The Hobbit: My Heart Will Go On

by moon_goddess_118

Summary

The Curse of Sauron:
"Your daughter will suffer from the choice you have made when you denied my marriage offer for another man. On your daughter's fourth birthday, the very same year that you will be twenty-four, you will die at Sunset and your daughter will grow up without ever knowing who you are or what you look like. It will be only a faded memory. Your bloodline will no longer be able to carry sons, only one daughter will be born from you. This curse will carry down to your daughter to her daughter and so on. The only way for your descendant to break the curse I have placed on your bloodline, is that if one of them falls in love with me out of true and genuine feelings and of her own willingness. Until than, my curse will follow your descendants forever and your bloodline will be mine forever."
Elves: "Italic"
English: "Normal"
Khuzdul: "Bold"
Thoughts: Italic
Dark Language: "Bold/Italic"
Psychic: 'Bold'
Chrechte: 'Italic'

her singing voice is that of Jodi Benson (the voice actress who did Ariel from the Little Mermaid and Thumbelina from Thumbelina): https://youtu.be/T7ovB7OdNEk
Chapter One: Reunion between Human and Wizard

Chapter Summary

Céline Dion - My Heart Will Go On

Every night in my dreams
I see you, I feel you,
That is how I know you go on

Chapter Notes

Rowena's barmaid outfit is found here:
http://www.haletheater.org/costumes/inventory/images/peasantwenchTeal.jpg
This is what Bríghid looks like. Not too old, not to young just right:
https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/cd/64/b2/cd64b22cfdb8683bd3a93b7b5b4923c3.jpg
I changed what Rowena looks like, I think the one I have picture below is the best one. It's close to how I pictured her to look.
I'm mentioning my other three Original Human Characters in this Chapter, her fellow mercenaries, Deòrsa, Màiri and Seònaid. They will not be seen until the next chapter and that's when I will switch from Rowena to Màiri, who is in Lake-Town, and Seònaid, who is in Mirkwood.
Chapter One: Reunion between Human and Wizard

Bree

It’s not easy being life’s own personal joke, but twenty-one-years-old Rowena has made an unstable peace with the beast. Rowena had always found dangerous and difficult missions and situations coming her way and she had handle them to the best of her ability and she always won fights that she finds herself in, may it be with a Troll, Orc and Goblin. But right now, Rowena had the distinct feeling that life decided to give her something that she had trouble with in the beginning when she first became a mercenary, and it was darn lucky that it didn't have a physical form because Rowena had the urge to beat the crap out of life with a blunt object.

And that would be men and their constantly never-going-to-take-her-seriously-due-to-her-looks-and-gender attitude and mind-frame. Honestly, Rowena had at first, when she started this job of being a mercenary at the tender age of thirteen, that she would eventually get mad enough that she
would quit for not being taken seriously enough. But than Rowena found that she enjoyed it, and she would be able to teach those men that by underestimating her would be the last thing they do, which translates to: Rowena beats them to a bloody pulp and no one ever underestimates her again in that town.

But problem was Rowena had already knocked some guy off his high horse months ago and now that she's back in Bree, a newcomer doesn't seem to believe that Rowena is a mercenary when the Bar-Keeper and the same guy told him of her fighting and agile prowess. They had told him that she had fought and won a fight against a Elf (Rowena had wondered how the hell they heard about that when she promised Elladan that she would never breathe a word that she had beaten him in the practice ring to anyone) and that she had fought against ten Mountain trolls and won in that fight without receiving any deathly wounds (that was actually based on absolutely dumb luck, Rowena didn't even know how she survived that and she was still bewildered to this day when she had won that fight by using the trolls’ own stupidity against them).

Of course, he didn't believe them. He called them and herself liars, saying that any man can easily trick a Troll and beat an Elf, but he couldn't believe that some little girl was able to beat a group of trolls and an elf. The man went on saying that she looked like a barmaid than a mercenary.

Now Rowena wasn't mad at being a called a barmaid when she had shot up and told him to come outside so that she could show him how she beat the Elf. She was totally fine with being called a barmaid, as she had at one point worked as a barmaid when she didn't have any job requests coming her way. No, Rowena was more mad at the fact that he called her a little girl, when it was clear that she was no little girl, a blind man can see that plainly.

Rowena has an exquisite, delicate, triangular-shaped face with a definitive jaw line and accentuated cheekbones. The eyes were disturbing, with an exotic slant. Such vibrant green eyes in that fair face, so green and clear, like colored crystal. The lips were soft and full and the nose straight and slender. A thick fringe of pale lashes framed those extraordinary eyes, while blond brows arched gently above them. Her hair was blond, too, in loose little waves surrounding her face, giving her fair skin a glow like polished ivory. Rowena also have a tear-shaped mole under her right eye.

Rowena has an lithe, firm build yet didn't lack feminine curves, which is wide yet slender shoulders, and ample yet firmly and soft breasts, full hips, and thighs; slim waist, and long, shapely legs. She also has a well-defined butt and long, muscularly toned legs, which showed when she was wearing trousers.

Her said-hair was pulled back in a high ponytail and held in place by a metal clasp, and she has a small braid on either side of her head, disappearing into the ponytail itself. Her hair was thick, luscious and full, such a pale golden blond color that it seemed unreal for a human to possess. She has loose tendrils of hair surrounding her face perfectly, tendrils that are impossible to keep within the ponytail and have always come lose no matter how many times she had put her hair up.

And she wore a teal corset, white blouse, blue pattern underskirt, blue plaid overskirt, and a messy slightly brown apron that used to be white. She wore the blouse over her shoulders, showing off her ivory skin to perfection.

Rowena knew what she looked like, her beauty could easily rival those that the Elves are well-famous for and she had to fight in order to make a name and reputation for herself, in order to get across everyone in Middle Earth head that she may be a woman for great and ethereal beauty, but she shouldn't be taken lightly and when it comes to a fight, Rowena could hold her own like the best of them and she didn't need rescuing like some Princess from the Fairy Tales that her adopted father has always told her when she was a little girl.
Rowena thought as she faced the drunk man, she had her arms crossed under her breasts. *It's not like I asked to be this beautiful. But thanks to that, I have to deal with men like him who thinks that a woman who looks like me should be something other than a mercenary.*

Man looked down at Rowena as he came to stand before her. "I don't like fighting a woman, there's no fun in fighting one."

Rowena was silently letting him and his friends have their laugh before speaking. "I don't like fighting drunk men, there's no fun in fighting one."

Angry clouded the man's dazed eyes and made his face red. "How dare you! It's very clear that you do not know your place, little girl."

Rowena felt her jaw clenched as angry flared through her, and before the man even knew what happened, she threw up a sharp right hook to his jaw. The force of her punch dropped the man instantly to the ground and knocking him unconscious. Rowena felt her jaw dropped in surprisement. She couldn't believe it only took one punch from her to knock him out cold.

Rowena leaned over him and immediately smelt the ale on his breathe. She pulled back from him and looked at the Bar-Keeper. "How many pints did he have, Bríghid?"

Bríghid looked up in thought as she started to count on her fingers. "I think he had thirteen pints."

Rowena slapped her palm to her forehead. "No wonder he was easily defeat with only one hit to the jaw."

"I see you're starting fights now, Rowny." said a very amused masculine voice from behind her, causing Rowena to turn around to see Gandalf the Gray standing behind her.

"I don't start fights, I end them, Gandalf." Rowena smiled up at the elderly man as she spoke to him. "Anyways, I haven't seen you since I lifted Rivendell after my training was complete."

Rowena, still a child at the time, was saved by Gandalf from orcs, the old wizard had taken her to Rivendell in order to heal from her wounds, she was supposed to be sent home to her adopted father but Lord Elrond had taken a fondness towards her and kept her there so that he could have her train in archery as well as being taught how to speak Elvish. And Rowena took to the lessons like a fish to water, she had enjoyed it greatly, especially when Lady Galadriel came over and taught her healing techniques. The White Lady had also taken a shine to Rowena and had loved her like a daughter, just as Elrond did and still does.

Gandalf walked over to her and examined her, running his eyes over her form before reaching up and cupping her cheek with his palm. "Even though it's been four years since I last saw you, I'm always surprised to see how truly beautiful you are, Rowny."

Rowena kissed his cheek, smiling. "Flatter." She took his arm and led him inside the inn as two men came forward to move the drunk from the road. "Now, what are you doing here?"

Gandalf turned to face her and smiled as he asked. ""I was wondering if you wanted to go on an adventure with me? Of course it won't be just us two, they'll be some dwarves and a hobbit with us."

Rowena arched a brow at the mention of hobbit." A Hobbit will be joining us? Who is this hobbit you speak of? Not many would be so eager in joining in an adventure, Gandalf. Well, expect the Too....." She trailed off at her words, ending that sentence as she noted the faint smile on Gandalf's lips. "You didn't....."
Gandalf winked at her as he pinched her chin, affectionately, as he had always done when she was a little girl. "Of course I did, my dear. He was the perfect candidate for the job."

Rowena crossed her arms over her breasts as she pointed out. "I'm not so sure, Gandalf. When he had found me when I was four and the two years I had stayed with him until I met you, he was very protective of me and didn't allow me to go too far from his side or home when we would go for walks."

"You can't possible think that his Tookish side is completely gone, Rowny." Gandalf scolded her even though he had a merry twinkle in his eyes, her way of knowing that he wasn't serious. "Besides his overly-protective nature towards you, my dear, was probably stemmed from the fact that he had found you badly hurt and nearly death outside of his home that one day, so he didn't want to lose you, who became a daughter to him, just as he lost his parents."

Rowena shook her head, returning back to the question he had asked her. "So you want me to go on an adventure with you, huh? I don't see why not, it's not like I have anything better to do."

Gandalf smiled down at her as he wrapped his arm around her shoulder and they resumed their walk into the inn. "Great, so you'll be coming with me to Shire in order to talk your adopted father into going on this adventure, correct?"

Rowena threw her head back and laughed, saying. "Oh, Gandalf! I wouldn't miss if my very life depended on it."

"Good girl, good girl." Gandalf said as he stroked her hair as the door of the inn closed behind them. "By the way, where are your three companions?"

"Deòrsa is off on a job, Kenna and Catrin have already reached their adopted homes by now." Rowena answered him, as she led him to the counter and stepped around it, in order to get his drink. "So what's the plan for getting my father to agree in going on this adventure, Gandalf?"

Gandalf raised his brow at her as he asked. "Since when you were a barmaid? I thought you were a mercenary."

"I am." Rowena said with a laugh as she got Gandalf a drink. "But this is more like a side-job when no King is hiring a mercenary to join his rank." Than she frowned at him. "And you deliberately avoid that question, Gandalf."

"I'm working on a plan as we speak or travel." Gandalf said as he took a sip of ale. "Anyway, there is a King now who is hiring you for your mercenary skills."

Rowena arched a brow at that. "Oh? And who is this King?"

" Actually King-in-exile is his correct title." Gandalf corrected.

"What's the difference?" Rowena asked, clearly not understanding it.

Gandalf explained to her, smiling at her expression. "He didn't have a coronation, so he's a King-in-exile."

Rowena mumbled, which caused Gandalf to hoot with laughter. " Well, excuse me! I didn't know there was a difference."

Gandalf watched Rowena tidy up behind the counter by wiping cups down. "So have you found that Blacksmith of yours?"

Rowena stopped in the mid-wiping and looked up at him. ".....No, I haven't."
Gandalf didn't say anything for a while before he said. "Aren't you curious to know what happened to him, Rowny?"

Rowena sighed as she set the cup down. "Yes, no, maybe. I don't know, Gandalf. I think that was mere girlish infatuation in my part. I highly doubt that he even loved me."

She turned away and headed towards a customer, who was getting her attention for another cup. "Besides, he may have completely forgot about me. So what's the point in trying to find out if he even loved or remembered me."

Gandalf watched as she made her way towards the customer and talked to him, laughing, as the old wizard noticed the mithril bead gleamed in her ponytail, and gave a secret half-smile. *You say one thing yet you still carry that courtship bead around in your hair. Your actions clearly don't match up to your words.*

Gandalf watched Rowena as many men flirting with her, even though the young woman did not flirt back at them, and he couldn't help but wonder how times she gets this type of attention from these men. He waited until she came back before he asked. "Rowny, I've been noticing this now but how many times have you been flirted with?"

Rowena looked up and squinted, as if that would help her remember. "Erm... I think three, maybe four times? Bríghid?" She looked at the amused Inn Owner in question, who shook her head and held up ten fingers but kept flashing them towards her. "Really? You lost count too, huh? It felt like less." She turned back to Gandalf who looked equally fondly exasperated and fed up with her words. “So four.”

Gandalf asked as he smiled up at her. "I'm guessing this is a constantly occurrence and you've grown use to it."

Rowena nodded her head as Bríghid agreed with her. "Yeah, pretty much."

Bríghid kissed her cheek in fondness. "She can't help it, Rowny is the prettiest girl in all of Bree."

Rowena laughed as she hugged the old woman to her. "Thanks for the compliment, Bríghid."

Bríghid twerked her cheek before she moved away from her as Gandalf thought to himself with most amusement. *I wonder what he would do if he hears that Rowena has a lot of suitors seeking her favor.*

Rowena looked back at Gandalf. "So when should we leave?"

"Tomorrow, in the morning." Gandalf answered her as Rowena set down a plate of food before him.

Bríghid came over, her arms filled with plates and pints. "When you're done, I'll show you to your room." The old woman looked back at Rowena and said. "You can go now and pack your things for tomorrow, love."

Rowena smiled at Bríghid as she put the towel down and kissed the old woman on the cheek. "Thanks, Bríghid."

Both Gandalf and Bríghid watched Rowena move away from them, before Bríghid moved away from Gandalf, who returned back to meal, in order to give her customers their food and drinks.

When Gandalf had finished eating and Bríghid came over to him to led him to his room. As they walked up the stairs and entered the halls, it was only then that Gandalf felt comfortable enough to
ask Bríghid." Is Rowena afraid to fall in love?"

Bríghid sighed before she response. "She is a cursed woman who doesn't remember a lot from her
colorhood. All she remembers is that destruction and death is always following her."

Gandalf looked down at the old woman by his side. "She can't possibly believe that."

"But she does, Gandalf," Bríghid said. "Because that's what she remembers. Vaguely yes, but that
is what she remembers."

"So she doesn't know that she's...." Gandalf trailed off.

"Yes, she doesn't know but I do want her to eventually know about her birthright and title."
Bríghid stopped in front of the door before his room and looked up at him. "I want that girl to be
happy, Gandalf. I think that Blacksmith is the one for that job."

Gandalf arched a brow at that. "What makes you say that?"

Bríghid smiled as she explained. "Because every time she talks about him, she gets this dreamy
look about her and I can tell that he's the one for her."

Gandalf smiled at her as he opened the door to his room. "And in that, my dear Bríghid, we are in
agreement."

Morning

Gandalf watched as Rowena put the saddle on Goliath, her black Friesian stallion, after she had
fought to put the bridle in his mouth. The old wizard smiled as the young woman stroked the
Friesian side as she fixed the strap on the saddle, tightened it around the stallion's waist.

Gandalf came towards her and Goliath, making his way towards his horse. "Ready to go?"

Rowena smiled at him. "Yeah, I'm ready. I already said good-bye to Bríghid and she packed us
snacks to carry with us on our way to Shire."

Gandalf nodded at her as he got his horse ready to leave as well. The young woman watched the
wizard for a while before she turned back to her stallion and patted his rump, her way of telling
him that he was done. Goliath reared back and danced in mid-step, happy that was done.

Rowena grabbed his rein and led him outside, in order to keep Goliath from making Gandalf's
horse nervous around him. She came around Goliath to stand before once they stood outside the
stables. The young woman smiled as the Friesian tipped his head down and rested his nuzzle
against her chest, and Rowena stroked his mane as she waited for Gandalf. She looked away from
her stallion to look up at the sky above them.

It was a cloudless and beautiful morning, now too cold or too hot. It was nice and cool, a perfect
day for traveling. But to Rowena, it reminded her of the day where she had met her Blacksmith
Dwarf and it was also the day where she had to leave with Gandalf. Well, not on the same day but
on a day just like it. She reached behind her head, touching the thin braid that is hidden within her
ponytail. Her fingertips ran down the braid until it reached the bead that was keeping the braid
together and she stroked it with a dreamy and fond smile on her lips.

Rowena allowed herself to be taken away in her daydreams, as she remembered that day.
"Rowena!"

Fourteen-year-old Rowena turned around to see the Blacksmith Dwarf, Thorin, walking towards her in a rush. She stopped in front of the stables, where Goliath waited for her to saddle him up and take her to where Gandalf was waiting patient for her to meet him outside of town.

Rowena gave Thorin a lovely smile, the smile reaching her eyes as she did so. "Mister Thorin! What can I do for you this fine morning?"

Thorin stopped before her and looked up at her, not by much though because he stood just about to her lips, barely passing her upper lip, making him the perfect height for Rowena to barely having to lean down and kiss him.

Her thought caused the young girl to blush furiously and hoped that the handsome dwarf would think that it was only because they were now standing in front of the open air...which wasn't even hot but nice and cool.

Rowena thought to herself as she stared into beautiful pale blue eyes. "Kill me now."

"I heard you were leaving today." His deep, baritone voice broke through her thoughts and bringing Rowena back to the presence and to him.

Rowena gave him another smile, this time it was sheepish. "Yeah, my grandfather sent word that it was time to go and I was on my way to meet him."

Thorin looked away and turned back to look at her. "When can I see you again, Rowena?"

Rowena chewed on her bottom lip, a habit she always had when she was a child, but she quickly smiled. "I hope so. I really enjoyed being with you."

Thorin didn't say anything after her sentence and Rowena was almost on the verge of panicking, thinking that he didn't share her enjoyment, when he made his move.

Rowena tilted her head to the side as she watched him reached into a small pouch hanging from his belt and pulled out a mithril bead with green gems on the surface. Than he gestured for her to lean her head down, and Rowena followed his silent request, turning her head to the side.

Then, very deliberately, he caught a portion of Rowena's hair next to her temple, and carefully began to braid it. The young girl waited patiently as she felt his fingers running through her hair as he braided the portion. Her eyes drifted closed as she felt his warm breath against her cheek, secret enjoying this moment between them, as well as the closeness of their faces.

She felt Thorin stepping back from her, letting her know that he was done with the braid, and Rowena straightened her head back up as she reached over and stroked her fingertips down the braid until she felt the bead on it.

Thorin whispered as sapphire blue gaze into jade green. "So that you'll remember me forever and it is also a promise that I will come for you and we will met each other again."

Her face broke out in a wide and bright smile, changing her face completely, making her seem more beautiful and more mature. Well, to Thorin as Rowena didn't know the change that smile made to her face.

Rowena leaned over, too excited to care about the consequence of her action, and pressed a chaste kiss Thorin's face, barely missing his lips. His bread tickled her lips, it was a nice feeling not a bad feeling and Rowena found that she liked the feeling a lot.
"Thank-you so much!" Rowena said as she leaned back and continued smiling at him, too happy to notice the shock expression on the Blacksmith's face and the amused expressions on the crowd's faces. "I'll treasure it forever!"

Rowena turned before placing another chaste kiss on the Blacksmith's face and hurried into the stables. She quickly got Goliath ready and rode out on him, waving good-bye to Thorin, who was still standing there as she rode passed them. "Bye, Thorin! I really hope to see you again!"

Rowena watched Thorin waved back at her and she turned back to look ahead, so she didn't see Thorin raising his hand to his face and touching the place where her lips had touched.

"What has taken you away from me, Rowny?"

Rowena jolted and turned around to see Gandalf sitting on top of his horse, staring down at her with an amused expression on his face. She inwardly winced as she hoped that Gandalf hadn't been trying to get her attention.

Rowena said as she rubbed the back of her cheek, sheepishly. "Hey, Gandalf. I see you finished getting your horse ready."

"Rowena" Gandalf said with a amusement clearly in his voice.

"Yes?" Rowena asked as she looked up at him.

"I've been standing here for quite some time now." He said, smiling as he watched the shock and horrified expression danced across her face.

Rowena dropped her face into her hands and groaned, loudly at it. "Damn, I hate it when my mind wanders away from me."

Gandalf chuckled as he watched Rowena climbed up onto Goliath's back. "I see you're still daydream like when you were a little girl."

Rowena snorted as she and Gandalf rode off. "You mean absentmindedly let my mind, and guard, down whenever and wherever I am? Yeah, that just asking me to get killed in a middle of a fight."

Gandalf reached over and patted her hand, affectionately. "But it showed an active imagination, my dear child, it's not a bad thing."

Rowena laughed. "Yeah, I had such an active imagination that I could play by myself, or with others, for hours and never grow bored of it."

Gandalf hummed in agreement as they rode in silent, heading out of Bree. Around them, the townsfolk were getting up and getting their stores ready to receive customers. Rowena waved at the children, who ran alongside them as they rode through Bree. But the children turned back when Gandalf and Rowena rode out of town and continued on their way.

After a while, Gandalf turned his head to look down at her. "So, who were you daydreaming about?"

Rowena pursed her lips in annoyance, she had hoped that Gandalf wouldn't have asked but apparently luck wasn't on her side today. "I was think about that Blacksmith I met in that town when I was fourteen."
"Ah, yes. Your Dwarf." Gandalf said as faint smile tugged on his lips. "Have you thought about searching for him?"

Rowena shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know where or who he is. From all I know he could be married by now."

Gandalf nodded in agreement. "True. But you won't know for certain unless you search for him."

"You act like I'm going to find him as soon as I start searching, Gandalf." Rowena said, looking at him. "He could be anywhere and I have missions to do, I simply cannot drop whatever I am doing just to look for one dwarf who may not remember me or share my feelings." She looked away from him. "Besides he's simply not going to suddenly appear right before my eyes."

Gandalf looked away from her. I wonder what her reaction would be when she sees who's the King Under the Mountain really is.

Elsewhere, Thorin Oakenshield the King Under the Mountain was sitting inside an Inn, waiting for the rain to die out before he continued on his journey. He didn't appreciate the fact that the rain had came pouring down as soon as he entered the gates and he had to spend the next hour trying to find an Inn to which he seek shelter and he did, but by that time, he was already soaked through his clothes, chilling his usually warm flesh. Thorin was on his way towards the Shire after being so let down when his own Kin turned down his request for aid to get back Erebor, when he heard the first thunder and saw the first lighting. He quickly urged his pony to ran towards the village that he was heading towards for a rest after riding for so long.

Thorin rubbed his hand over his face as he walked towards the window of his bedroom and stared out the window, watching the rain slide down the glass. His thoughts turned to the human girl, his One, he had met eight years ago. Thorin wasn't sure what surprised him the most. The fact that he indeed found his One after living so long, thinking possibly that his One had died in Erebor, when the dragon came, an infant or youth not of age, someone he wouldn’t have felt The Longing for because they were too young, or that his One was a human girl, instead of a dwarf-woman.

He hadn't believed that the latter had been true for him, Thorin had heard it happened from others of his comrades and he never believed that he would be one of those dwarves who’s One was an infant or youth, not of age, because they were simply too young for him to feel that pull. That tug. So Thorin took it upon himself to seek the human girl out and slowly built up a friendship with her. But now that he thought about it, the human girl seemed to seek out his company more than he did, to the point that she would hang around his forge just to talk to him.

A smile appeared on his lips as a memory came to him and he leaned against the window to watch the raindrops on the window, becoming lost in the memory and seeking comfort from it, of course.

"Wow, it's so hot in here!"

Thorin stopped in the middle of pounding his hammer onto a sword and looked over to see Rowena, the human girl and his One, standing in the entrance of his forge. She was carrying a basket filled with cheese, meat and bread.

Thorin had to fight back a smile to appear on his lips at the sight of her standing there. "I see you brought food for me."

"What gave me away?" Rowena asked as she walked passed him to the table. "The basket filled
with food or that I'm here?"

"You know I don't have to spend either my lunch or any other time with you, Rowena." Thorin said as he walked towards the table as the human girl set down the plates and foods on the table.

Rowena suddenly leaned her face towards his, surprising Thorin of her closeness. "But you'll miss me if I stay away for too long, Thorin."

Thorin slowly blinked as Rowena pulled away and returned to preparing lunch for them as the dwarf king watched her. He did miss her when she had stay away from him, even though Thorin didn't want to admit or showed it. Thorin was always on edge with his feelings and thoughts when Rowena doesn't come over to spend time with him. Thorin learned that the human girl is very much like the wind, she comes and goes whenever the mood strikes her. But Rowena always return to him and no one else and Thorin like to believe that she may feel something with him, just like he does.

Thorin caught movement from the corner of his eye coming outside open window and turned his head to see the fishermen's son, Lachlan, standing outside, near the Inn. The dwarf King noticed the look he was getting from the human lad and frowned at it before he heard Rowena hum a tone and turned to look at her before looking back at the boy.

'Ah,' Thorin thought as he finally realized why the boy was glaring at him. 'He's jealous because Rowena is seeking to spend her free time with me, instead of seeking it with him.'

Rowena looked at him and cocked her head at him. "Is there something wrong?"

Thorin inclined his head towards the boy. "We have an angry peeping tom outside this window."

Rowena looked her and gave a sigh of frustration before she set down the cheese knife and walked over to it, closing the window. "He's starting to worry me a little."

"What is he doing that is worrying you, Rowena?" Thorin asked

"Well, he's been following me around and watching what I'm doing." Rowena said as she came back to the table. "He's also expressing his dislike to everything I do and say."

Thorin looked at her. "It sounds like he believes that you two are together and it's his given right to control whatever you do."

Rowena dropped her gaze to the table, sitting down on the chair. "It's more like he doesn't like me for myself."

Thorin was silent for a while watching her before he reached up and touched his fingertips to underneath her chin and raised her head up, making her look up at him. Deep blue eyes met and locked with pale green eyes. He moved his fingers so that they were cupping her chin now and his thumb pad was touching the seam of her bottom lip.

Thorin leaned over and gently touched his forehead to hers, causing Rowena's eyes to close. "Your personality and outlook on life is exactly what makes you special. It makes you so perfect. I would never change or tame you for all the treasure in whole middle earth."

Rowena's eyes drifted open and she smiled widely at him. "Thank-you, Thorin!" She reached over and grabbed a braid, surprising Thorin, as she gently touched her forehead back to him.

Thorin blinked his eyes down at her in shock but he shook himself before he made a fool of himself. Rowena was a human girl, she couldn't possibly knew what it means to touch his braid or his forehead with hers. So Thorin decided to keep his mouth shut and this situation to himself. He
didn't want to freak the girl out when she's already have to deal with the human boy outside, and Thorin is also planning to speak to the boy as he didn't want some boy to sniff around her skirt.

The Dwarf King simply didn't, and couldn't, see the human boy as a rival for Rowena. How could he when Thorin is every inch of perfect specimen of virility.

Thorin turned his head as a knock sounded on his door, snapping him from the memory and looked towards the door. He pushed himself away from the window and opened the door, revealing a tavern wench, carrying his food and wearing a sultry expression on her face.

Thorin step to the side as the tavern wench breezed passed him and set his food down, she turned to him and slowly, seductively bite her lip.

"Is there anything else I can help you with, Master dwarf?" The tavern wench asked with an inviting look.

"No, I have everything I need." Thorin said, turning his back on her, dismissing her.

The tavern wench frowned at him before she walked out of his room and closed the door behind him. Thorin let out a breath he was holding and he raised his hand up to rub his face as he placed his other hand on his waist.

Thorin was constantly finding himself being bothered by women for sex over the centuries, it had started when he first started working as a Blacksmith, so his muscles that were honed from fighting also became honed from wielding a hammer and pounding it into metal. He had matured well, becoming more handsome and virility as he aged. But they weren't his human girl, his One. Thorin didn't have time to have only one time sex with some women who are complete strangers and who he would never remember ever again.

*I don't have time to become lost in my memories either.* Thorin thought as he walked towards the platter of food that was placed on the table. *I need to focus on the quest instead of focusing it on a human girl I would probably never see again. Even though she is my One.*

Miles from Gandalf and Rowena, to the East. Near the Lonely Mountain, or Erebor as the Dwarves call it, there was a great woods known as Mirkwood filled with mystery and enchantments. Something dark and evil has lay it's claim the woods, casting a dark enchantment over it. So no one enters it, due to the evil radiating from it, making everyone fear it. All expect for the Elves who have years made Mirkwood their home and settled down it in. They were the ones who survived the evil enchantment of the woods due to them following Elven Path and remaining on it as they walk through the woods.

Mirkwood was a dense and heavy woodland that made up much of the eastern part of Rhovanion or the Wilderland, that maintained its borders and relative shape for many ages. Its natural land features included (in the northern part of the forest) the Mountains of Mirkwood, a sizable river referred to in Tolkien's map as the Forest River, that ran from the Grey Mountains down to Long Lake, and a smaller river that ran from the Mountains of Mirkwood to join with the Forest River west of the Elven-king's Halls. This smaller river was enchanted (or polluted) to such an extent that it caused slumber and forgetfulness to anyone who fell into it. Mirkwood's climate was relatively mild. Except for ways through the thickets of the forest, there were very few commonly used routes through Mirkwood save the Old Forest Road and the Forest Path. Mirkwood was approximately 600 miles long from north to south and 250 miles across from west to east at its width. During the events of The Hobbit it was home to giant spiders and the kingdom of King
Thranduil and his woodland elves.

Elves had always lived in Mirkwood for centuries now, calling it home. No humans lived in Mirkwood and no human would willing travel through the path in Mirkwood. Well, expect for one human but she had lived here ever since she was a four year old girl. Her name was Catrin and she was found and raised by an Elf couple who treated her as their daughter and loved her as one. They taught her everything they know: healing, archery and swordplay.

Catrin could have easily be passed as a Elf maiden if it wasn't for her ears, she resembled an Elf maiden in looks and grace.

Catrin has an exquisite, delicate, triangular-shaped face with a definitive jaw line and accentuated cheekbones. The eyes were disturbing, with an exotic slant. Such vibrant green eyes in that fair face, so green and clear, like colored crystal. The lips were soft and full and the nose straight and slender. A thick fringe of sooty lashes framed those extraordinary eyes, while black brows arched gently above them. Her hair was black, too, in loose little waves surrounding her face, giving her fair skin a glow like polished ivory. Catrin also has scar on her bottom lip.

Catrin has an lithe, firm build yet didn't lack feminine curves, which is wide yet slender shoulders, and ample yet firmly and soft breasts, full hips, and thighs; slim waist, and long, shapely legs. She also has a well-defined butt and long, muscularly toned legs, which showed when she was wearing trousers.

Her said-hair was pulled back in a bun and held in place by a metal clasp. Her hair was thick, lush and full, such a dark as a raven's wing color that it seemed unreal for a human to possess. She has loose tendrils of hair surrounding her face perfectly, tendrils that are impossible to keep within the ponytail and have always come lose no matter how many times she had put her hair up.

Catrin was standing on the highest branch of the tallest tree, looking around the canopy of Mirkwood around her. She scratched her chin as she looked down to catch a glimpse of the dead Giant Spiders below her, surrounding the trunk of the tree. Catrin knew that her Elven King would be angry when she delivers this pleasant news to him, but despite her misgivings about telling him, Catrin knew she had to. This was a need to know and King Thranduil needed to know.

Catrin climbed down the tree and easily weaved her way through the dead bodies of spiders, not stepping on any of them. She quickly founded the Elven path and followed it back to the Palace and Fortress of the Elves of Mirkwood.

Catrin inclined her head towards the two Elves that stood guard outside the doors as she walked passed them and into the Palace.

"Catrin!"

Catrin came to absolute halt and turned her head around at the sound of her name being called by Legolas, Prince of Mirkwood and son of King Thranduil, walking towards her. She quickly bowed to him. "Your Highness."

Legolas grimaced at her words. "Don't call me that, Catrin. You know I hate it when you call me that."

Catrin arched a sooty brow at him. "But you are a Prince." At his glare, she threw her hands up in a surrendering gesture. "Alright, alright. Sorry, Legolas."

"What happened?" Legolas asked, concern in his voice and eyes as he touched her bleeding cheek.
"Giant Spiders are making themselves comfortable our Forest." Catrin told him. "I was on my way to see your father and report what had happened."

Legolas said as she walked away. "I think it's wish to get that checked, Catrin."

Catrin called back to him over her shoulder. "I'll get it check after this!"

Catrin was thankful that her adopted father and mother, Alosrin and Calarel, were not present and did not hear that exchange. They both worry as it is about her tendency to sneak out of the Fortress and seek adventure and danger in Mirkwood or as a mercenary. She knew they worry about her as any real parents should but Catrin was a grown woman now and she didn't need to be treated as if she was a baby!

Catrin came to a complete stop when she caught a glimpse of herself on the shiny surface of a hanging metal shield. She grimaced at the sight of blood and dirt on her face and quickly looked around for something to wash her face clean before going to see the King.

"Here," a wet cloth appeared in front of her and Catrin looked up to see Tauriel, standing by her side, smiling. "Use it and make yourself beautiful, Catrin."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Tauriel." Catrin told her, feeling a faint blush forming on her face.

Tauriel softly laughed as she wiped away the dirt and blood off her skin, "Don't take me for a fool, Catrin. I know what lurks in that bold heart of yours."

Catrin grimaced but didn't argue with the Lovely red-headed Elf maiden any further. Tauriel knew of her love for King Thranduil, much to Catrin's great dismay. The Captain of the Elves had figured out about Catrin's feelings for him when she had caught the human girl, at the tender age of thirteen, looking down at King Thranduil with such a dreamy expression on her face that Tauriel quickly shield her expression from her King when he had started to glance her way.

Tauriel had dragged Catrin away and confronted her about it, and Catrin tearfully admitted to it, but she had told the girl to keep her feelings to herself and avoid him, until she knew how to keep her feelings from showing, and Catrin did
Chapter Two: Rowena Baggins comes home

Chapter Summary

Céline Dion - My Heart Will Go On

Far across the distance
And spaces between us
You have come to show you go on
Chapter Two: Rowena Baggins comes home

The Shire seemed impervious to time. Grassy hills as far as the eye could see, and the utter sense of peace one could find just by simply strolling on through. Emerald green grass waved in the breeze, long enough to sway but short enough to be inviting, like it wanted someone to run through it. The hills rolled ever one and on, further than the eyes could see, and anyone could have the insane urge to walk forever to see just how far they went. The Baranduin River cut through the Shire, with a beautiful bridge standing over the river itself.

Rowena felt a wide and brilliant smile forming on her lips as she and Gandalf rode into the Shire, her happiness and excitement must have passed onto her black Friesian Stallion, Goliath, because he started to a fast and brisk, high-stepping trot. She leaned over and patted his neck as she looked around her as they rode deeper into the Shire.

It hasn't change. Rowena thought as she took a deep breath of fresh and clean air. I miss this place, it felt like I was missing a piece of my heart when I was taken from here and never dared to came back.

Gandalf looked over his shoulder at her and grinned. "I was wondering if I lost you for a moment there, Rowny."

Rowena frowned at the old elderly man as they both stopped their horses and climbed off them.
"What do you mean by that, Gandalf?"

Gandalf reached over and placed his hand on her shoulder as he said. "After I had saved you from those Orcs and you lead among the Elves, I have not once seen that bright-eyed, filled with curiosity and mischief little human girl I had met that one day, two weeks before the attack. I thought I had lost her."

Rowena laughed as she brought Gandalf in for a hug before the pair started to walk, leaving their horses behind. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Oh? Elrond does seems to have a idea what you've been doing." Gandalf said with a twinkle in his eyes as he looked at Rowena. "I heard that you and his twin sons were absolute terrors, as the three of you caused mischief and mayham."

Rowena laughed. "You and him have absolutely no proof that I was even involved in any mischief and mayham that Elladan and Elrohir caused." A smirk appeared on her lips as she gave a little shake of her head, causing her ponytail to lay across her shoulder. "Besides, I am quite capable of getting into trouble all by myself."

Gandalf felt a smile formed on his lips as he thought back to when Rowena was still living in the Shire. "Yes, I remember that. You were quite the mischievous little girl back then, and I still think that mischievous little girl is still alive within you, Rowny."

Rowena didn't response to that, she actually didn't have to as she knew that the same little mischievous little girl was still within her and she has a habit of raising head whenever a golden situation to cause trouble rears it head and who was Rowena to deny herself some little fun and mischief.

Gandalf shook his head as he and Rowena walked passed hobbits who were on their way to the market. "Try not to cause mischief in this town, Rowny. I don't want them to think that I've encouraged your mischievous nature."

Rowena smirked at him as she looked at him. "I can't keep promises I can't keep, Gandalf, you know that."

Gandalf gave a long-suffering sigh that caused Rowena to throw her head back and laugh uproariously. "Oh, I know, my dear Rowny."

Bilbo Baggins was right and proper. He was as hobbitish as a hobbit could be, with his curly brown hair, blue-green eyes, pointed ears and modest clothing (not to mention his hairy feet, can't be a hobbit without hairy feet). He took comfort in the simple things such as smoky his Old Toby and food. And he lived in the most luxurious and comfortable Hobbit-hole, Bag End. It was something he had inherited from his parents, Bungo and Belladonna Baggins, after they had died during Winter, attacked and killed by a rogue pack of wolves. Bilbo had survived that by sure dumb luck (as someone he knew would have put it).

He glanced over and up to see his adopted daughter, Lily Baggins, a young hobbit woman with wavy brown hair up in a bun with her namesake flower in the bun, and eyes blue as the clear sky, reading on top of Bag End. She was a beautiful young lady habit of eighteen years of age (her age in human terms), and had many suitors wanting her hand in marriage but both Lily and Bilbo turned them down flat. Bilbo didn't see them worthy of her and Lily simply wasn't interest in marrying anyone just yet.

Bilbo had found Lily with the bodies of her parents in her home, they were brutally mangled and
the child Lily was hiding inside the closet, obviously placed there by her parents. He had later learned that her mother and father were killed by a pack of wolves who had broken into the smial, but not before her mother had placed her in the closet and shut the door.

Bilbo decided to adopt her and brought into his home, needing someone to fill the void that was lifted behind by his human adopted daughter. He had been realizing that Lily was pretty much similar to his adopted daughter in personality. She was mischievous and playful but only in front of those she knows, than she's shy and quiet, stammering when she's been spoken to. Bilbo loved Lily and knew that she would have been close as peas with....

Bilbo immediately shook himself from the thought, not wanting to reopen the wound that hadn't fully healed when she had vanished from the Shire that one day. But he had found it impossible to completely forget her, she was everywhere in the Shire. She never stayed in one place, like the wind, she had traveled all over the Shire, bringing laughter, smiles, and mischievous with her wherever she went. She was truly like the sun, always seen with a smile on her face and filled with such happiness, carefreeness and cheerfulness, which was only rivaled by her unlimited sense of curiosity and mischief-making.

The only time that Bilbo didn't do something that was not entire Baggins and entire Took, and that was when he had adopted a little four-year-old human girl, who was hurt badly and almost near death outside his smial. He brought the weak human girl into his face and tended to her, bringing her back to full health and strength. And when he learned that her mother had died and she had lost her home to Orcs, Bilbo knew that he couldn't take her to Bree to find a home there, and he made the decision to adopt her as his daughter, giving her his last name as her own.

Bilbo loved his little Summer Sun like his very own daughter and spoiled her, he saw her as the sweet, cheerful and carefree little girl that she was but his fellow hobbits did not. To them, she was a human and an outsider, she would never be like them, a true hobbit, no matter how who she was raised. But Bilbo ignored those ignorant fools and taught her everything he knew. He even tried to teach her the Baggins way but she showed such a Took trait, that had him almost believing that she was truly his daughter that had missed the Baggins traits and kept all the Took traits, and Bilbo eventually gave up trying to get her to be a proper and right little lady.

Lily had a bit of both Baggins and Took in her, but something told him that his human daughter would have made her more Took than Baggins like her, and they would have been making all of Shire go absolutely crazy wit their antics.

With a shake of his head, Bilbo banished his adopted daughter from his mind, closing his eyes slipping off into a deep reprieve. Today he was going to relax, and enjoy it and not spare her another thought. He inhaled from his pipe and immediately he felt himself unwind and slumped upon the bench. He breathed out, forming a perfect smoke ring if he did say so himself. It drew upward, further and further then the most peculiar thing happened. The smoke transformed into a smoke moth, that fluttered around. Bilbo sat unaware of what was going until the smoke moth, flew into his face. Bilbo lets out a little gasp of surprise and sputtered in an undignified manner.

He abruptly halted when he noticed two shadows looming over him, and he looked up to see a man and a young woman, the man is impossible tall at that, with a long grey hair and beard draped in grey cloak, and with a pointed hat on top of his head. The young woman standing behind him, is small compared to the man, coming up only to his chest, she has long, lush and full pale golden blond hair that is tied back in a high ponytail and has an lithe, firm build yet didn't lack feminine curves.

And they both seemed to be very familiar to Bilbo but he couldn't place them for the life of him, and he knew it was going to bug him now.
The old man stood with a staff clasped in his hands, and he looked down at Bilbo with a strange twinkle in his eye. Lily came to the realization that they were no longer alone and looked over to see two people, an old man and woman, standing in front of her father, standing in front of the gate, they hadn’t walked into the yard. Lily set down her back and swung her legs over the edge of the hill, staring down at the two strange people in vivid curiosity. Her movement didn’t go unnoticed, both old man and woman had glanced up and stared at her for a while before looking back down at her father but not before they both smiled up at her.

Bilbo stared, perturbed up at the face and he felt a bit uncomfortable underneath such a knowing stare. But despite uncomfortable he felt, he still was polite. "Good morning," he said, giving the man a half-hearted attempt at a smile. He glanced inside the house and wished he had an excuse to go inside now, without Lily being embarrassed by his rudeness.

"What do you mean?" The old man said, tilting his head and giving Bilbo a calculating glance while his lips twitched up into a pleasant smile. "Do you mean to wish me a good morning, or do you mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not? Or, perhaps you mean to say that you feel good on this particular morning?" The man's smile widened when Bilbo looked more and more perplexed. "Or are you simply stating that this is a morning to be good on?"

Bilbo paused, his brows furrowing ever so slightly as his smile fell into a confused frown. His eyes went to the old man's silent lady companion, but she wasn't much help. She merely looked at him, smiled and shrugged her shoulders, as if she was silently telling him that it was just this man and he enjoyed confusing people with his words, and something told Bilbo that it was probably true. Lily felt her lips curving up into a smile, impressed by the man's wit and good humor.

"All…of them at once I suppose," he said, uncertainly. He is even more bewildered when the man looked down at him with a hint of disapproval in his grey eyes. Bilbo nervously fiddled with his pipe, and asked, "Can I help you?"

"That remains to be seen," the old man said, his voice almost a whisper. He drew himself upward, and smiled at the hobbit. "I'm looking for someone to share in an adventure."

"An adventure?" Bilbo's eyes widened before he could help himself and he felt a brief spark of interest rise in his chest. Then he realized what he was doing, and schooled his expression into a scowl. "Now, I don't imagine anyone west of Bree would have much interest in adventures. Nasty, disturbing, uncomfortable things," he said, adding a condescending note to his voice to hide the slight tremble that went through him.

No! No! Absolutely not! He quickly rose from his bench and made his way to the mailbox, he had gestured Lily to climb off the hill before he did so, which she does. "Make you late for dinner," he added, pulling the mail out of the mailbox. He looked through the mail, trying to appear busy and he sends shifty glances at the old man who was still standing there waiting ever patiently. "Well… well… good morning," Bilbo repeated, and turned to head back inside. Lily followed after her father, climbing up the stairs as they made their way towards the door.

He heard a huff from the old behind him. "To think that I should have lived to be good-morninged by Belladonna Took's son," the old man grumbled, hiding a smile when Bilbo halted in step, "as if I were selling buttons at the door."

He froze as still as a statue, his heart sputtered in his chest at the mention of his mother. Slowly Bilbo turned back around, Lily stepped to the side and looked over at the old man, she noticed that the woman was now leaning against the gate as she watched this encounter but she never said anything, she was merely watching this with obvious interest and humor.
"I'm sorry," he said, with a light frown. "Do I know you?"

"Well, you know my name, although you don't remember I belong to it. I'm Gandalf! And Gandalf means…me," the old man finished, with a slightly sheepish.

"Gandalf…" the name sparked something within Bilbo's memory of fireworks bursting in the night sky and it all came rushing back. "Not Gandalf, the wandering wizard, who made such excellent fireworks! Old Took used to have them on Midsummer's Eve!" He grinned slightly, and then his mouth kept running before he could stop it. "I have no idea you were still in business."

Lily covered her hand with her mouth, shocked by her father's words while the woman started to laugh uproariously behind the wizard, making a sound finally.

Gandalf had looked pleased until that came out of the hobbit's mouth, and the wizard stared at him with an indignant expression. "And where else would I be?" He asked, arching a brow. Bilbo opened his mouth, a sheepish blush staining his cheeks and he looked down at his hairy feet which had suddenly become all the more interesting. Now he knew why both of his daughters always stared at their feet if they got caught in an embarrassing situation, it's the best way to avoid answering a question.

"Well," Gandalf huffed lightly, "I'm pleased to find you remember something about me, even if it's only my fireworks." The wizard turned back to the hobbit and smiled. "Well, that's decided. It will be very good for you…for both of you and most amusing for me. I shall inform the others."

"Inform the who?" Bilbo's eyes narrowed suspicious while he shifted on his feet, torn between staying to interrogate the wizard or going inside with his daughter, who was now staring at Gandalf with a puzzled expression on her face. "What? No. No." He gestured at the wizard wildly with his pipe. "No! We do not want any adventures here, thank you. Not today, not…” He made his way to his door, grabbing Lily's hand and dragging her up the stairs behind him. "I suggest you try over the Hill or across the Water. Good morning."

He hurried inside and shut the door behind him, pushing Lily inside before him. He let out a shaky breath and leaned against his door, while wiping his sweating brow. Lily was staring at her father with a concerned expression on her face. That's when both father and daughter heard a curious noise, and Bilbo turned to press his ear against the door, Lily walked over to stand before her father, listening attentively as well. Bilbo went to look out the side window, only to find Gandalf's eyes appear in front of him. He gave a cry of fright and jumped to hide behind a wall. He stayed there a few minutes, before he dared glance out another window.

This time he saw the wizard hurrying away, and relief poured through him. He slumped releasing a sigh, Bilbo leaned on his desk and his fingers brushing along the spine of a book that funny enough was about adventures. Now that he thought about it, most of his books were of adventures. He looked down at the book, a whimsical smile playing on his lips before he forced it away with a rough shake of his head.

"Adventures," he spat, marching through his house. "I have no need of adventures."

"Are you alright, Papa?" Lily's soft voice broken through his reverie and looked back at her.

"I'm well, Lily." Bilbo told his daughter, cupping her cheek. "Let's head into town and get supper."

Meanwhile outside the smial, as Bilbo and Lily was safe inside the smial, Rowena looked at Gandalf with a mischievous half-grin on her lips. "That could have gone better."
Gandalf sighed as he looked back at the closed door. "I had hoped that there's some Took in him."

Rowena patted his back as she smiled up at him. "Yeah, there's still a Took lifted in him, I can tell." She glanced at the door before looking back at Gandalf. "If you want, I can stay here and talk to him."

Gandalf hummed in agreement as he nodded his head. "Yes, I believe that would be for the best but before I leave...."

Rowena watched with a frown on her lovely face as Gandalf turned back to the door and started to put a mark on the door, she was cringing as the small scratching sound against the wood soon reached her ears.

Rowena had waited patiently for Bilbo and his adopted daughter, Lily, (she had pressed her ear against the door in order to listen in) to come to the market, she was sitting on a barrel, watching the path that leads from his house into the market. She quickly spotted Lobelia Sackville-Baggins walking into the market with her lackeys behind her (she meant friends but Rowena had always felt that Lobelia and her lackeys always targeted her even though she was a little girl).

Rowena stared at Lobelia, who was still gossiping with her friends. *She still looks like she's sucking on a lemon. I'm surprised she even got married with that face.*

Rowena quickly spotted Bilbo in front of the hobbit who was selling fish and hurried over to him on quiet feet, grinning mischievously at the prank she was going to pull on her father.

Bilbo and Lily leaves Bag End, the young fauntling waited for him in front of the gate while he locked the door behind him, well after Gandalf and the human woman had gone, but he's still pretty much wary that he’ll run into the wizard as he and Lily began their journey to marketplace. He walks down the hill, with Lily walking behind him, and into the Hobbiton marketplace. When Bilbo and his daughter entered the marketplace, it was filled with Hobbits talking and laughing amongst themselves, even drinking, selling their wares to customers, and young fauntlings running through the marketplace, laughing and playing as they go.

Lily had walked away from Bilbo when they entered the marketplace, heading towards the stand that sold books.

Bilbo stops in front of a stall that was selling fishes and picked two fishes, he waits as the Fish Seller wraps up the fishes, looking around him as he does so, just to make sure that blasted wizard wasn't around still. But because he was so focus on looking out for the wizard, he failed to see the human woman who was with Gandalf walking up behind him until she swooped him up in her arms and spun him around, getting a yelp from the startled hobbit.

"You were always so easily to scare, Papa." said a very amused, and familiar, lilting, soft and slightly husky feminine voice into his ear.

Bilbo looked behind him to see the human woman from before holding him up in her arms, smiling at him as she stared back at him. He stared into her laughing vibrantly pale green eyes.

*Wait, the only person I know with that shade of eyes is....* Bilbo thought before the flash of recognition filled his eyes and face and he gasped. "Rowena!"

Rowena Baggins, his missing adopted daughter, smiled fully as she winked at him. "Hey, Papa, long time no see, huh?"

Bilbo finally found his voice and brought her in for a big hug. "Rowny! I was so worried that you were kidnapped or killed! What happened?!"
Rowena returned her adopted father's hug, burying her face into his neck. "I'm sorry, Papa. I'll tell you when we go back home, okay?"

Bilbo nodded his head as he pulled back from his adopted daughter and his gaze moved across her face, taking in this older version of his daughter to his mind. Then he smiled as he looked into her eyes. "You've grown into such a beautiful young woman and I never got to see it."

Rowena smiled softly at him. "Sorry, I really wanted to come back and let you know I was okay but I didn't think I would be safe."

Bilbo's attention was brought back to the hobbit before him, and noticed that he had wrapped up a third and he paid for all three fishes for dinner later that evening. He smiled at the thoughtfulness of the seller and took the fishes and placed them in his basket. He turned back to his daughter and offered his arm to her, which she accepted, and the pair walked away.

Bilbo asked as they weaved their way through the crowds. "Aren't you going to tell me what took you away from me all those years ago and where you had gone?"

Rowena said when she spotted Lobelia and her lackeys talking to Hamfast Gamgee now. "I'll feel more comfortable telling you when we're home and not when Lobelia is around. That gossiping banshee."

Bilbo patted her hand in comfort before he spotted Lily. "Lily! Come here, lad! I have someone I want you to me!"

The young hobbit maiden waved good-bye to the book seller and hurried over to her father, smiling until as she noticed the human woman who was with Gandalf standing next to her father now and she gave her a curious look when she stopped by her father, staring up at her.

Bilbo stepped away from her, taking his arm back and placing his hand on top of Lily's shoulder. "Lily, this is your sister and my daughter."

Lily smiled as she realized who she was. "She's Rowena, the human child you had adopted all those years ago, right Papa?"

"Yes, she is." Bilbo smiled down at his daughter, confirming his guess as the correct one.

Rowena smiled at Lily as she addressed her father. "I guess something happened to her parents and you adopted her, just like me, huh?"

Bilbo nodded his head as he stroked the maiden's hair. "And you'll be right in that assumption, Rowny."

A Hobbit stopped Bilbo as he was leaving the marketplace with Lily and Rowena walking alongside him, and shows off a wheelbarrow full of very large tubers to him.

Bilbo responds, "Very impressive, Mister Worrywort. Now I don't suppose you've seen a wizard lurking around these parts?"

"Tall fellow? Long grey beard? Pointy hat?" Bilbo sees what appears to be a familiar looking hat moving behind a tent, panics, and starts to run away, leaving amused Rowena and a confused Lily behind with him. "Can't say I have", Mister Worrywort responds and then he noticed that Bilbo was nowhere in sight, leaving him to stare at a human woman with a hobbit lass.

Bilbo gave a relieved sigh when the hat turns out to just be a basket of fabric. Rowena inclines her head towards a very confused Mister Worrywort and walked towards her father, with
Lily following close behind her.

Rowena stopped in front of her father, smiling down at him. "That's the first time I saw someone get scared and run away at the very sight of a basket of fabric, Papa."

Bilbo glared up at his daughter, not amused at being teased as Lily giggled. The human woman just shrugged her shoulders, taking her father's glare in good humor.

Bilbo sighed and said. "Come, let's us go home where you can tell me all about your adventure, Rowny."

Rowena said, smiling down at him. "I never thought I get to hear the word 'adventure' coming from your mouth, Papa."

Bilbo held out his arm to her and Lily held out her hand to her, Rowena took his arm and her sister's hand, and the trio took the long walk back to Bag's End.

Some time later, Bilbo was in the kitchen, making tea for himself and Rowena as she sat at the table waiting for him. She was looking around her as she waited for him to finish preparing the tea and snacks, Rowena smiled as she realized that nothing really changed, it was still the same but it seemed smaller now and that was probably because she was a grown woman and not a little girl running around inside. But still, nothing really changed.

Rowena thought as she looked towards Frodo, smiling. Well, there was a change, be it a little one, but still a change regardless.

Bilbo said as he set a cup of tea down before her. "I think I'm ready for that explanation, young lady."

Rowena laughed as she took the cup into her hands. "Can I fake forgetfulness and we never speak of it again?"

Bilbo gave her a stern glare. "No, but nice try."

Rowena snapped her fingers in a playful oh-darn gesture. "Man, I thought that was going to work." Than she became serious and sighed as she tapped her nail on the dinner table. "Well, I was attacked by Orcs when I was out picking blueberries for dessert. I remember running from them, and them getting me with their swords and hands. Then I remembered nothing, only darkness." She paused to take a sip of her tea before continuing once again. "When I finally regained consciousness, there was an Elf-man standing above me, and Gandalf was there as well."

Bilbo snapped his eyes to her. "You mean he saved you?"

Rowena nodded her head as she smiled. "Yeah, he did. Gandalf told me that he had came upon the Orcs carrying my unconscious form through the forest and he attacked them, saving me in the progress." She rubbed her forehead as she went back to her tale. "Elrond thought it would be for the best of myself and Shire that I don't go back, so I stayed there, his people taught me many things, like how to defend myself by using a sword and archery."

Bilbo glanced over at her bow and quiver, grimacing in distaste at the sight of them. "Yes, so I noticed."

Rowena glanced at her Archery gear as well and looked back at Bilbo. "It was the only way for me to protect myself, Papa. I didn't really have much of a choice, I was a child when I met both Gandalf and Elrond."

Bilbo sighed as he reached over and patted her hand. "Yes, I know. Please continue your tale."
Rowena smiled at him and she continued. "I spent my entire childhood there, studying under the Elves of Rivendell, until I turned thirteen, where I lifted with Gandalf."

Bilbo frowned at her, asking. "Gandalf stayed in Rivendell with you?"

Rowena nodded her head, smiling still. "Yeah, Gandalf thought of me as his granddaughter and had expressed his wishes to bring me along with him on his travels to Elrond, who at first didn't want me to go but Galadriel, she was also my teacher but of the healing type, thought it was time for me to go and find adventure, danger and love." She rested her hand on her chin as a dreamy smile appeared on her lips. "And I did."

Bilbo arched a brow at that. "Which one? Adventure? Danger? Love?"

Rowena blushed as she realized what she had done. "Eh? Well, only the first two of course." She flinched slightly at the Look on Bilbo's face and sighed, before reluctantly telling him. "I met a Blacksmith Dwarf on one of my travels. Gandalf wasn't with me as he had something to do without me. So I was staying at a town, waiting for me to return to me and it was there where I meet this Blacksmith." The dreamy smile appeared back on her face and Rowena didn't stop it. "He was smart, proud, brave, intelligent, vengeful and a bit stubborn, and he was extremely noble and highly respectable with a flair of vanity about him, but he was so serious and stern, in both appearance and personality."

"He doesn't sound someone you would fall in love with, Rowny." Bilbo said, causing Rowena to laugh at that.

Oh, aye." Rowena said, agreeing with Bilbo. "He was much too serious and stern for the likes of me, someone who was too carefree and cheerful. But somehow, I fell in love with him, but I didn't know how he felt about me. He thought that my personality was so much like the sun, warm and genuine and that was what he liked about me. He liked the fact that I was honest in both my feelings and thoughts, it was a welcoming sight to behold, and how real I was when it came to expressing my thoughts and emotions, I never once did try to hide what I was feeling and thinking."

Bilbo nodded his head in agreement. "Oh, I know that very much, as does every Hobbit living here."

Rowena laughed as Frodo walked towards her and she picked up the little boy and set him down on her lap. "And you love me just the same."

"Yes, I wouldn't change you for anything in the world, Rowny." Bilbo smiled at her. "Now, tell me what ever became of this romance between the two of you."

Rowena sighed, and Bilbo noticed the changed demeanor in her. "Gandalf came back before I even got the chance to tell him how I truly felt but he did give me something."

"What was it, Cousin Rowny?" Frodo asked, looking up at her.

Rowena stroked his hair as she reached under her ponytail, and pulled out a thin braid of the tail. She held it in front of her and both hobbits noticed that beautiful mithril bead with pale green gems on the surface attached to the end of the thin braid, it was keeping the braid together. "He gave me this, to remember him by."

Bilbo reached over and took the braid from her hand to examine the bead closely. "Do you think it was his way of telling you that he loved you as well, Rowny?"
Rowena shrugged. "I don't know, Papa. Remember, I never told him how I felt towards him."

"Yes, but your actions speaks louder than your words ever could, Rowny." Bilbo told. "He probably knew before you were even aware of your feelings or even told him."

Rowena smiled as she whispered. "I hope so."

Bilbo stood and ruffled both his nephew's and daughter's hair. "Well, it's time for me to start supper. Why don't you two spend time together in order to get to know each other."

Rowena looked down at Frodo, who looked up at her and both smiled as they said. "Okay!"

Bilbo laughed as he watched Frodo dragged Rowena out the door in order to play with her, the young woman turned around and waved at him as the door swung close behind them.

Bilbo thought as he went into the kitchen in order to preparing dinner. *Now my life is fully whole, now that I have both Rowny and Frodo in my life.*
Chapter Three: The Trouble with Dwarves and Wizards P.1

Chapter Summary

Céline Dion - My Heart Will Go On

Near, far, wherever you are
I believe that the heart does go on
Once more you open the door
Chapter Three: The Trouble with Dwarves

Rowena had changed out of her mercenary clothing after noticing many odd looks directed towards her from the hobbits passing the smial as she and Frodo played outside. She didn't want to ruin her father's reputation that he worked so hard to get and keep, so she had gone back inside to change out of it and put on something that would scare the good people here living here.

So now, she was wearing a burgundy dress with a slim fit bodice of the tunic that emphasizes her breast and waist while a wide skirt with 4 additional gussets drapes with soft pleats. The skirt is hemmed with the trim as well as sleeves and neckline. Also the trim is used to decorate the lacing fastening at the fore part of a gown. Underneath the dress, she wore a white linen semi fitted chemise, that is made of thin unbleached natural linen. The chemise emphasizes her breast and
waist while softly draping hips. Long and wide sleeves can be adjusted to any length up to her biceps with the help of drawstring casing.

Rowena thought as she and Frodo played as the day turned into dusk. 'I feel like I was supposed to do something but I can't remember for the life of me what it was.'

Bilbo noticed the changing color of the sky, and he opened the door, stepping out, calling to them. "Supper will be ready soon!"

'Oh, well. I'll remember it when I remember it. ' Rowena thought as she laughed as she stopped spinning Frodo around in her arms. "Alright! Come on, Frodo!"

Bilbo finished cooking dinner as Rowena and Frodo came charging into the house, breathless with laughter and faces filled with bright smiles. He took their plates, and heads towards the table, before going back into the kitchen to get his plate.

"I want you two to wash your hands before you eat and into your nightgowns!" Bilbo called out to them and he was rewarded with an 'Okay' from the both of them.

He tucked his napkin into his collar and picked up his utensils when a knock came from the door. He paused, his brows furrowing as he looked towards where he could clearly hear Rowena and Frodo, chattering and laughing in the bathroom. They were both inside and cleaning up for dinner.

Setting his utensils carefully down, Bilbo pulled the napkin from his neck and set it down on the table before rising from his seat. He padded across the wooden floor, trying to think of who would disturb him at this hour. Probably Lobelia, she had the uncanny knack for coming around at the most inopportune times and she probably saw Rowena at the market or heard that she was here by one of his neighbors. He sighed, and opened the door ready to politely send her on her way when he froze on the spot.

That is most definitely not Lobelia.

Bilbo couldn't only stare, mouth agape. He felt absolutely befuddled. He couldn't remember another time in his life that he felt as befuddled as this, well expect for when Rowena decided to bring home a small direwolf pup and wanted to keep her. But now, he felt all thought fly out of his mind leaving him stammering like a halfwit. The person upon his doorstep…well, it was certainly not Lobelia, and first time in his life (and last), he wished it had been his cousin upon his doorstep for standing on the other side of the threshold was dwarf, who easily towered over him. He was intimidating and fierce with his tattooed scalp, draped in furs and weapons.

"Ah…" was the only thing Bilbo was capable of saying articulately. The rest just came out as squeaks or strained mumbles.

"Dwalin, at your service," the dwarf introduced himself, giving a surprisingly graceful bow.

Shell-shocked, Bilbo let out a noise like a whimper. He fumbled with his robe, tying it shut and stood taller. "Bilbo…Bilbo Baggins, at yours," he greeted with a slight bow.

Dwalin stepped halfway through the doorway, Bilbo wasn’t sure of having this barbarian dwarf in his home, with his daughter and nephew inside.

“Um… do we know each other?” he asked him.

He glared at him and answered. “No.” he went into the house while taking off his worn travel cloak, Bilbo swallowed when he saw that he had two battle axes strapped on his back.

“Which way, laddie?” He asked as he continued his walking through his house. “Is it down
“Which way, laddie?” He asked as he continued his walking through his house. “Is it down here?”

“Is what down where?”

Dwalin turned to him and simply replied “Supper.” And threw his travel cloak to him to hang up, he walked passed him to find the kitchen himself.

“He said there’ll be food and lots of it.” He continued.

“He-he said? …who said?” Bilbo asked him, confused about what is strange dwarf was talking about, he noticed that he’s heading straight for the kitchen when he realized that his dinner and he rush after the dwarf to stop him.

Rowena raised her head and turned to look out the bathroom as she heard two voices coming from the front of the house, and she frowned. She clearly could hear Bilbo's voice but she didn't recognized the other voice.

Frodo looked out the bathroom as well before he looked up at Rowena. "Who's here, Cousin Rowny?"

Rowena lifted him off the stool and walked out of the bathroom with him following close behind her. "I don't know, let's go see."

Bilbo could hear two echo of footsteps walking through the hallway and turned just as Rowena and Frodo appeared through the doorway; both clean, dry and in nightclothes.

Rowena looked at her father and asked. "Is something wrong, Papa?"

The little hobbit lad noticed the dwarf sitting at the table, and his eyes widened with astonishment. “Whoa!” He exclaimed, having only read about dwarves in the books. This dwarf was the first one he had ever actually seen.

His loud exclamation caused Rowena to be also aware of the dwarf's presence and him of them, which caused Bilbo to drop his face into his palm, as he had hoped that Rowena would have kept his nephew quiet and taken him back out but it was clear that his daughter wasn't aware of the dwarf's presence until his nephew had said something.

Rowena was embarrassed of having not noticed the dwarf's presence until Frodo's exclamation alerted her of him. "If Elladan and Elrohir hear that I let a dwarf catch me unaware, I would never hear the end of it.'

The dwarf stood up and looked the small boy and tall young woman standing before the table looking at him with wide eyes as if he was a giant, well the boy at least, the girl had a very bewildered expression on her lovely face.

He grinned at the little halfling with amusement. “Well hello there laddie.” Dwalin chuckled. “Who might ye be?"

Frodo stared, flushed slightly. “I'm Frodo Baggins Pleased to meet you, um… Master Dwarf?” He held out his hand to the dwarf for a handshake.

Dwalin took the tiny hand in a firm grip, being careful not to crush the boy’s hand and shake it. “Dwalin at your service, Master Baggins.”

Dwalin looked up at the human woman before him. "And ye?"

"Rowena Baggins." the human woman said, gesturing towards Bilbo. "He's my adopted father."
Frodo began to ask him questions about a dwarf’s life and Dwalin grinned at him taking a liking the boy. Which gave Bilbo a chance to grab Rowena and pulled her out of the kitchen.

Rowena followed nervously, waiting for the inevitable explosion to happen. Finally, when they reached their destination, the hobbit's head slowly turned in her direction, and she gave him a shrug with a tentative smile.

"Rowena!" Bilbo sputtered, and looked near pulling his hair out of his head before he finally gathered his wits. "Do you know why a dwarf came into my house?!" Bilbo struggled to keep his voice barely more than a whispered.

"Because you invited him inside?" Rowena tried to appear nonchalant, when Bilbo had sent her a surprisingly vicious look, it had her holding up her hands in surrender. "Okay, I have no idea why a dwarf would be here...." Then Rowena remembered why she was here and who exactly sent those dwarves here. 'Of course! Gandalf said something about going on a adventure with dwarves.....so that was that mark on the door for....oops!'

Rowena noticed that she wasn't the only one who put two and two together as she watched anger drained out of the hobbit's face. 'Oh, yeah. I'm in trouble now.'

Bilbo pressed his hands to his face as the cold realization settled upon him. "Gandalf," Bilbo groaned, running his hands down his face. "That rotten wizard...why are the two of you up to?"

The hobbit sent her a glare.

"Hey! I'm actually innocent here!" Rowena placed her hands on her hips. "For the most part..." A guilty flush crawled across her face. "But to be completely honest, I forgot about it."

Bilbo frowned at her. "Forgot what?"

Rowena smiled sheepishly at him. "I was supposed to talk you into going with us on this adventure but I got distracted playing with Frodo."

"Well, I should be grateful how easily distracted you are." Bilbo said, with a heavy sigh, ignoring Rowena's 'hey!'. "I suppose I have little choice now that he is here, after all. I should be a gracious host to him. After all, father would roll in his grave if I were anything less."

Rowena's smile turned full mischievous and she reached out and patted his shoulder false sympathetically. "Oh, you poor, poor hobbit. Not only him," she said.

"Not only him?" Bilbo looked puzzled. "What does that mean?"

"Gandalf said 'dwarves', not 'dwarf'," she said, with her mischief smile still on her face.

"Dwarves?" Bilbo repeated, and he cocked his head staring at her as if he hadn't heard quite right. His hands on his hips and he inquired as if he didn't understand the word at all, "As in more than one? As in more...dwarves...coming here?"

Rowena nodded, biting her lip in an attempt to keep from laughing.

"No! No!" Bilbo brushed past her, looking around wildly searching for something that would somehow help him out this. Or something to at least bar the door. Unfortunately, he could find nothing. "We'll...we'll just pretend we aren't here. Just like I do when Lobelia shows up."

"Huh? that was my idea. No fair taking my idea." Rowena said laughing. "I remember distinctly that I got into so much trouble when I did that."
Bilbo shot her a glare. "That was because you were little when you decided to do that, Rowny."

"But it was a good idea if you started doing it." Rowena smiled as she followed Bilbo back into the kitchen, causing her father to chuckle. "Anyway back to Gandalf and his dwarves, I may know a little, but not a lot. Gandalf doesn't exactly share his mad schemes with me before he drags me head first into them." Rowena paused for a great effort before she added. "Which seems to happen constantly now that I think about it. It seems to be on a need-to-know basic."

Bilbo and Rowena entered the kitchen to see Frodo still talking to Dwalin, asking him questions and such. She felt a smile forming on her face as she noted that Frodo remained her of herself when she was that age. Showing absolutely no fear, only curiosity of everything around her.

“This is good. Anymore?” Dwalin asked, his mouth full. Bilbo thought this dwarf has no manners and nearly missed what he inquires.

“What? Oh yes, yes let’s see.” He found the freshly baked scones that he made early in the day on the window and sneakily took some for himself, Frodo and Rowena, before he placed the plate down in front of his ‘guest’ and he used that term loosely. “Here we are, I made them this afternoon, help yourself.” He said kindly.

As soon as the plate hit the table, Dwalin began to wolf down the scones.

Bilbo thought it might be best to explain to the dwarf that there’s been a little misunderstanding. He noticed, as he stood by the dwarf, that amused expression on Rowena's face as she watched everything from the safety of the doorway.

“Um… Sir, there seem to be a little mix-up.” Bilbo tried to explain without upsetting him. “You see the thing is um… it’s just that we weren’t exactly expecting company.” Before he could explain any further however, the doorbell rang again Bilbo looked up startled and Dwalin gazed up at him.

“That’ll be the door.” He said matter-of-factly.

Bilbo just looked at him, and wondered did all dwarves state the obvious before he went to the door. “Um… would you excuse me for a moment?” He excused himself, “Frodo stay with Mr. Dwalin please while I’ll go see who’s at the door.”

“Yes Uncle Bilbo.” Frodo obeyed and went on asking Dwalin question about the dwarves.

Bilbo just looked at him, and wondered did all dwarves state the obvious before he went to the door with a clearly amused Rowena tagging along behind him. It was clear that she was finding the entire situation amusing as she watched everything going on around her.

Bilbo sighed before he pulled the door and was baffled at what he saw. Another dwarf standing outside; the dwarf was an old, white-haired dwarf whose beard was styled to be split at the end. He had a genially expression that put Bilbo at little bit at ease.

“Balin.” He introduced himself. “At your service.” He added and he bowed to him.

“Good Evening.” He greeted in puzzlement.

“Yes, yes it is.” He said as he looked up at the starlit night sky. “Though I think it may rain later.” He continued as he went through the doorway. “Am I late?” Balin asked.

“Late for what, exactly?” Bilbo questioned him becoming even more puzzled. But Balin didn’t answer him; his attention was drawn by the small noise in the living room and saw to his amusement, Dwalin with help from Frodo, who was next to him eating a biscuit, tried to get the
rest of biscuits from a glass jar from the mantle of the fireplace.

“Oh ha ha, evening brother.” Balin greeted Dwalin. Dwalin looked up with his hand in the opened jar to see his older brother coming forward from the hall way leaving the hobbit lad and human woman by the open door. He handed the biscuit jar to Frodo and went to welcome his brother.

Bilbo raised an eyebrow, and looked at Rowena who was now leaning against the wall with her arms crossed under her breasts. He mouthed, 'Brothers?' and gestured between the two dwarves. Rowena cocked her head, looking between the two and she just shrugged.

“Oh, by my beard!” Dwalin chuckled. “You’re shorter and wider than last we met.”

“Wider, not shorter.” Balin claimed as Bilbo looked out of the door to see if there are any more uninvited guests. “Sharp enough for both of us.” he teased and gave a wink. They both laughed and grabbed each other’s shoulders as if they about to give a bear hug, Bilbo came over to them quietly and Frodo looked at them with awe.

And then ‘CRACK!’

Both the dwarves head butted each other very hard with a loud thud that made Frodo and Bilbo jump, and Rowena wince. But both the dwarves laughed and don’t seem to be harmed of what they did.

“Wow!” Frodo exclaim. Dwalin gave young lad’s hair a ruffle with a chuckle.

Both hobbits looked at Rowena, who answered to that unspoken question to the best of her ability. "Maybe it's a dwarf greeting. Instead of shaking hands, they knock themselves silly with their heads."

Balin then noticed Rowena after she spoke, and said, "Oh, forgive me my lack of manners, lass. Dinnae see you there. Balin, at your service," he gave her a bow with a smile.

"Rowena, at yours," she replied in kind, her tone was a bit bemused of the whole head butt thing. "Take a seat where ever you like, and help yourself."

Bilbo still couldn’t understand why these dwarves are in his house, since Rowena didn’t know either as Gandalf didn’t see fit to tell her either, and Frodo being friendly with them and decided to give them an explanation of this mistake.

“Uh, excuse me, gentlemen? Bilbo tried to explain to them. “Sorry I hate to interrupt. But I’m not entirely sure you’re in the right house.”

But they are not been listening to him and ask Frodo if there’s a pantry in the house, Frodo guided them to where it is just across from the dining room.

As Dwalin and Balin began looking through the pantry with Frodo standing by the doorway, Bilbo followed them. “It’s not that I don’t like visitors.” He continued. “I like visitors as much as the next hobbit. But I do like to know them before they come visiting.”

“The thing is… I don’t know either of you.” Bilbo carried on as Dwalin threw the blue cheese over his shoulder and across the room; Bilbo pulled Frodo out of the cheese’s way and Rowena ducked under the flying cheese, and looked after it. ”Not in the slightest. I don’t mean to be blunt.” Bilbo said firmly, “but I have to speak my mind. I’m sorry.”

The dwarves stop chattering and turned to look at him as he clear his voice thinking he made his
They paused for a moment and then, “Apology accepted.” Balin simply said.

Rowena smiled as she said, noticing his taken-aback expression. "I don't think they were listening to you, Papa."

Bilbo sighed as he rubbed his face. "I figured as much."

Once again the doorbell rang again, Bilbo looked in disbelief, and she thought there’d be no more visitors coming to her house. He went back to the door, Frodo and Rowena following her, Bilbo opened the door and saw this time not one dwarf but two of them standing outside the door and he gave a whimper.

Rowena leaned to the side as she stared down at the two young and handsome dwarves standing before Bilbo. The one on the left had a with the blond mane reminded her of a lion, his blue eyes filled with intelligence and mischief. On the left, was a brunette who had long hair that stopped just past his shoulder and yet possessed no beard which threw her off for a moment, but the young dwarf's beard was no business of hers so she let it go. He had an impish glint in his eyes, even though they strived to remain serious. Though the two appeared to look as different as the day is to night on first glance, with only the wild glint in their gazes, she did notice several similarity on further inspection. Their eyes were same shape, their lips similar and they both carried the same strong jaw. They were obliviously related. Brothers if she were to guessed.

There was something familiar about the two of them. A primal feeling of recognition that she didn't understand because she was sure she had never met these dwarves before her life.

"Fili," the blond started, solemnly.

"Kili," the brunette continued, seriously. Together they bowed, their movements completely in sync and finished with, "At your service."

Her eyebrow ticked upward in surprise, reminded faintly of a certain pair of twins in Rivendell. She held her tongue, having a feeling the comparison would not go over well with all the bad blood between dwarves and elves.

"You must be, Mister Boggins," Kili smiled.

As soon as she laid eyes on them she knew they were going to be trouble. It was written in their smiles and eyes as plain as day, which was clear due to Kili's mispronunciation of Bilbo's name, Rowena had to fight against a smile that was threatening to form across her lips.

“Oops!” Bilbo erupted with frustration. “You can’t come in. You’ve come to the wrong house!” He tried to shut the door on them, but Kili stopped it dead and push it back open to stand in the doorway.

“What?! Has it been cancelled?” Kili asked in uncertainty.

“No one told us.” Fili joined in.

Bilbo was about to respond to them, but Frodo told them without thinking and before Bilbo could stop him and Rowena was really fighting hard to keep from laughing uproariously. “No, Master Dwarf, nothing’s been cancelled.” This made Bilbo put his hands to his face in defeat and Rowena finally losing the fight, laughing outloud.

“That's a relief.” Kili said to the young hobbit gratefully as he heads into the house with Fili following his younger brother and turn to Bilbo. “Be careful with these.” Fili advised Bilbo as he
handed him an armful of his fairly sharpened weapons. “I just had them sharpened.” The weapons in his arms were heavier then he thought.

Kili was looking round the house inspecting it’s surroundings. “It’s nice, this place.” Kili complemented. “Did you do it yourself?”

Bilbo turned his head halfway to answer him as Rowena stood behind Frodo, wrapping her arms around his neck, drawing him towards her.

“What? Oh no, it’s been in the family for years.” Bilbo explained with an armful of weapons that Fili kept piling up from different places on his person, which had Rowena watching it with a amused raised brow at him. Frodo remained careful as he helped his uncle by carrying the smallest of the weapons.

Bilbo noticed a scrapping sound and turned to see Kili wiping his muddy boots carelessly on his mother’s glory-box making him gasp in horror of how this idiot could do such a thing to his mother’s box of precious things.

"Hey!” He scolded. “That’s my mother’s glory-box! Can you please not do that?”

Rowena spoke up finally, drawing Fili and Kili attention to her. "You're acting like you never had mud tracked into your house before, Papa."

Bilbo shoot her a look as Fili and Kili both looked at her up and down, a clear once-over that men do when they see something pretty before them. "Rowny, you are clearly not helping."

Rowena flashed him a smile and a wink before she looked back at the dwarves. "Oh, yes I am. I remember all the times I tracked mud into the house and got into so much trouble."

Fili then smiled charmingly that would have many woman swooning as he turned to face her completely and smiled up at her. "Please, my lady, allow me the simple pleasure of your name."

‘Oh, great. A couple of flirts.’ Rowena broke out in full-blown flirtatious smile. "Well, I suppose it would be rather rude to deprive you of your simple pleasures."

"Oh, most rude indeed," Kili grinned, broadly.


Dwalin came into the hallway a few moments later. “Fili, Kili come on, give us a hand.”

“Mr. Dwalin.” The boys greeted him and Balin as they entered the dining room with Bilbo putting the weapons down and taking the weapons from Frodo, so that the lad wouldn't get hurt by them.

“Shove this in the hallway.” Balin instructed to Dwalin, Fili and Kili as they moved the furniture. “Otherwise we’ll never get everyone.”

Bilbo was horrified by Balin unexpectedly mentions ‘everyone’ and Rowena was clearly amused by his behavior towards this than anything else.

“‘Everyone’?” Bilbo asked in alarm of having more dwarves in his peaceful home. “How many more are there?” Just after he asked this question, the doorbell rang for the fourth time and this was the last straw for Bilbo Baggins, as he looked down the hallway to the door, he had just about enough of this poppycock.

“Oh no. No, no, there nobody home!” He called out to the door in frustration, with Frodo and Rowena, who was limping now, following him at him heels as he headed to it. “Go away and
bother somebody else! There’s far too many dwarves in my dining room as it is!”

He, Rowena and Frodo almost at the front door once again. “If this is some Clot-head’s idea of a joke?!” He continued and laughed ironically as he reached the door, both Rowena and Frodo stepped back from him, never having seen him losing his temper like this before and was a little bit nervous of him.

“I can only say; it is in very poor taste!” As he opened the door, a bundle of eight dwarves tumbled over through the doorway and into a jumbled pile on the floor. Frodo and Bilbo were dumbfounded by these many dwarves that are having trouble untangling themselves. Rowena had finally lost the will of fighting back her laughter and she erupted to into deep belly rolls of laughter now.

Their eyes were now drawn to another figure behind the dwarves; a very tall figure bent down to the level of the door and they saw who it is.

“MR. GANDALF!” Frodo cried out happily of seeing the wizard again, climbed over the pile of dwarves and leaped to hug Gandalf, Gandalf laughed merrily as he caught Frodo just in time and gave the little fellow a hug in return, before his gaze rested upon his uncle who, in contrast, did not seem happy.

Rowena finally broke the silence. "Hey, Gandalf. Got lost on your way here?"

Gandalf smiled at Rowena. "You know very well, my dear Rowny, that a wizard never get lost."

Rowena smiled at him. "But a wizard certainly can take his sweet time getting back."

Bilbo said with such a disapproving tone. "Gandalf."

Rowena thought as she broke out into a wide-smile. *This is going to be so much fun!*
Chapter Four: The Trouble with Dwarves and Wizards P.2

Chapter Summary

Céline Dion - My Heart Will Go On

And you're here in my heart
And my heart will go on and on

Chapter Notes

Rowena finds much enjoyment in Bilbo's discomfort.

Chapter Four: The Trouble with Dwarves P.2

Gandalf came into the house with Frodo in his arms, the dwarves for their part, tried to straighten out themselves out from the floor they had fallen and once they managed to get themselves sorted and back to standing, Gandalf introduce them to the hobbits and human woman.

The first two dwarfs are Óin and Glóin who were brothers, the oldest: Óin who is like a fortune teller and healer of dwarves. He had grey long hair, a hawk nose, his beard is braided in the middle and split and curled at each end like a ram horns but upside down.

His younger brother Glóin in contrast had flaming red hair with small cylinder beads woven in his red beard and a bulbous nose

The next dwarves were two brothers; Bofur and Bombur and their cousin, Bifur. Bofur was a dwarf, who worked at mines, and wore a funny-looking hat with a goatee beard and a long curled mustache. His brother: Bombur was a dwarf who loved food and cooking, and it showed in the girth of his stomach with his beard braided in a loop like a hairy necklace.

Their cousin: Bifur, was a toy making dwarf who had an orc axe embedded in his forehead and only spoke Dwarvish, possibly from the accident on his head.

The last three dwarves were all brothers. The oldest of them was Dori who was silvery grey haired dwarf with multiple braids in his hair and a small braid woven in his beard.

The second brother was Nori; a light-brown haired dwarf with his beard braided in to three parts, reminiscent of a starfish.

Finally there’s Ori, who was the youngest of the brothers and was a gentle kind dwarf who skills are knitting and sketching.

“We are all at your service.” They all said together as they greeted Bilbo and went to find the others that had arrived before them, with Gandalf and Frodo in his arms following them.
Rowena glanced down at herself and gestured for Frodo. "Let's get back into our clothes, shall we?"

Bilbo looked down at himself. "Yes, I agree with you on that part."

Rowena looked back at Gandalf. "Can you keep them company until we finished changing."

"Well do," Gandalf said as the trio walked into their arms.

When Bilbo came back with Rowena and Frodo following close behind him, he couldn’t believe his eyes. All of the dwarves were busy chattering away while raiding his pantry of the food stored in there. Even Rowena had her mouth hanging open as Frodo stared wide-eyed at the chaos.

“Excuse me, that’s my chicken.” Bilbo exclaimed as Bombur walked passed by with the chicken. Then he caught Bifur with a ceramic bottle of wine in his arm. “If – if you don’t-.” He called out as he stopped him. “That’s my wine. Excuse me!” When Bifur turned to him, he started speaking Dwarvish to him as he pointed the axe in his head. But he couldn’t understand what he’s saying.

“He’s got an injury.” Óin explained it to him.

“What you mean the axe in his head?” Bilbo asked him.

“Dead?” He misheard as he held up his ear trumpet to hear him. “No, only between his ears, his legs work fine.”

He groaned in response turning back around to try and stop them, causing Rowena to laugh as she stood by Frodo.

But Rowena let out a indignant squawk when Fili, which he skillfully ignored, swooped in and picked her up bridal style, and grinned charmingly. "Allow me to escort the pretty lady back to her seat!"

Kili followed after them, laughing his ass off. Neither gave a care at her curses or threats, at least until she threatened to pull Fili’s braided mustache from his face. The reaction, however, was the exact opposite of what she wanted. Rather than putting her down, he actually THREW her up into the air, high enough that Rowena brushed the ceiling with her fingers. When she came back down, it was Kili who caught her.

The younger dwarf gave a cheeky grin that, under any other circumstance, she would have found attractive. "No beard to pull on. About the only good thing being hairless has going for it!" he tossed her in the air again and laughed when she tried to hang on to the chandelier and failed.

More and more dwarves kept going past him with more food from the pantry and into the dining room. “Put those back, put that back!” He kept telling them as they walked past him. “Put that back!” He called a bit louder. But they just kept on going without listening to him.

“Excuse me. Excuse me. It’s a tad excessive isn’t it?” He inquired after seeing Bombur went past him with an armful of three cheeses. “Have you got a cheese knife?”

“Cheese knife?” Bofur asked as he went by him. “He eats it by the block.”

“Ugh.” Bilbo exclaimed with disgust. Then he saw the other dwarves coming into the dining room with some of the antique chairs that belonged to his family for years. Then he noticed a laughing Rowena being tossed up and down by Kili.

He glowered at the young dwarf. "Kili, I swear to everything you hold near and dear, if you don’t release her RIGHT NOW-"
Oh he released her alright. Back into his brother's clutches! Rowena shrieked when Kili chucked her once more and Fili did a fancy little spin when he grabbed her from the air.

Dwalin suddenly appeared behind both boys and grabbed Rowena from Fili and grabbed their shoulders, dragging them away from her. "Stop flirting and help us!"

Rowena looked at both brothers and asked. "Were we flirting? I think I would remember if we were flirting."

Fili looked over at Dwalin as Kili nodded in agreement. "Yeah, I don't think we were flirting either, Dwalin. We were having a bit of fun with the lass."

Dwalin just rolled his eyes instead of answering, causing Rowena, Fili and Kili to laugh.

Meanwhile in the dining room Gandalf was helping the dwarves arrange the plates on the dinner table with some help from Frodo who showed them where the plates, tankards and serving dishes are kept.

“Excuse me Mr. Gandalf?” Dori asked politely carrying a pot of tea on a tray with two mugs.

“Yes?” Gandalf inquired as he turned to Dori.

“May I tempt you with a cup of chamomile?” Dori offered as he poured the tea.

“Oh, no thank you, Dori.” Gandalf declined politely. “A little red wine for me, I think.”

Dori went off to find some, while Gandalf entered the hallway, nearly knocking into the dwarves and knocking his head on the candle chandelier on the ceiling. A chuckle escaped Rowena when she saw that he had hit his head on the chandelier while trying to avoid the scurrying dwarves. He shot her a glance, and she shot him an innocent look. He shook his head, and he turned around. He started to counting the dwarves on his fingers.

“Ah, Fíli, Kíli.” He found them going past him carrying a barrel of ale into the kitchen with Frodo guiding them.

“Óin, Glóin, Dwalin, Balin.” Gandalf continued to count as they got by and trying to remember the ones who are here. “Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Dori, Nori and…”

He paused for a moment trying to find the twelfth and found him with Bilbo trying to take back his prize-winning tomatoes he grew in the garden from him. “Ori!” Gandalf spotted Rowena coming towards him.

He paused, a realization dawning in his eyes, as Bifur came up to Gandalf and spoke to him in Dwarvish and patted his left arm.

Gandalf, who understood the dwarvish language, he knew exactly what Bifur was talking about. “Yes, you’re quite right, Bifur. We appear to be one dwarf short.”

“He is late that’s all.” Dwalin explained while nursing a tankard of ale. “He traveled north to a meeting of our kin. He will come.”

Once again Dori came up to Gandalf holding two glasses of red wine. “Mr. Gandalf?” Gandalf turned to him. “A little glass of red wine as requested.” He presented the small cork-size glass goblet to Gandalf. “It’s got fruity bouquet.”

Gandalf gladly accepts the glass. “Oh cheers.” And drank the tiny glassful in one sip.
Rowena raised a brow at that. "I don't think he has a bigger glass."

"Yes, but it should be fine." Gandalf said.

"But it looks like you need it more now." Rowena said with a smirk on her face, but Gandalf just rolled his eyes at her comment making Rowena laugh.

Thorin rode through the dusk, staring as best he could at the green fields and flowers and cozy homes of these Hobbits. He'd learned, after losing everything and spending the years wondering Middle Earth after Smaug attacked his kingdom, to see wealth in more than just gems and metals, something that wouldn't be held in value to most but to some are highly values and treasured. To read the signs of what a place valued, and this place was rich. But it was something that his human girl, his One, would spend hours telling him how much she loved the feel of the cool breezes on her or how she valued the sound children laughing as she played with them. Thorin was grateful that his One had also helped him in seeing the value in things were not gleaming like diamonds or polished brightly like the sun. She was the most interesting girl, seeing the value of the most smallest and homely of gifts and treating it as precious as a diamond.

Anything he’d ever seen or heard about hobbits bleated on about their love of gardening and and eating and dancing and comfort. If it wasn't for the gardening part, Thorin was almost certain that he was going to meet a fellow dwarf instead of a hobbit. He even had a brief Déjà vu to his One once again, as she loved gardening, eating and a dancing and comfort. Well, he didn't know about the comfort part because he had seen her sleeping on a branch of an oak tree outside of the town where he worked as a blacksmith. Tharkûn had told tales of one of Baggins’ ancestors who fought and killed a goblin king. Thorin highly doubted the truth of that story. He shook his head and set his shoulders. A hobbit was, sadly, essential, and Tharkûn had picked out this Baggins person from of all the rest of the hobbits who lived here, however Thorin didn't know any of the hobbits well enough to be picky about it. But he didn't exactly know how he should fell about a woman, no matter if she was a mercenary to join them.

He knew how Man valued their women, treating them as objects or possessions. Thorin remembered seeing some men back at the town treating their women. Treating like slaves or breeding mares, to was sickening to watch them do so, and he never spoke to those men. He was worried that he would have fight them if he did. Humans simply do not treat their fairer sex better or hold them with any value. But yet, Tharkûn tells him that this daughter of Man is different. She hails from a now extinct race man where women fought alongside their men and have equal value to them. Yet Tharkûn did warn him that this mercenary had it more difficult due to one thing:

Her ethereal beauty.

Thorin didn't know if Tharkûn was overestimating on her beauty being that ethereal or he was being truthful but he highly doubted that a daughter of man could be even beautiful as an elf. Now, he can't say for sure that his own One had blossomed into a beauty over the years. After the journey, Thorin would take it upon himself to look over her, once he had reclaim his kingdom and become King.

Thorin rode a few moments in silence, the sounds and smells of a settled, peaceful place rising around him. At first it started out feeling like a wash of contentment but then it changed into a glowing, burning ache in his breast. He stopped the pony and took a few deep breaths, but the ache persisted, much like a small bright jewel under his heart. He placed his hand over his heart and grimaced, rubbing it in order to loosen the feeling.

*It had been awhile since I've eaten*, Thorin thought, as he began to ride again, resume his journey.
to Hobbiton, perhaps that. Perhaps it was just hunger. Yet it wasn’t, it had became quite obvious as he got closer to Hobbiton, the more the ache pulled him forward, and Thorin, with a hiccupsing gasp, realized what it was. The Longing. Thorin remembered feeling it with his One, when he had first met her and he was thrilled at the thought of finding her, despite the fact that she was a human girl.

There was a nagging feeling, a hope, that she was in that direction but then he remembered that the mercenary was there, waiting for him to make his arrival in Bag’s End. So he didn’t understand why he was feeling the Longing towards a mercenary. Dwarves can only have one Soulmate and no one else, so could it mean that the feeling he had felt toward the young human girl could have only a passing fancy and nothing else? Thorin felt guilt and heartbroken at the very thought of it. He had given her one of his beads as to remember him by, Thorin gave her as a wish to court her when she was old enough and marry her, silently vowing to make her his Queen.

Thorin stopped again, staring at the sign that pointed towards Bag End, the dwellings of Baggins, trying to master this new, intrusive feeling. Back then, when he had met Rowena, his One, he was thrilled to know that his One hadn’t die in dragon fire but instead was too young for him to feel the Longing and also a human instead of being a dwarf. But now, he had no time for a spouse, especially not on this quest to reclaim Erebor. Distraction, danger - it was bad enough putting his sister-sons in harm’s way, even knowing they will follow him if he had refused them from joining the company - but to have his One by his side, knowing the dangers that they faced? He had watched too many of his family and his friends to pass from this world, die or slip away in their minds right before him. Why, why did this have to come now?

He could see the lights around a merry green door, the glowing wizard’s rune upon it, from far down the lane. The closer he rode to that small, merry home, the more pressing the ache in his breast became. His One was in there, in that house, he was certain now. He turned the pony around and galloped away.

Giving the pony it’s head for a time, he just ran, ran from everything this meant, ran from something he’d desired so much in his youth, so much that he devoted time to learning more than just the usual rights and duties of marriage, but poured over books teaching how to strengthen the bonds of love through playful, passionate joining. He had made himself as ready to be a husband as he had a warrior, and had locked that all away after the dragon came to Erebor, after his adad disappeared at Moria. There was no time, and too many people to care for, to lead. He had no time then, he had no time now. No time. The only time that side of him came out was for Rowena, she had him reopening that side of him when he had met her, and he was slowly opening back up, only for her. But when she had lifted and Thorin started to hear rumors his father, Thráin, being alive, he had return to his old self. It was almost like not only did she take his bead but she also took his heart and that side of him with her.

The Longing pulled at him though despite being miles away from her now, and his thoughts turned to thinking of what a comfort it might be, a joy to have someone he could just be himself with, not a king. Not the one carrying the burden of a people, of a mountain and a dragon on his shoulders, just him.

Thorin thoughts went back to the human girl, who had accepted him for himself and she had found joy with being with him when it was obviously that many other boys her age wanted her to give them her undivided attention. He had often wondered what she look like now, if she was still even alive, humans have such fragile lives and bodies. Would she be beautiful? Plain? He did not know, but sometimes, during the night or when he’s lost in his own thoughts, his imagination would take wing.

He rubbed his chest, as if to soothe (or smother if he was honest with himself) the ache and turned
around his saddle so that his gaze looking behind him, knowing which way to look in the fallen night, not even needing to truly look where he was heading, because a strand of mithril ran from his heart to his One’s, an unbroken shining tether with which he could find her anywhere. Thorin hoped, with all his heart, that this mercenary was his One as a grown woman and not someone else. He really didn't want to face the truth that the feeling he had with Rowena was false because he truly loved her and believed that she was his One, and she had kept his Courting bead and not given it away, as it was the only way for him to find her.

He clucked his tongue at the pony, and turned the stead, and himself, toward his responsibilities, and his One, with hope and dread in his heart, fearing that this Mercenary will not be his One.

Back inside Bag End, All of the food that was in the pantry was now on the dining room table. All the dwarves settled in the dining room and around the grand feast, they were eating noisily, and messy which she could see by the look on Bilbo's face he wasn't enjoying one bit.

"Bombur, catch!" Bofur tossed a piece of food to Bombur.

Bombur leaned to the right and caught the door in his mouth, and everyone cheers. Rowena ducked when a food fight started and aimed a glare at Bofur, who grinned good-naturally at her, taking her glare in strides. Frodo was laughing at their antics, taking enjoyment everything that they do with childish glee.

Bilbo sent a mournful glance at his pantry which was nearly cleaned out, and heaved a sigh wiping a tired hand down his face. He sharply turned when he heard a startled noise burst out of Rowena's lips when Fili jumped on the table carrying several cups of ale, and knocking the food out of his way as he went.

"Who wants an ale?" Fili asked, and several shouts went up all around him. He started passing them out but when he stopped on his brother's hand, Kili slapped his foot in retaliation.

Rowena glanced at the cups before looking at her father. "Maybe you should drink some ale so that you can get through this night without killing someone."

Bilbo looked at her before turning to glare at Gandalf. "If I'm going to kill anyone, it's going to be Gandalf."

"Huh, you're a hobbit." Rowena said, "I don't think that murderous urge should be apart of your blood."

Bilbo grumbled as he walked away from Rowena. "Oh, trust me. I so very much want to murder that meddlesome wizard."

Meanwhile, Fili handed one to Dwalin who decided to pour it in Oin's hearing trumpet, and Oin sputtered in anger, his face turning red. Everyone else laughed, and Rowena smiled as she watched them, Frodo coming over to her to lean against her legs. On the count of three, the dwarves tried to down their ale in gulp. The ale poured all over their faces and runs down their beards, and Rowena nearly shrugged at the mess, when she caught her father looking at them now in shock and disgust, that there would be come the end of the night, having gotten use to messes done by rowdy drunks due to her barmaid days. Ori, the youngest of the group lets out the biggest burp. While the dwarves laugh loudly, Bilbo just shook his head in disgust.

Rowena sighed as she looked down at Frodo, who looked back up at her. "It's sad when this doesn't faze me or gross me out."
Frodo asked her. "Were you working as a barmaid before, Rowny?"

Rowena nodded her head as she smiled down at him. "Yeah, I was." Than she spotted Bilbo now standing away from everyone, looking clearly upset. "Hey, Frodo, go see if you can find any leftover food so that we three can eat, okay?"

Frodo nodded his head. "Okay, Cousin." He hurried away from her, in order to search for any leftovers.

Bofur came over to Rowena and asked. "Did I just hear correctly that you were a barmaid, lass?"

Rowena looked down at him, smiling. "You did hear correctly. I work as a barmaid when I don't have any mercenary jobs."

"So this doesn't shock you, huh?" Bofur asked.

"Nope." Rowena said, shaking her head. "I've dealt with dwarves before."

Rowena had her arms crossed over her breasts as she watched the Dwarves, Bofur had lifted her side to rejoin his comrades, having a merry good time when she suddenly felt a glowing, burning ache in her breast, causing her to frown and started to rub at the spot, as if it would help ease the pain but it didn't.

Balin walked over to her and asked, concern clearly shown in his voice and expression. "Are you alright, lass?"

No, she wasn't alright. She hadn't had this type of ache since her dwarf blacksmith but she simply didn't put in much thought over the ache and she also didn't want Balin to worry over her.

Rowena gave him a bright smile. "Yeah, I'm fine. Go have a good time, Mister Balin."

Bilbo watched worriedly as Balin talked to Rowena, who was responding to his questions with an easy smile to her lips and a bright gleam in her eyes. He even started to look around for Frodo when he realized that his nephew was no longer with Rowena but gave a sigh of relief when he saw the boy talking to Gandalf now before his nephew started to dart away from him. Bilbo sighed as he rubbed his forehead, thinking himself a fool because he was worried about his daughter and nephew, he was acting like Gandalf would hurt them when, deep down, Bilbo knew that was false due to the fact that Gandalf would never hurt Rowena or Frodo.

Then he suddenly felt a pull on his breeches and looked down to see Frodo smiling with the two scones in his hands that he found in his dressing gown and gave one to him. Bilbo smiled sweetly at his nephew for his thoughtfulness and took his scone and watched as Frodo went off to find Rowena, who was now standing by Gandalf.

He watched as Frodo tugged on Rowena's skirt, causing her to look down at him and took the offered scone with a bright smile on her face. Bilbo smiled, happy and thankful that both Frodo and Rowena are getting along better than he had hoped they would. Frodo stayed with Rowena, not wandering off like how Bilbo expected his nephew to do. But he figured that his nephew drew comfort and strength from his daughter, and not that Bilbo can blame him. He also sought her natural giving comfort and strength that she seemed to give off.

Dinner came to an end, and the dwarves started wandering around Bag End. It was genuine curiosity on their part, it was irritating to Bilbo and it was amusing to Gandalf, Rowena and Frodo.

"Excuse me, that is a doily, not a dishcloth!" Bilbo snatched the doily from Nori.
"But it's full of holes!" Bofur looked at it, bemused. Dwalin stood sitting with his boots on the kitchen table while they drank their tankards of ale, watched them and took a look at the cloth in the hobbit's hand, watching the situation unfolded.

Bilbo looked at him. "It's supposed to look like that," the hobbit sighed. "It's crochet."

"Oh," Bofur shrugged, "and a wonderful game it is too, if you go the balls for it."

Rowena snorted loudly, turning it to a cough when Bilbo glared at her.

“No, no. Crochet, Mr. Bofur.” Frodo spoke up to Bofur, explaining to him the difference between the two things, and too innocent to realize the vulgarity of Bofur's words. “Not croquet. Crochet is a sort of type of knitting.”

Bofur looked down at the lad before he grimaced at Dwalin. "I forgot about the wee lad being here."

"Ah, there you are lassie!" Bofur turned towards her, startling Rowena badly, she wasn't expecting him to move on silent feet. "Why you hiding in the corner for?"

"Less chance of getting stepped on," Rowena answered, with a bright smile on her lips. "You dwarves wear heavy shoes and I don't want to chance the risk of losing my toes."

"But all the more chance to miss out on all the fun!" Kili cried appearing to her right. His cheeks are red, and his eyes are glazed over. Rowena snatched the mug of ale from him despite the young dwarf's protests.

"Me thinks you've had too much to drink," Rowena told him, eyebrow arched in amusement. "No more ale for you," she wagged a finger in his direction, giving him a feigned no nonsense look but smiling.

"Boo!" Kili shouted at her for taking away his ale.

"Boo!" Fili, and Ori echoed.

Rowena rolled her eyes, saying. "Don't Boo me, you drunks. I've been wresting drink from drunks like you dwarves well before my first kiss...." She flinched suddenly and she moaned in feigned pain. "now, you've done it, you made me remember a bad memory that I didn't even want to be reminded of. So excuse me while I go be sick in the bathroom."

Gloin frowned at her. "Why are you acting like that, lass? I thought lasses gets giddy over their first kisses."

"Not if it was forcefully taken from you." Rowena commented, started to tear a cloth apart in angry.

Dwalin walk towards her, asking her. "Who was it that force himself on you, lass?"

Rowena looked at Dwalin and saw that he was concern and outrage. She looked around and saw that the other dwarves wore the same expression. "He only stole a kiss from me and nothing else. He never got a chance to continue on. His name's Marcus."

Rowena sighed as she stopped by Gandalf after Bilbo had walked off to have a mini private breakdown somewhere else, she felt and saw Frodo taking a hold of her skirt. "You do realize that once this is all over, he's going to kill you."

"He's a hobbit, my dear Rowny." Gandalf told her. "Hobbits don't kill people."
Rowena looked at him with a raised brow. "Are you sure? Because I think your death will be the first Hobbit murder."

"You're not funny, young lady." Gandalf mentioned as he walked away from her.

Rowena shouted back at him. "I wasn't trying to be funny, Gandalf!" She stayed for a while before sighing and following after him. 'I better make sure that Papa doesn't kill Gandalf.'

She followed after Gandalf, dragging Frodo along with her, and they dodged Bofur and Nori, who were wrestling over a chain of sausages, which caused Rowena to laugh at the silliness of it.

"Really? You two are fighting over sausages? How are you guys still even hungry?" Rowena asked as she patted their bellies as she made her way after Gandalf.

Bilbo, meanwhile, felt like he was about to explode by the vulgar of these dwarves.

“Be bother and confiscate these dwarves!” he raged under breath as he went to place the doily on the kitchen dresser.

Then Gandalf came into the kitchen to see Bilbo under deep stress.

“My dear Bilbo,” Gandalf asked with concern. “What on earth is the matter?”

“What’s the matter?” Bilbo asked sarcastically to Gandalf. “I’m surrounded by dwarves. What are they doing here?”

Gandalf looked at a very sheepish Rowena. "You mean Rowena didn't tell you."

Rowena was extremely quick to defend herself. "You didn't tell what the heck was going on, Gandalf. All you said to me was 'We're going on an adventure with a hobbit and dwarves', you didn't exactly explain to me what was going on and where we are going."

Gandalf arched a brow at that. "And you also forgot about talking to him about this."

Rowena shrugged. "So I forgot, you act like I always forget important details, I mean, since when did I ever forget mentioning anything important....Don't answer that." She added when she noticed the looks on Bilbo and Gandalf's face. "Let's get back to the topic at hand. What are they doing here?"

“Oh they’re quite a merry gathering.” Gandalf said with amusement after he shake his head at Rowena's antic of changing the subject and it worked. “Once you get use to them.”

"I don't want to get use to them!" The hobbit hissed, hands on his hips and his hazel eyes fierce. "The state of my kitchen! There's mud trod into the carpet, they've pi-pillaged the pantry. I'm not even going to tell you what they've done in the bathroom; they've all but destroyed the plumbing. I don't understand what they're doing in my house," Bilbo finished, looking like he was ready to pull his hair out.

Gandalf didn't look offended in the slightest, in fact, he looked pleased by Bilbo standing up for himself. Rowena wondered if that was what the wizard had been waiting for this whole time and knowing her lovable grandfatherly wizard, it wouldn't surprise her if that was his goal in the first place.

So Rowena felt sorry for her father and came to her father, leaned over and wrapped her arms around his chest. But Rowena wasn't the only feeling terrible for Bilbo. Frodo felt sorry for his poor uncle Bilbo too, of what he going through and gave him cuddle to make him feel better as
well. Bilbo returned both their hugs, drawing strength from the both of them, with Gandalf watching them with a little bit of pity.

“Excuse me, I’m sorry to interrupt.” Ori said politely as he came up to Bilbo in the hallway, drawing Rowena, Frodo, Bilbo and Gandalf's attention to him. “But what should I do with my plate?” He asked him asking his plate.

Well at least this dwarf has some manners. ’Bilbo thought, and he noted Rowena's grateful smile at the timid dwarf and he knew that she was grateful as well, even though she was laughing the entire time they were here.

Bilbo opened his mouth to answer, when Fili popped out of nowhere. "Here you go, Ori, give it to me,” Fili insisted, and took the plate.

"Where did you come from? Seriously where did you come from?” Rowena asked, gaping as she looked around to find some conceivable place the dwarf could have popped up from but found none.

Fili grinned at her before, without warning, he threw the plate at Gandalf’s way, who moved out of the way and Kíli who was behind him caught the plate in mid-air and threw it like a discus to Bifur in the kitchen and caught it and started washing the plate.

"Oh!" Gandalf ducked to avoid a plate.

Bilbo looked like someone had just killed his puppy. His mouth dropped open, and his eyes about to bulge out of his head. It only got worse when all the dwarves started to participate and tossing their plates and dishes through the air.

Rowena stood there, in awe and shock at how effortlessly the dwarves worked together with a swiftness she hadn't known dwarves could possess. If I did this, I wouldn't be able to sit down for a week.’

Rowena quickly pressed her back, grabbing Frodo in the progress to bring him along with her, against the wall to avoid a glass and knife. Bilbo was running around in an attempt to stop the chaos.

"Excuse me, that's my mother's West Farthing crockery, it's over a hundred years old!” Bilbo shouted, trying to jump up and catch the dishes, but failing. The dwarves at the table begin rhythmically drumming on the table with utensils and their fists. The hobbit whirled around on them. "And can you not do that? You'll blunt them!” The hobbit complained. Rowena released a deep, belly laugh while Frodo chewed on his lip in order to keep his in. And the young woman realized that she had been laughing the entire time she was here, it was a first for her.

"Ooh, d'hear that, lads? He says we'll blunt the knives,” Bofur laughed loudly, his strange hat tilting forward ever so slightly.

Kili got a mischievous smile on his face, and opened his mouth. Rowena had expected a joking comment, and was totally caught off surprise when he started to sing. His voice was rich, and full of laughter. ~Blunt the knives, bend the forks, Smash the bottles and burn the corks!~

Rowena continued her laughter (unknown to her, all the dwarves were actually doing everything they had been doing in order to hear her laughter again. It reminded them of warm summer days with a cool wind, it was lovely and bright). She couldn't hold it any longer as all the dwarves picked up the rhythm and started singing along. Rowena took Frodo's hands in hers and she pulled her young cousin into a fast pace dance. Frodo followed Rowena's movements, finally joining in her laughter, watching to mirror her steps as he was pulled around and around.
Fili took over, his voice deeper and more mature than his brother's. ~*Chip the glasses and crack the plates. That's what Bilbo Baggins hates!*~

As they sang this obnoxious song and as Rowena and Frodo continued their dancing, Bifur got out a tub to wash the rest of the dishes with, while the others handed over Ori a handful pile of plates, dishes, bowls and a tankard, making the pile turn into a tower of dirty dishes, while they kicked the rest of the tankards to Nori to pass to Bifur to wash up.

Frodo let out a loud startled laugh as Rowena twirled him around in her arms. The hobbit boy and the human woman continued dancing around, laughing as the dwarves around them continued singing and playing music.

Rowena was still enjoying herself. "Come on, Papa!" She urged the hobbit to join in. She couldn't remember a time where she had enjoyed herself more.

Bilbo resisted the urge to scold his daughter but he restrained from doing so, due to her obvious happiness of this, as well as Frodo's. *This is not proper. Not proper at all,* he thought stiffly and tried to catch some of his plates and silverware but the dwarves were initially throwing it out of his reach.

~*Cut the cloth and tread on the fat. Leave the bones on the bedroom mat. Pour the milk on the pantry floor. Splash the wine on every door!*~ The dwarves sang as Ori very carefully made his way to the kitchen with the towering dishes in his hands while Bilbo watched everything with his mouth wide open. More and more dishes, bowls, mugs, cups and cutlery are thrown, tossed, kicked and tumbled into the kitchen by the dwarves, Kili threw a large fork at Bifur that made Bilbo gasp in fright; luckily he caught it just in time.

~*Dump the crocks in a boiling bowl. Pound them up with a thumping pole. When you've finished, if any are whole. Send them down the hall to roll!*~ The dwarves continued, Bombur was in charge of cleaning away the scraps of food from the plates and eating them, all the rest of the dwarves carried on with throwing the bowls and plates as they sang they even got the instruments out to play music.

Balin helped too with the plate tossing with Fili catching them in the background as they went.

Gandalf watched with amusement as he smoked his pipe making shapes out of smoke as the bowls went past him. The dwarves played their music instruments with Bofur with his flute and Óin playing with the teapot as they bounced the plates and dishes. Then they kicked the last of the dishes into the kitchen. Rowena had continued her dancing with Frodo, spinning the both of them around, they were both still laughing breathlessly and having a good time, much to Bilbo's amusement and annoyance.

Then all of the dwarves head for the kitchen with Bilbo, Rowena and Frodo following behind them, Bilbo was getting furious and goes to the kitchen expecting the dishes to be damaged. ~*That's what Bilbo Baggins hates!*~

As soon as they finished the song, Bilbo pushed past them and saw to his astonishment; the plates, bowls, mugs, cups and cutlery are all safe washed and not a chip or crack in sight.

The dwarves and Gandalf laugh. Rowena stumbled, holding onto Frodo while laughing breathlessly. She gasped out between her laughs, "That was amazing!" Bilbo shot her a dry look, to which she only gave him a mischief smile while Frodo gave him a guilt smile.

That's when three loud ominous knocks on the door, that caused all the laughter to fall into a sobering silence but Bilbo, Rowena and Frodo instead looked to the door with curiosity.
"He is here."

Rowena slapped her hand to her forehead. "Duh! There was another one coming! Hello, Rowena!"

“Another one?!” Bilbo cried out. “Oh no.” he groaned and hid his face in defeat with Frodo and Ori comforting him.

Rowena laughed as she patted her father's shoulder. "it's okay, at least he's the last one." She paused before looking at Gandalf. "He is the last one, right?"

Gandalf smiled as he pinched her chin. "Yes, he is the last one."

Bilbo said from his hands. "Thank Goodness!" causing Rowena to throw her head back and laugh uproariously at his pained response.
Chapter Five: To Tell Him or Not To Tell Him? That is the Question!

Chapter Summary

Céline Dion - My Heart Will Go On

Love can touch us one time
And last for a lifetime
And never let go till we're one

Chapter Five: To Tell Him or Not To Tell Him? That is the Question!

For a moment, no one spoke or moved. It was like everything had frozen, and a wave of unease moved through the room and everyone in it. Rowena felt her muscles tightened, and coiled, her pulse jumping in her throat. "Bilbo, Rowena, Frodo, with me if you please," Gandalf gestured for them to follow him. The hobbits and the woman in question shared looks with different expressions on their face. Frodo looked excited to meet this new dwarf, Bilbo looked nervously scared and while Rowena seemed curious. It made her wonder why Gandalf would also want her to meet him when it was Bilbo who was more important for this mission and Rowena felt like a tag-along. The three shuffled behind the wizard dutifully, and Rowena felt her heart thumping in her chest as they drew closer and closer to the door.

There was the feeling in the air, like an electric spark and she had this feeling in the pit of her stomach that by opening this door both her and her father's life would irrevocably change, forever. The wizard's hand landed on the handle, and Rowena drew in a sharp breath. Gandalf pulled the door open, and Rowena was instantly caught off guard. It wasn't because he wasn't like Dwalin, nor Balin, not like Fili, not like any of the other dwarves. It was more due to the fact that she was familiar to this dwarf before her and she couldn't place where she had met him.

But this dwarf was…absolutely striking.

The Dwarf before them had sharply chiseled features and a long sharp nose and piercing sapphire blue eyes or pale blue eyes of a wolf. His hair was as black as a moonless night, like the color of a raven's wing with a few veins of silver streaking through it, which only accented his beauty, not take away from it. It was long and flowed down his back stopping a few inches below his broad shoulders and chest, while a short and trimmed beard covered his chin.

He was also quite tall, for a dwarf, and he was dressed in deep blue tunic with a belt with buckle that look like a diamond symbol and a travel coat trimmed with dark grey fur and on each hand bore silver rings. And he also wore breastplate armor, she caught the glint of it when he moved.

"Gandalf," he spoke in a deep baritone voice. A soft rumble, a warning before the rain came pouring down. "I thought you said this place would be easy to find. I lost my way, twice."

He stepped into Bag End, and his sheer presence encompassed the hallway, a sort of majestic magnetism that just flowed off of him in waves. There was something regal about the way he held himself, as if he had the weight of the worlds resting upon his shoulders. A deep strength that she only encounter a handful of times in a handful of people. He was a warrior dressed in an impressive armor, and there was something that made her feel like everything in his life was hard won. And not just battles with a sword. He took off his cloak, and handed it over to Kili with an
unconscious motion of trust.

'Hmm, why does his voice sound so familiar?'. Rowena noted, tapping her chin with a thoughtful expression. 'I could have sworn I heard that voice somewhere but where?'

He was a wall of muscle, the layers of clothing and armor could not hide it. His body had been built from years of labor and battles and Rowena did not doubt there were be a fair number of scars upon his skin. He had well-sculpted muscles on his chest and back, the curves of his biceps, and the flat plane of his stomach. And she couldn't help but wonder why he looked without a shirt on.

Rowena jolted from her thoughts and waved her hand around her head, as if she was banishing that thought. 'Whoa! Where did that thought come from? That type of thinking can get me into trouble.'

He looked at the wizard, a faint look of amusement or perhaps it was merely exasperation on his face. "Wouldn't have found it all if not been for the mark on the door," he said, turning in such a way that the life cascaded over him.

And that caught Bilbo's attention as Rowena slapped her hand to her forehead as she remembered that from this morning. 'Yeah, Papa is going to kill Gandalf now.'

"Mark? There’s no mark on that door." He claimed as he pushed past the dwarves to get to his door with Frodo, who dragged Rowena behind him, at his heels and tried to look at the door for the so-called mark. "We painted it a week ago." But Gandalf closed the door before Bilbo could take a proper look.

"There is a mark." Gandalf admitted, turning from the door to face him, as he managed to look a tad contrite and sheepish, though Rowena believed that the wizard was far from apologetic. “I put it there myself this morning.” Bilbo looked upon Gandalf with aggravation as he crossed his arms, finally realizing what caused the scratching noise on the door this morning. Frodo went next to Bilbo as Rowena stayed behind to get a better look at the new dwarf. "Bilbo Baggins, allow me to introduce the leader of our company," the wizard easily evaded the argument. "Thorin Oakenshield."

Thorin looked at Bilbo, tilting his head. His eyes was the color of the clouds of an oncoming storm, like the thunderclouds building up in the distance and he stared down his aristocratic nose at Bilbo. "So...this is the hobbit," Thorin murmured, looking Bilbo up and down clearly judging him.

Bilbo was a tad taken aback by Thorin's attitude which was in stark contrast to that of the other dwarves. Thorin was composed, indifferent and aloof where the other dwarves had been generally loud and openly polite for the most part. His hips rolled with the gait of a predator, circling Bilbo like a wolf circling his prey looking for a weak spot.

Rowena frowned as she watched the encounter between her father and the dwarf. 'Okay, now his personality and his demeanor is slowly bringing back a memory.'

"Tell me, Mr. Baggins, have you done much fighting?" Thorin questioned, his voice serious and rough.

"Pardon me?" Bilbo blinked.

Rowena dropped her hand to her face as she sighed. 'Oh, this isn't going to end well, I can tell.'

"Axe or sword?" Thorin asked, quickly. "What is your weapon of choice?"
"Weapons?" Bilbo thought with disbelief. 'who does he think I am; a warrior?' The hobbit looked over at her for a moment before answering, "Well, I have some skill at Conkers, if you must know, but I fail to see why that's relevant."

Thorin snorted, a sardonic tilt to his lips. "Thought as much," the dwarf said, his blue eyes looking down at Bilbo coolly. "He looks more like a grocer than a burglar."

'Oh, that's it!' Rowena thought as she pushed Frodo aside, gently, as she strode towards Thorin Oakenshield as her temper flared at the rudeness done to her father. 'I have to play nice with that harpy that he calls a cousin, I'll be damn if I'm going to let a complete stranger talk rude to him in front of me!'

"Hey! I don't know who you think you are, but you can't just waltz in here like you own the place!" Rowena snapped, once she came to stand by her father. Bilbo looked up at her as she placed her hand on her hip as the other one pointed her finger into his chest. "He is your damn host! So maybe you should stop acting all high and mighty, and be polite to him!" She barely noticed that he was almost to her chin, like her Blacksmith, but Rowena was too angry to even think about. "I mean who died and made you King?!"

Thorin's blue eyes narrowed as they swept over her. It was when he was this close that Rowena realized his eyes weren't either sapphire blue or wolf blue, but a mixture of both and it was very beautiful color. They were staring at one another, and to her shock, he didn't take his gaze from hers, not for one second, not like everyone else who shied away from her unnatural eyes. No, his gaze pressed in on her and she felt something shift in the air as if binding them together in some ancient ritual she did not understand.

Thorin didn't realize that she was standing here with Gandalf, the hobbit and his company, until she came over to angrily defend the hobbit, unconsciously drawing everyone attention to her as she strolled up to both Thorin and Bilbo, he noted the pale expression on the Hobbit's face as she came towards them. He completely forgot about the presence of His One inside the house until she drew his attention to her when she swiftly came to the Hobbit's aide and what a presence she has.

She had an exquisite, delicate, triangular-shaped face with a definitive jaw line and accentuated cheekbones. The eyes were disturbing, with an exotic slant. Such vibrant green eyes in that fair face, so green and clear, like colored crystal. The lips were soft and full and the nose straight and slender. A thick fringe of pale lashes framed those extraordinary eyes, while blond brows arched gently above them.

Her hair was blond, too, in loose little waves surrounding her face, giving her fair skin a glow like polished ivory. The young woman also have a tear-shaped mole under her right eye. Her said-hair was pulled back in a high ponytail and held in place by a metal clasp, and she has small yet braids on either side of her head, disappearing into the ponytail itself. Her hair was thick, lush and full, such a pale golden blond color that it seemed unreal for a human to possess. She has loose tendrils of hair surrounding her face perfectly.

She had an lithe, firm build yet didn't lack feminine curves, which is wide yet slender shoulders, and ample yet firmly and soft breasts, full hips, and thighs; slim waist, and long, shapely legs.

Thorin thought she was an Elf at first until he saw that her ears were round and not pointed like Elves and she was clearly not an hobbit, due to her height. She was very beautiful for a human and her angry only added to her great beauty.

Gandalf sighed as Rowena finally went quiet, her breasts heaving with each angry breathes she takes. "He is a King and also our employer."
That immediately cooled her temper and a sheepish expression came upon her face as she looked at Gandalf. "You mean, he’s Thorin Oakenshield, King-in-Exile and King Under the Mountain?"

Gandalf just nodded his head ‘yes’ as Bilbo rubbed his temples as he sighed and Rowena bite her bottom lip.

Rowena slapped her hand to her forehead as she moaned. "And my temper and big mouth gets me into trouble once again! Why can't I think before I speak?"

Bilbo said as he looked up at her. "Because I don't think you have that type of self-control of your temper."

Rowena looked over at Thorin and titled her head towards him. "I'm sorry about my temper. It's always getting me into trouble and I still haven't learned to properly control it yet."

Thorin seemed surprised by her apology to him, he probably didn't expect her to give him one, and inclined his head towards her, accepting her apology before looking at Gandalf when he also noticed the little hobbit lad next to the young human woman. "And who is this woman and young flaunting?"

Gandalf reached over and touched Rowena's shoulder and laid his hand on top of Frodo's head. "The woman name is Rowena Baggins and the lad is Frodo Baggins."

“Gandalf, why didn’t you told me that our burglar has a wife and son?” Thorin demanded before spotting the small Black-haired hobbit boy with bright blue eyes before to the human lass.

“Frodo Baggins is his nephew, Thorin.” Gandalf clarified to Thorin. “And Rowena is actually is adopted daughter, he found her when she was four-years old outside his home.” Gandalf explain as he looked down at Frodo who was in awe of this warrior-like dwarf. Thorin looked displeased.

It was than that Bilbo noticed how late it was from the clock on the fireplace.

“Gandalf, I’m just going to put Frodo to bed.” Bilbo informed Gandalf as he was about to join the others. “I’ll be right back.”

“But I want to stay up, Uncle Bilbo.” Frodo begged, looking up at Bilbo with pleading eyes.

“No, Frodo.” Bilbo ordered with a gentle tone. “It’s late and I’m not sure how long these dwarves will be staying, but we’ll find out in the morning. Now come along, Frodo it’s time for bed. Say goodnight to Gandalf.”

Rowena stepped forward, touching Frodo's head. "I can take him to bed, Papa."

Bilbo looked up at her, asking with a frown on his face. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah, no trouble at all." Rowena said with a smile as she held out her hand for Frodo, to led him to his room. "Come on, Frodo! Let's get you to bed!"

Rowena waited as Frodo went to Gandalf to give him a hug and kiss Bilbo on the cheek. He took her hand and Rowena led her young cousin to his bedroom.

Frodo hopped into bed and Rowena tuck in the covers around him and sat with him for a while and stroked his soft curled hair.

“I’m going to join our guests.” Rowena whispered to Frodo. “Now go to sleep. Good night, Frodo.”
“Good night, Rowny.” Frodo murmured under the covers as Rowena gently kissed his forehead and blew out the candle on the night stand by his bed, then she stepped out of the room and closing the door lightly behind her.

As soon as he heard the door clicked, Frodo leaped out of bed and headed towards his bedroom door, slowly tiptoeing out of his room and following his cousin behind her in the shadow as she heads to the dining room. He hid outside both the pantry room and dining room and started to listen to the conversation going on in the dining room.

Rowena headed back towards the dining room where everyone, her father and Gandalf are at, and everything had calmed down now and the table lit by candles and each dwarf including the wizard had a tankard of ale. She just got there when she heard them discussing something. She noticed that Thorin had a bowl of food in front of him and figured that her father had given him food when she had gone to put Frodo to bed.

As Rowena went to stand on the either side of the King-in-Exile, the opposite of Gandalf, Thorin had turned his head and looked at her.

Those blue eyes of his were unfathomable and unreadable, like a deep abyss that was filled with too much yet nothing at the same time. A chord of familiarity struck somewhere in her memory, bringing back her memory at last.

Rowena barely concealed her shock from showing on her face as she finally remembered who he was. 'Oh, my Vahal! He's my Blacksmith! I've finally been reunited with my childhood infatuation!' Than she gave a low moan as she placed her hand on her forehead and rubbed it. 'Lovely, I lost my temper to the guy I like and I didn't even remember him until our eyes were staring deeply into each others!'

Gandalf suddenly grabbed Rowena's bicep, surprising the young woman. "If I may, before we start, talk to Rowena for a moment."

Bilbo looked like he was going to deny Gandalf's request but a quick reassuring smile from Rowena, he nodded his head to approve Gandalf's request. Just as Gandalf was dragging her away, Rowena noticed that Balin and Dwalin both had a flashed of recognition in their eyes directed towards her and Thorin had a suspicious gleam in his eyes, which was probably due to Gandalf and she couldn't blame, she would suspicious of him as well if she was him. But she didn't know why Balin and Dwalin would recognize her when she did not know them.

Gandalf dragged her through the kitchen and out the back door, closing the door behind him, before he turned around and faced her. "He's your dwarf."

It wasn't a question, it was a statement and Rowena was surprised that Gandalf knew her dwarf's true identity when she did not. "You knew?"

"I wasn't so sure that your dwarf and the King-in-Exile were the one and the same person until I saw that your face when you recognized him." Gandalf stated, noticing that slowly forming hurt and angry in her eyes and expression.

Rowena sighed as she rubbed her face, turning her back on him and moving away from him. She covered her mouth with her hands. 'Does he recognize me? No, I had changed, so lost my girlish figure when I was seventeen.'

Gandalf's voice brought her back to the present and making Rowena turn around to face him. "Do you want to tell him, Rowny?"

Rowena was silent, thinking about it, before she response with a little shake of her head. "No, I
don't want him to know, Gandalf."

"But why, Rowny?"

Rowena ran her fingers through her hair in a frustrated gesture. "Because he's a King and I'm a nobody, Gandalf." She gave him a heartache expression of forlorn that broke Gandalf's heart at seeing it on her face.

"You're not a nobody, Rowena." Gandalf said, clearly disappointed in her. "You are someone and you have so much to give him."

"Like what, Gandalf?" Rowena asked, as tears glistened on her lashes as they formed in her eyes. "I have nothing else to give him. Everything I once was and had was taken away from me on my fourth birthday."

Gandalf stepped forward, saying. "Rowena, you are...

But his words were halted when Rowena placed her fingers on his mouth, shushing him. "I don't have a title, Gandalf. So please, don't make me remember, please."

Gandalf's heart broke all over again when he heard that tremble in her voice and saw her bottom lip tremble as she fought against the tears that threatened to spill. "Very well." Gandalf said, swallowing his words. "I will keep it a secret. But what are you going to do when he recognize you and demands why you didn't tell him?"

"Then I'll tell him everything, Gandalf." Rowena said. She quickly raised her hand, halting his next words. "It's my decision, Gandalf. It's my curse, my life and my destiny. He has the right to know...if he even shares the same feelings as me."

Gandalf nodded his head after a long pause and turned around to open the door before her, allowing Rowena to enter before him and the pair made their way back to the dining room, with the young woman wiping the unshed tears away from her eyes.

The other dwarves had settled back in their seats, their jovial and joyous assertiveness had become a silent somberness that weighed heavily in the dining room. Bilbo immediately grew worried and concern when he saw his daughter wiping her eyes, her sleeves wet with tears. He hurried over to her as Gandalf retook his place.

Gandalf noticed that Thorin was secretly watching Rowena as Bilbo took out his handkerchief and wiping away her eyes, cleaning away the tears. It was obvious that the dwarf King was concern about what had caused the young woman to cry even though he was trying hard not to show it.

But Gandalf wasn't the only one who noticed, Dwalin and Balin did as well and both brothers shared a secret smile. After Thorin ate a few bites, downing them a drink of ale did Balin break the tense silence.

"What news from the meeting in Ered Luin?" Balin asked, his voice quiet and his eyes uncertain. "Did they all come?"

"Aye. Envoys from all seven kingdoms," Thorin confirmed. While the other dwarves murmured in joy, Rowena was quick to notice a line of tension that ran along Thorin's shoulders. Apparently the news he carried was not good news at all.

"What do the dwarves of the Iron Hills say? Is Dain with us?" Dwalin asked, his face carefully blank.
"They will not come," Thorin stated. The mood in the room dropped, and the heavy weight of the atmosphere pressed down upon with her an almost crushing weight now. Rowena swallowed thickly, drawing in a long breath but it did not satisfy her lungs. He continued, his voice even and his face giving away nothing, "They say this quest is ours, and ours alone."

Rowena murmured under her breath. "Asses." Then she noticed that everyone was looking at her and she gave a sheepish grin. "Sorry, did I say that out loud? I'm just going to... yeah, I'm going to keep my mouth shut."

Kili smiled at her, teasingly. "Is that even possible for you?"

Rowena stuck her tongue out at him. "Bite me."

"Rowena!" Bilbo scolded, causing Rowena to flinch at her father's disapproving tone.

"Sorry, I meant please shut your trap before I shut it for you." Rowena said, sweetly, causing Bilbo to disapproving glare at her and Kili and Fili to laugh at her. "What? I said it nicely."

Bofur gave her a teasing smile. "Do you even know the meaning of that word, lass?"

"Yeah... it means... er..." Rowena said, confident at first than she looked at Gandalf with a wide-eyed puzzlement expression on her face. "What does the word 'nice' mean?"

This caused Bofur, Nori, Fili and Kili to laugh uproariously as the other dwarves either shook their heads or laugh, or the mixture of the two. Gandalf smiled as Bilbo shook his head at her.

"It's depressing when you don't know the meaning of that word now. " Bilbo said. "You were so nice when you were a little girl.

Gandalf and Rowena looked at Bilbo with clear disbelief on his faces and pointed at her. "Nice? Rowena? I never thought I've live to hear the day that 'nice' and 'Rowena' were used in the same sentence." Gandalf said.

Rowena snapped, clearly offended. "Hey! I can be nice..." She flinched when she noticed the disbelief in Gandalf's eyes, trailing off. "...Most of the time..."

"You're going a quest?" Bilbo paused, his eyes lit up with interest despite himself, after he had directed a warning look to Rowena, who merely shrugged good-naturally at it.

"Rowena, my dear, let us have a little more light." Gandalf requested.

Rowena immediately went to the pantry to find a candle and a tinderbox to light it, jokingly complaining the entire way. "Rowena, do this. Rowena, do that! Rowena, Rowena! What am I? A servant?" She could hear some snickering coming from the dwarves (If she had to guess it could have been either Kili, Fili, Bofur or Noir and it could have been from all four of them). When she came back Gandalf was opening up a piece of parchment paper.

"...Far to the East, over ranges and rivers." Gandalf was remarking he placed the unfolded parchment on the table in front of Thorin. "Beyond woodlands and wastelands, lies a single, solitary peak." He continued as he pointed the images of the parchment.

Rowena and Bilbo leaned forward, looking over Thorin shoulder to see what they're looking at, as Rowena was being extremely careful with the candle trying not to catch Thorin’s hair. The parchment was a map, written in westron and in ancient runes and showing a mountain with a drawing of a flying red dragon on top of the peak.

"The Lonely Mountain." Bilbo read the map.
Rowena cocked her head to the side as she whispered. "Wow. Even though it's a drawing, it's truly lovely."

Thorin looked over his shoulder to see her and he gently took the candle from her and as he did so, their fingers brushed against each other.

Rowena felt the roughness of his callused fingertips brushing against her in a seductive way that she couldn't help but shiver by the contact. It was the same with Thorin; never had he felt such soft skin. But they quickly shook the moment off and pulled away Thorin putting the candle on the table as Rowena made her way back into the pantry to put away the tinderbox (to gather herself, she didn't want to melt into a poodle of ooze at handsome King-in-Exile's feet). Gandalf and Balin witnessed the moment and shared a secret smile as Gandalf lit his pipe by a magic flame from his forefinger, listening to the dwarves discuss about the Lonely Mountain.

"Aye. Oin has read the portents, and the portents say: it is time," Gloin said, his eyes brimming with excitement. The others let out grumbled, and a few eye rolls. "Ravens have been seen flying back to the mountain as it was foretold," Oin nodded, fiddling with his ear trumpet. "When the birds of yore return to Erebor, the reign of the beast will end."

"Uh," Bilbo looked concern, "What beast?"

"Well that would be a reference to Smaug the Terrible, chiefest and greatest calamity of our age," Bofur stated, his voice uncharacteristically serious. "Airborne fire-breather, teeth like razors, claws like meat hooks, extremely fond of precious metals-" Rowena at that point had decided to stop Bofur while he was good and ahead by slapping her hands over his mouth.

"Yes, I know what a dragon is!" Bilbo interrupted quickly to stop him going any further.

'A Dragon?!' Frodo thought with terror and excitement at the same time.

Rowena looked down at the amused Bofur. "Let's not give my father a reason to faint, shall we?"

Bilbo shoot his daughter a look. "I don't faint."

Rowena arched a brow. "You fainted when I came in here completely muddy, covered in bruises and scratches, and carrying a kitten inside the house."

"You could have gotten killed!" Bilbo scolded as Rowena shook her head. "What were you think?! Climbing that giant oak tree?!"

Rowena immediately put Bofur between herself and her father. "I was a child having fun and didn't really think about the dangers."

Fili asked her. "From what I'm hearing, you most have been a real hellion back than."

"She still is." Gandalf said before Rowena could answer him as the young woman's attention was suddenly called away from them.

Rowena looked towards the doorway of the dining room as if she heard something and stood up, tip-toeing over and poking her head around the corner. Her sudden presence startled the eavesdropping Hobbit boy, badly.

Rowena placed her hands on her hips as she looked down at Frodo with a fond look in her eyes. "If you're going to eavesdrop, sweetie, then you better make sure that the Queen of eavesdropping in not present in the room as well."
Frodo gave her a sheepish look and Rowena offered him her hand, saying. "Come on, you can join in the conversation now since I believe it would be impossible for you to fall asleep with all this noise."

"I'm not afraid!" Ori shouted, jumping to his feet, as Rowena and Frodo walked back into the dining room. His young face the picture of determination. "I'm up for it. I'll give him a taste of Dwarfish iron right up his jacksie." That caused several other dwarves to shout their approval.

Dori however was not amused, his face paling at the very thought. "Sit down!" He snapped, jerking on his little brothers shirt. Ori sat down, looking a tad put out then annoyed when Dori proceeded to fret upon him. Nori was worried too, but he was more subtle about it by coming to stand behind his younger brother.

And Bilbo was giving both Rowena and Frodo a disapproving look as she walked back to her seat and lifted the lad up and set him down on her lap. He was clearly not happy that Frodo was up and eavesdropping and that Rowena had brought him into the room with them.

"The task would be difficult enough with an army behind us. But we number just thirteen, and not thirteen of the best, nor brightest," Balin commented, his hands clasped on the table in front of him. His comment, needless to say, was not well received by the present company for out cries from all around the table were heard.

"Hey, who are you calling dim?"

"Watch it!"

"No!"

"What did he say?" Oin asked, his face scrunching up in confusion. He fiddled with his ear trumpet in an attempt to hear better.

Rowena scooted her chair back and held her cousin tighter to her chest. "hmmm, now that I think about it, maybe we shouldn't be so close to dwarves."

"We may be few in number, but we're fighters, all of us, to the last dwarf!" Fili stated, proudly puffing out his chest. It reminded Rowena a bit like a lion cub trying to valiantly roar only to fall short of its mark.

"But we have a wizard in our company!" Kili shouted suddenly, rising slightly from his chair. He tossed Gandalf a confident smile. "Gandalf will have killed hundred of dragons in his time!"

Rowena smirked as she thought. "It would be so amusing if Gandalf never killed a dragon in his entire life!"

"Oh, well, now, uh, I-I-I wouldn't say that," Gandalf flushed, and it occurred to Rowena that she may be right and she almost wished that she wasn't right. Almost.

Rowena whispered to Frodo, causing her little cousin to laugh. "I didn't know he could change to such a lovely shade of red."

"How many?" Dori inquired.

"Uh, what?" Gandalf blinked. Rowena let herself take in the wizard's discomfort with amused smile.

With a mind of their own, her eyes drifted back to Thorin and her lips broke out in wide, bright smile as she leaned over to whisper to Balin's ear. "I never seen Gandalf this uncomfortable since
the day I called him on having a crush on Hilda."

Balin silently chuckled and Rowena could have sworn that she saw a smile hovering on Thorin's lips even as he rolled his eyes in a rather unkingly way.

"Well, how many dragons have you killed?" Dori asked, his face anxious. "Go on, give us a number!"

Gandalf coughed embarrassed, and fiddled with his pipe. Rowena was still smiling even though she was starting to feel the beginning of a headache forming when the dwarves shot to their feet, and shouted angrily. Frodo leaned back against her shoulder and grabbed her hand, giving her a reassuring squeeze, and Rowena squeezed his hand back. Rowena watched on, with a amused expression. Thorin's expression is pinched, and the lines around his eyes tightened. He leapt to his feet, and brought down a fist on the table. Rowena and Frodo jumped back, surprise and shock written on both of their faces as they stared at the dwarf as if he had just lost his mind. Bilbo flinched back startled and took a step closer to Gandalf.

"Shazara!" Thorin bellowed, and everyone fell silent.

Thorin drew in a deep breath, composing himself. He stood to his full height, meeting all of the dwarves eyes and he began, his voice strong and willful, "If we have read these signs, do you not think others will have read them too? Rumors have begun to spread. The dragon Smaug has not been seen for 60 years. Eyes look east to the Mountain, assessing…wondering…weighing the risk." His eyes were filled with such depth, and a deep, painful longing. A need to find home, to find what it meant to belong once more.

"Perhaps the vast wealth of our people now lies unprotected. Do we sit back while others claim what is rightfully ours?" Thorin's jaw clenched, his voice rising and he raised his clenched fist. "Or do we seize this chance to take back Erebor? Du Bekâr! Du Bekâr!" He roared, and the group cheered.

Balin however had a pensive look in his eyes. "You forget," Balin commented, softly after the cheers died down, "the front gate is sealed. There is no way into the mountain."

Rowena gave Balin a feigned disapproval look. "Way to be a mood-killer, Balin."

Balin gave Rowena a hearty wink, which caused the human woman to laugh.

"That, my dear Balin, is not entirely true," Gandalf leaned forward, his hand slipping into his robe. Delicately he pulled out an ornate dwarvish key.

Rowena, even though she saw how he did it, reached over and touched his sleeves, with one arm still around Frodo. "Where did you pull that key from? Thin air?"

Thorin's face fell and he looked stricken. Wonder, hope and so much pain was in his gaze, and Rowena felt a pang in her chest at that look, that immediately swept away all humor from her. "How came you by this?" His voice is rough with emotion, and Rowena swallowed thickly, tears forming in her eyes as she watch.

"It was given to me by your father…by Thrain," Gandalf commented, softly. "For safekeeping, it is yours now."

He held out the key, and Thorin took it slowly as if he feared it would disappear the moment he touched it. When it didn't, his hand curled around it possessively and he held it close to him staring down at as if it could answer all the questions swarming in his heart. His face was so bare with emotion in that moment that, but with great effort, Thorin schooled his features to become less
caring and entirely detached.

'As a leader must be,' Rowena thought silently, finding herself falling all over again for the dwarf.

"If there's a key, there must be a door," Fili murmured, a smile on his face and his eyes lit with wonder.

Gandalf pointed at the runes on the map. "These runes speak of hidden passage to the lower halls," the wizard stated, with a half grin.

"There's another way in," Kili said, a tad breath with amazement clearly written in his eyes.

Rowena smiled at the brothers. It was official, dwarves liked to state the obvious. "Aren't dwarf doors invisible when closed? Like they blend in with the rocks or something?" Rowena asked, out loud. Everyone looked at her, and she paused under all those eyes feeling a tad put on the spot. "What? I can't know that?" She asked, wide eyed at all the stares, good humor was clearly in her voice and action.

Frodo looked up at her, smiling up at her. "I don't think so."

Rowena pouted. "I figured as much, but it didn't hurt to ask."

"Indeed, they are," Gandalf said, saving her. "The answer lies hidden somewhere in this map and I do not have the skill to find it. But there are others in Middle Earth who can. That task I have in mind will require a great deal of stealth, and no small amount of courage," the wizard comment, shooting a look over at Bilbo who was still focused on the map as if to memorize it. "But if we are careful and clever, I believe it can be done."

"That's why we need a burglar," Oin stated.

"Hm. A good one, too." Bilbo stated, innocently and unaware of Gandalf's plan for him, his daughter so wanted to warn him but kept her mouth shut when the old man shot her a warning look. "An expert, I'd imagine."

"And are you?" Gloin asked.

"Am I what?" Bilbo blinked confused.

"He said he's an expert!" Oin shouted, with his poor hearing thought he had Bilbo say such a thing. Rowena frowned at the ear trumpet and wondered if that blasted thing was even helping the poor dwarf at all because he's been mishearing things the entire time he had been here.

The hobbit stuttered out, "M-me? Burglar? No! No, no, no, no. I'm not a burglar; I've never stolen a thing in my life! I am not a burglar," he stressed every word so there would be no misunderstandings this time.

Rowena held her hand up, happily admitted. "I have thought!"

"That's not something to be proud of, Rowena!" Bilbo scolded.

"It is if being done to that old hag, Lobelia." Rowena shot back, smiling impishly at her father, who look like he wanted to either scold her or spunk her, and she hoped the former won because she really would like to be able to sit.

"I'm afraid I have to agree," Balin said, not unkindly. "Mr. Baggins is hardly burglar material."

Bilbo nodded in agreement.
"Aye, the wild is no place for gentlefolk who can neither fight nor fend for themselves," Dwalin concurred with his brother.

Kili glowered slightly at Dwalin. "I think he'll be fine!"

Fili nodded, while Dori shook his head muttering. All the dwarves were throwing their opinions around loudly trying to speak over the other. Rowena noticed that Bifur was making hand gestures and she picked up on a few things that were less than polite about Bilbo.

Rowena shook her head as she rolled her eyes skyward. "And here we go again!"

All of a sudden the dining room was getting darker and Gandalf stood up with his head nearly hitting the ceiling.

"ENOUGH!" Gandalf boomed in a deep loud voice that made everyone jump back in fear. Frodo buried his face into Rowena's breasts, surprising the human woman. "If I say Bilbo Baggins is a burglar!" Then slowly the darkness was fading and Gandalf voice returned to normal. "And a burglar he is."

Rowena rubbed her temple as the headache that had formed when Gandalf first yelled started to fade away. "I hate it when you do that."

Gandalf looked at her. "I'm sorry."

"If you're sorry, then you wouldn't keep doing it." Rowena said.

"Hobbits are remarkable light on their feet; in fact they can past unseen by most if they choose." Gandalf continued as he informed the company. "And while the dragon is accustomed to the smell of dwarf, the scent of a Hobbit is all but unknown to him, which gives us a distinct advantage."

Bilbo grasped on what Gandalf and the dwarves are intended on why they want a burglar on their quest.

Gandalf sat down when he saw the doubt look on Thorin's face. "You have asked me to find the Fourteenth member of this company, and I have chosen Mister Baggins." Gandalf settled.

Bilbo could hardly believe what he was hearing and he hope that Thorin would say no on hiring him as a burglar.

"There's a lot more to him than appearances suggest." Gandalf carried on as look round the company and then directly to him. "And he's got a great deal more to offer than any of you know, including himself."

Then Gandalf looked to Thorin for confirmation. "You must trust me on this." He persuaded.

His lips twisted down into a frown, a grudging reluctance flickering through across his before he let out a sigh. "Very well. We will do it your way," he stated, despite Bilbo protesting 'no, no, no' behind him. "Give him the contract."

"Uh…please, no," Bilbo stated, but Balin handed the contract over to Thorin who practically shoved it over his shoulder at Bilbo. Bilbo stumbled back, grasping at the piece of paper with a stricken expression on his face.

"Alright!" Bofur cheered. "We're off!"

"It's just the usual summary of out-of-pocket expenses, time required, remuneration funeral
arrangements, so forth," Balin commented, trying to ease the hobbit's worries. He looked at Rowena and gave her a contact as well. "Here you go, lass."

Rowena smiled her thanks. "I was being to worry that I wasn't going to be able to go on this quest as well."

Balin winked at her, fondly. "I've heard of ye, lass, so I know you'll be able to take care of yourself."

Rowena smiled at him once again and set Frodo down, standing up, so that she can read the contract.

Bilbo asked as he saw Rowena holding the contract in her hands. "Why did she get a contract as well?"

Rowena looked her father before looking at Gandalf. "You tell him."

Gandalf arched a brow at her. "I didn't peg you for a coward, my dear."

Rowena laughed. “No, it's saving myself from the disapproving dad stare.”

Gandalf sighed before looking at Bilbo. "Rowena is a mercenary and I've hired her be an extra sword on this mission."

Rowena raised her gaze up and found the narrowed gaze of one Bilbo Baggins and she pointed at him. "See! Papa has the perfect disapproving dad stare."

Her father stepped around Frodo to no doubt scold her, but she sidestepped as well to keep hobbit lad in the middle of them and continued speaking. “Direct your attention to the narrowed eyes, flared nostrils, slowly reddening cheeks from mixed anger and embarrassment.” Her father took a step left, she took one right. "Aye, the perfect specimen, he is! Perhaps it's a sign among his species that he's searching for a suitable mate!"

The red in her father's cheeks advanced, and he facepalmed before taking a deep breath. "Frodo, if you don't move aside this instant so that I might hit her, you'll be sharing in her punishment."

Frankly Rowena couldn't blame Frodo for moving, no one should get into trouble with her when they were completely innocent in the matter. And like a crow on carrion, her father swooped in to slap her on the bottom, causing Rowena to yelp. "When were you going to tell me about this, young lady? No, no sass, just tell me. When?"

Rowena immediately put Frodo between them once again as she rubbed her bottom. "Well, I wasn't going to tell you period because I knew this would happen. Ow, my poor bottom."

Rather than directly reply to her, Bilbo threw his hands in the air like he just didn't care and turned to patted the stunned Thorin on the shoulder. "She's your problem now. I wash my hands of her and her shenanigans."

Rowena gasped dramatically at that, and her father didn't even pause in his reading of contract, having grown use to her playful nature. "You don't mean that! You love me!" No reaction. Not deterred, she gave Gandalf a wide-eyed wretched look. "Gandalf, Papa doesn't love me anymore!"

Rowena started dry sobbing, wishing more than anything that she was more proficient in crying on cue. The lack of tears didn't stop him from joining in on her act. Gandalf pulled Rowena to him and pet her head, making shushing noises and rocking her back and forth like a mother would her babe. "Who needs that stinky old hobbit anyway when you have an awesome grandfather like
babe. "Who needs that stinky old hobbit anyway when you have an awesome grandfather like me?"

Frodo laughed uproariously at Rowena's antics, as did Fili and Kili.

Gandalf whispered as he noted the looks they were getting from Dwalin and Thorin. "I think you should read your contract, my dear."

"Yeah, I can feel that disapproving glares directed at my back." Rowena whispered back before she pulled away from him and started to read her contract.

"Funeral arrangements?" Bilbo said, his voice filled with horror.

Rowena mumbled. "Oh, how thoughtful. That's the first time someone ever cared enough to handle my corpse."

While they were reading the contract Thorin moved closer to Gandalf. "I cannot guarantee his safety." He whispered, gravely to Gandalf.

"Understood," the wizard gave a sharp nod.

"Nor will I be responsible for his fate," Thorin said, his expression was so hard that it looked like it was carved out of marble instead of flesh.

The grey wizard eyed the dwarf for a good moment before nodding. "Agreed," Gandalf said, before turning to face the hobbit. Bilbo was walking around while reading off the contract out loud. The old wizard frowned when he realized that he didn't add the human woman as well.

"What about Rowena?"

Thorin directed his gaze towards the beautiful human woman before looking back at him. "I've heard about a human woman from Balin. She is a skilled mercenary despite her beauty and I am willing to allow her to come along with us. I trust Balin's words."

Gandalf arched a brow at that comment of her beauty but wisely kept his tongue to himself.

"Terms: Cash on delivery, up to but not exceeding one fourteenth of total profit, if any. hmm, Seems fair," he murmured, unaware of all the eyes upon his back. "Eh, present company…shall not be liable for injuries inflicted by or sustained as a consequence thereof including but not limited to lacerations…evisceration…incineration?" Bilbo's voice rose filled with incredulity.

"Wow, that's a lot of ways for a dragon to kill someone." Rowena looked at Frodo, who was reading the contract with her as well as Rowena had picked the boy up into her arms. Both were wide-eyed as they both read the contract.

"Oh, aye, he'll melt the flesh off your bones in the blink of an eye," Bofur added, a little bit too cheery for such a grim subject.

"Huh?" Bilbo blinked.

Rowena looked at Bofur, asking. "Aren't you a little too cheery for saying that, Bofur."

Bofur smiled at her, charmingly. "I haven't got the foggiest clue of what you are talking about, my dear girl."

Rowena gestured for his pint of ale. "Handed that over before you lose even more common sense to you."

"My dear girl, you wound my heart with that suspicion clear in your lovely voice." Bofur said as
he handed his pint to Rowena.

"Don't you charm me, Bofur." Rowena said with a laugh, her amusement clearly shone in her voice and eyes. "I've been charmed at when I was working as a barmaid and I've grown used to charms."

"You all right, laddie?" Balin inquired, drawing everyone's attention to Bilbo, including Rowena and Bofur, who were bonding.

Bilbo bent over, taking a deep breath. He looked a bit green, and pained. The contract trembling between his fingers. "Uh, yeah…feel a bit faint is all," the hobbit said, breathlessly.

"Think of a furnace with wings," Bofur added.

"Air…I need air," Bilbo said, breathlessly.

Next to Bofur, Rowena was making a cut-off motion with her hand, slicing her hand in front of her neck, her way of telling Bofur to stop when he was ahead.

"Flash of light, searing pain, then poof! You're nothing more than a pile of ash," Bofur continued on oblivious to what he was doing to the poor hobbit.

"Bofur," Rowena said, in a sing-song voice. "Knock it off, please."

Her father gave a long and agonizing silence, the dwarves, his daughter, and nephew fixed their eyes on him waited anxiously to hear on whether or he would choose to be their burglar. But after that ever-so helpful description of death done by Smaug. Frodo peeked from behind Rowena's skirt to see his uncle standing there saying nothing, waiting nervously to hear his answer.

Rowena knew what was going to happen next and her father didn't disappoint.

"Hmmm…" Bilbo wobbled on his feet. "Nope." His eyes rolled into the back of his head, and his knees buckle beneath him, and he dropped to the ground like a sack of potatoes.

"Ah, very helpful, Bofur," Gandalf grumbled, sarcastically.

"I never believed that someone other than myself can make my father faint like that." Rowena said as she walked towards her father and knelt by him.

Frodo asked Rowena, leaning over her shoulder to look down at his uncle. "Is he going to be alright, cousin?"

"He's going to be fine." Rowena answered him. "I better put my father in the living room." Than she looked down at Frodo. "And you better get to bed before I get into even more trouble."

Dori suddenly stood up and moved towards her. "I can take your father for you."

Rowena smiled her thanks at the dwarf as she handed her father over to him. "I'll get blankets. Go to bed, Frodo, you had enough eavesdropping for one night."

Frodo nodded his head silently and made his way towards his bedroom but stopped and glanced over his shoulder to see that Rowena and the others weren't watching him and he tip-toed passed them. He headed towards the chest near the front door and climbed inside, quietly closing the lid behind him before anyone had seen him.

Gandalf came into the living room first, followed by Dori and Nori, as well, carrying unconscious Bilbo, placing him in his armchair by the fireplace. He watched as Rowena came in and draped
blankets over him and sat down by him as Dori and Nori walked away, Gandalf stayed behind with his cousin.
His eyelashes fluttered, and his eyes cracked open with a little groan escaping his lips, the last thing Bilbo remembered was having dwarves and a wizard came into his house uninvited, bombarding him with a mad job of stealing from a fire-breathing dragon that lived in a mountain. He blinked rapidly several times before his gaze focused on Rowena, who was sitting next to him with his hands in hers.

A relieved smile appeared on his lips, and Bilbo said, "Oh, Rowena, you won't believe the weirdest dream I just…" he trailed off when he saw Gandalf sitting in the other chair, smoking a pipe, and the dwarves in the kitchen wondering around, and his face fell. "Oh…what a nightmare…"

His daughter threw her head back and laughed at that as Dori came from the kitchen with a cup of steaming hot chamomile tea and kindly handed the cup to Bilbo.

"Are sure you’re alright Mister Bilbo?’’ asked Dori with concern.

“I’ll be alright.” Bilbo answered shakily as he accepted the cup from him. “Just let me sit quietly for a few minutes.”

Dori headed back to the kitchen to find his brothers as Bilbo clutched the cup to his chest, steadily drinking the tea as Gandalf walked over to him. Rowena stood up and stepped to the side, to give them room to talk. Her father had taught her manners and she just picked and choose when she's going to use them.

Unknown to them and hidden inside the chest, Frodo lifted the lid of the chest a little and listened to his uncle and Gandalf having conversation in the living room.

“You’ve been sitting quietly for far too long!” Gandalf protested.

Bilbo looked up at him appalled as he paced about the living room. Rowena crossed her arms over her breasts as she watched them, her expression calm and cool, her mercenary face.

“Tell me when did dollies and your mother’s dishes become so important to you?” Gandalf questioned. “I remember a young Hobbit-lad who was always running off to search for elves in the woods! Who would stay out late and come home after dark trailing mud, twigs and fireflies.” He added with a chuckle.
Bilbo smiled a bit of his childhood memories as he looked into his steaming cup. “Yes. But I was just a child back then.” He justified.

Rowena thought to herself as she looked at her father. *That sounds a lot like me.*

“Yes, but an adventurist child who would have liked nothing better than to find out what lies beyond the borders of the Shire.” Gandalf replied as he pointed at the window with his pipe.

Bilbo looked up to him from his cup with uncertainty, he noticed that Rowena had titled her head to the side as she watched them with curiosity in her eyes.

“The world is not in your books and maps.” He said and then gestured towards the window. “It’s out there.”

Bilbo looked towards the window and the world out there with inquisitiveness, but suddenly shook it off with determination.

“Gandalf, I’m not that child anymore, I’ve grown up and I can’t just go running off into the blue.” Bilbo said steadily. “I’m a Baggins of Bag End.”

“True but you are also a Took.” Gandalf specified.

Bilbo sighed and placed his hand on his forehead in frustration.

“Did you know that your great-great-great-great uncle, Bullroarer Took was so large that he could ride a real horse?” Gandalf questioned him as he pointed to the portrait of his ancestor, drawing Rowena’s attention to the portrait.

“Yes.” Bilbo remarked.

“Yes well he could.” Gandalf confirmed. “In the battle of Green Fields, he charged the Goblin ranks. He swung his club so hard, it knocked the Goblin king’s head clean off and it sailed 100 yards through the air and went down a rabbit hole. “And thus, the battle was won.” Gandalf concluded. “And the game of golf invented at the same time.”

Bilbo gave an amused smile at the last bit. “I do believe you made that up.”

“Well, all good stories deserve embellishment.” He said with an amused smile as he sat on the chair opposite him. “You’ll have a tale or two of your own when you come back.”

Bilbo had showed a small smile and looked up at with hesitation. “Can you promise that I will come back?”

“No.” Gandalf replied. “And if you do, you will not be the same.”

“That’s what I thought.” Bilbo signed. “I’m sorry, Gandalf I can’t sign this.” Bilbo stood up from his armchair. “I’m afraid you got the wrong Hobbit. I just can’t leave poor Frodo, not after what he been through when he lost his parents, so good night Gandalf.”

“Good night then, my boy.” He replied with a sigh. After that, he left.

Rowena watched her father leave before she walked up to Gandalf and said. "I'm sorry, Gandalf. He was like that when I was a little girl, he didn't like the fact that I took to the Took side better than the Baggins."

"Oh, it's not your fault, my dear girl." Gandalf said with fondness in his voice as he cupped her cheek with his palm. "I knew the Tooks would expect you more because you're so reminded them
all of The Old Took's favorite granddaughter, Belladonna."

"Yes." Rowena said with a smile. "As Grandpa Gerontius keeps telling me over and over again whenever I came over to play and spend some time with him." She chuckled softly. "I remember him telling me once that if it wasn't for my small, hairless feet and tall height, he would have sworn that I was actually his great-great granddaughter, instead of a human who is adopted."

Gandalf cupped the back of her neck, holding her still, as he leaned his head down and touched his forehead against hers softly, something they have done ever since she was a child. "You're a Took despite being adopted. Never listen to what that old hag tells me, my girl."

Rowena nodded her head. "I know, Gandalf."

She walked away from him but stopped in the doorway of the kitchen. She turned around and looked at him, holding her contract, which has been signed. "Give this to Balin and tell Thorin that I'll help him reclaim his home with him, so I require no payment or anything like that."

Gandalf arched his brow at that. "That's the first time I heard Rowena the Mercenary ever offering her services for free."

Rowena shrugged her shoulders. "I told you before I didn't have anything to give but I can give him my sword."

With that, Rowena turned and stepped into the kitchen where she was greeted warmly by Dori, Nori and Ori. Gandalf chuckled as he watched her talk to the brothers.

Meanwhile in the hallway, as Rowena and Gandalf had waited for Bilbo to regain consciousness, life had not been an easy one by any means for Thorin, son of Thrain, son of Thror. One tragedy after another, and he had to keep his head high and continue to lead his people no matter what the cost may be. His blue eyes studied the hobbit hole, filled with knick knacks and warmth. It was quaint and simple, nothing like Erebor and yet it was home to this hobbit and nephew as Erebor was home to him.

He would be a liar if he did not admit that the Shire's peaceful lands did not appeal to him, the prosperity that was here was one he had longed to see for his own kingdom one day. And while he admitted that, he also begrudged them their peace and plenty for it had taken him several years (practically a lifetime in the eyes of man) to provide that for his family, and his people. Years of moving from one place to the next with no steady job, or means of support. Years of being ridiculed and cheated through the ignorance of man and elves. He knew what it was like to be starved, he knew what it was like to be beaten down, he had been oh so weary, but he never broke. And he moved forward. The Blue Mountains were a blessing, and through hard work, he had built a new life for his Kingdom.

But...the painful longing in his heart reminded him, the Blue Mountains were not home. Even now, after so many years that he had fought to make it so, it was not truly his. With the fall of Erebor, Thorin's power as King had also dwindled and the nobles who were once his grandfather's council had more say and power and it was their funds that helped make the Blue Mountains what they were today. A fact that they had constantly reminded him of, and a reason they protested so heavily on the quest for Erebor. If he reclaimed Erebor, Thorin would not have to rely so heavily on them and the council feared their loss in power.

Thorin cared not. After so many years spent in exile, and roaming the lonely hills, he could
practically taste the fresh mountain air. He could smell the scent of pine trees upon the breeze, and in his mind as clear as the day he left, he could see Erebor still standing tall. He was so close, and nothing would dissuade him now. Not even the other kingdom's refusal to come could crush his the hope that burned within his like a smoldering fire, instead it spurred him on with a defiant need to prevail where they all said he would fail. He looked at the thirteen dwarves that had answered his call, and watched them wander around the home with curious gleaming in their eyes.

He had not been lost like he had claimed. He had arrived in front of Bag End, he had heard the laughter and merriment from inside, and he had not the heart to knock on the door right away. There would not be time for such frivolous things on the road, so he gave them a few more minutes of reprieve while he stood outside and gathered his thoughts. Or brood, as Kili was fond of pointing out often. He listened as Gandalf tried to persuade the hobbit to join the quest, and Thorin hoped the hobbit wouldn't join.

This quest was not for the faint of heart.

Thorin's thoughts turned to Rowena and he frowned when he remembered that she was crying. Despite not showing concern over her unshed tears, Thorin could tell that his men, including himself, was concern over her tears and had wondered if Gandalf was the cause for her tears. Neither of them gave an explanation to her tears and the human woman allowed her adopted father to wipe her tears away without any fuss.

She was a slight thing, the Dwarf king came up to the top of her lips, and her limbs that were lithe and wiry, she resemble an elf in her limbs but she has curvy yet lean build, like that of a human woman, something he couldn't help to notice even though she was daughter of man. She was an ethereal beauty with a definitive jaw line and accentuated cheekbones pair with a tiny slender nose. She stood straight, her head held high with a sense of entitlement like someone of high birth however he doubted that. No nobility in their right mind would allow their daughter to run, working as a mercenary.

Her eyes were the most startling thing about her though her carefree and cheerful, with a little of feistiness, attitude was a close second. They were startling shade of pale green, they reminded Thorin of Amazonite, the pale green gemstones that were constantly found in the mines back in Erebor. He clutched the key tightly in his hand, shoving such thoughts away. He had no need of distractions, and that is all that woman would be on this journey. An unnecessary distraction.

Yet Thorin couldn't help but be intrigued by the human woman. He had grudging admired her when she swiftly swept in to defend her adopted father, when she apologized when she realized that she speaking in such a manner to her leader, and when she was joking around and laughing with his men. He could tell that her bright, carefree and honest personality could have her make anyone or anything into her friends. He leaned back against the wall, crossing his ankles and appeared every bit of relaxed if it weren't for the hand that rested upon his sword. Dwalin stood off to his right, while Balin sat in a chair adjacent from him.

They heard Rowena suddenly laugh in the living room and the three dwarves looked towards the direction of the living room.

Dwalin looked at Thorin, cocking up an eyebrow. "Quite the little spitfire, isn't she?" He commented, with a slight smirk.

Thorin glared darkly, clearly not amused by his words.

"Oh, aye," Balin agreed, with a sly glint in his eye. "With a sharp tongue that would put many of our women to shame. The only other woman I seen with a quick wit combined with such a temper like that is Lady Dis."
Thorin frowned, a guilt in his blue eyes. He would never forget how upset Dis had been when they had left, how she said she would never forgive him if they did not come back home alive, or how she would never forgive him if anything happened to her boys. He had taken his nephews with him without her blessing, and that hung upon his shoulders like an ever constant weight.

"It matters not how sharp her tongue," Thorin intoned, the lines around his eyes tightening with annoyance. "I doubt she or the so called burglar will come. It will better that way. Our journey cannot afford such distractions."

"But at least she knew when to apologize." Dwalin arched an eyebrow, his lips curling in amusement. Thorin gave him a flat look that told him that his amusement was not shared. "Not a lot of people with own up to their mistakes and apologize."

"Yes, it takes a lot of courage to admit to their mistake and apologize for it." Balin said, smiling as he thought about Rowena. "She's truly not like any other person I've met in the past."

"Aye," Dwalin nodded. "But she got enough courage and gale to scold a King to his face without having a care to her own safety," he admitted, "than I say let her join, I bet that she could keep those nephews of yours in line."

Balin nodded his head. "Aye, I saw how she was with the young hobbit lad. She was firm yet gentle towards him." Then he chuckled and Thorin's lips to quirk upward ever so slightly as they both had the same thought. "She could even get Fili and Kili into even more trouble." He added. "But I can tell that she can be serious if she wanted too or when the situation demands."

"Hmm," Thorin tilted his head in consideration.

"That's what I thought." A voice broke him out of his reprieve and he caught the hobbit's shadow cast on the wall of him rising from his seat. "Sorry. Gandalf. I can't sign this. You've got the wrong Hobbit." With that the Hobbit walked down the hall, and Thorin could hear the wizard sigh.

"I'm sorry, Gandalf. He was like that when I was a little girl, he didn't like the fact that I took to the Took side better than the Baggins." The human woman's soft, lilting and slightly husky feminine voice broke through the silence of the living room and before even one of them could say anything.

"Oh, it's not your fault, my dear girl." Gandalf's voice appeared, fondness clearly heard in his voice. "I knew the Tooks would expect you more because you're so reminded them all of The Old Took's favorite granddaughter, Belladonna."

"Yes." Thorin could almost see a smile on her face as she said. "As Grandpa Gerontius keeps telling me over and over again whenever I came over to play and spend some time with him." She chuckled softly. "I remember him telling me once that if it wasn't for my small, hairless feet and tall height, he would have sworn that I was actually his great-great granddaughter, instead of a human who is adopted."

"You're a Took despite being adopted. Never listen to what that old hag tells you, my girl."

"I know, Gandalf."

They heard her footsteps moving away from Gandalf but they stopped suddenly. They could heard fabric and paper rustling. "Give this to Balin and tell Thorin that I'll help him reclaim his home with him, so I require no payment or anything like that."

Thorin knew that his face wore the same expression of shock as Balin and Dwalin. Clearly, they
were not expecting her to join the quest, let alone do it without wanting anything in return.

Gandalf's voice clearly held the tone of amazement and surprisement. "That's the first time I heard Rowena the Mercenary ever offering her services for free."

"I told you before I didn't have anything to give but I can give him my sword."

That comment caused Thorin to frown as he looked towards the living room, so he missed that secret look between Balin and Dwalin. He didn't understand why she would make that type of comment and he wondered when she and Gandalf ever had a conversation where she had told him that.

"It appeared we've lost our burglar," Balin noted, with a deep sigh and Thorin looked back at him. "Probably for the best. The odds were always against us. After all, what are we? Merchants, miners, tinkers, toy-makers; hardly the stuff of legend."

"There are a few warriors amongst us," Dwalin commented.

"Old warriors," Balin retorted.

"I will take each and ever one of these dwarves over an army from the Iron Hills," Thorin stated, strongly looking between his two long time friends. His head was raised, and his eyes were ablaze with determination. "For when I called upon them, they came. Loyalty. Honor. A willing heart." Thorin allowed his façade to fall for the brief of moments, and he looked at the group of dwarves with gratitude upon his face. "I can ask no more than that."

"You don't have to do this. You have a choice," Balin said, feeling that it had to be said. "You've done honorably by our people. You have built a new life for us in the Blue Mountains, a life of peace and plenty. A life that is worth more than all the gold in Erebor." Dwalin nodded in agreement.

Thorin gave the lightest shake of his head, and held up the king that Gandalf gave him. "From my grandfather to my father, this has come to me. They dreamt of the day when the dwarves of Erebor would reclaim their homeland. There is no choice, Balin," Thorin spoke, his voice firm and strong. "Not for me."

Balin stared at him for a long moment before nodding. Dwalin clapped him on the shoulder, and said, "Then we are with you, laddie. We will see it done."

_Or we will die trying._ Thorin thought, with a heavy heart. His eyes cast downward to the key clutched in his hand, and his resolved hardened like mithril. He had to succeed, he had no other choice and he would let nothing get in his way.

"Watch out!" Rowena's voice suddenly called through the moment between old friends and the three dwarves looked over to see Bofur swinging Rowena around as they danced out of the living room and down the hallway, making their way towards them. "Run away Dwarf!"

Laughter was clearing heard in her voice as she and Bofur swept passed them, the dwarf saying to her. "Who are you calling a run away Dwarf? That's rude!"

"I thought we already made it clear that I wasn't a nice person?" Rowena teased. "And besides, you're a run-away dwarf because I have to mind my toes with you lot."

"It's not my fault you have such delicate feet." Bofur chuckled as he twirled her around him. "But nice balance all the same though!"

"Oh, you charmer!" Rowena said. "I'll have you know that I'm quite use to men using their
"Oh, you charmer!" Rowena said. "I'll have you know that I'm quite used to men using their charms on me, as well as flirting with me, in order to get free drinks."

"Only free drinks?" Bofur asked. "I have a hard time believing that they were simply interested in merely drinking their ales free from you, lass."

"Well, that was true until I punched the last inappropriate suitor in the eye." Rowena said, with great pride.

Bofur arched his brow at that. "Did you now?"

"Yeah." Rowena confirmed with a nod of her head. "He had a nice black-eye for two weeks after that and no one ever did anything inappropriate to me ever since."

Gloin grumbled as she and Bofur danced passed them. "I still can't believe a girl such as yourself worked as a barmaid! It's highly inappropriate for such a pretty girl such as yourself."

Rowena smiled reassuring at the older dwarf. "I only worked as a barmaid when I didn't have any work as a mercenary. I was working as a barmaid in Bree when Gandalf came to get me yesterday night." She shook her head, causing her pale golden hair to tumbled across her shoulders and down her back. "Besides I haven't had this much fun since forever!"

Meanwhile when both Bilbo and Rowena left the room, Gandalf turned round and cast his eye on the chest near the front door.

Frodo froze where he was inside the chest when saw Gandalf looking straight at him and started walking straight towards him. Suddenly scared of being discovered he quickly and quietly shut the lid. He kept very still and held his breath waiting silently for Gandalf to go passed. 'Maybe he hasn't seen me.' He thought hopefully. Then he heard three loud thumps on top of the lid of the chest.

"I know you're in there, Frodo." He heard Gandalf's muffled voice through the wood of the lid. "You can come out now, no one will see you." Than he chuckled, thinking, as Frodo guilty lifted the lid and looked up at Gandalf sheepish. 'He reminds me very much of Rowena.'

"Come along; follow me to the living room." Gandalf beckoned Frodo.

Frodo quietly climbed out of the chest and Gandalf making sure no one’s watching guided him to the living room. As soon as he sat down on the chair, Frodo looked down at his small hairy feet with shame.

"I'm sorry Mr. Gandalf, I didn't mean to snoop." He apologized.

"You're just a curious lad, I understand that." Gandalf said gently. "Much like Rowena when she was your age...still is now that I think about it." Then he noticed Frodo had a troubled look on his face.

"My dear Frodo, what's the matter?" Gandalf asked.

"Do you think Uncle Bilbo and cousin Rowena would really go on this adventure?" Frodo asked with dread.

"I'm afraid she will, my dear boy." Gandalf confirmed.

Frodo looked up at Gandalf with alarm, after when he heard Uncle Bilbo asked if Gandalf promised that he would return and he could not promise that. The thought of his Uncle going out into the unknown and not knowing if he’d come back alive or dead made Frodo shudder in fear.
Knowing what he must be thinking, Gandalf gently consoled him.

“I know this journey may be dangerous, but we’ll do all we can to make sure she’s safe.” He assured him. “But, now it’s long past your bedtime, come along I’ll lead you back to your bedroom.” He added in just as they started to walk. "Besides Rowena will be coming with us, and if your uncle does come, she would be able to keep him safe.”

Gandalf secretly led Frodo back to his room when no one was looking.

“Thank you, Mr. Gandalf.” Frodo said quietly as he entered his room. “I just wish I could come with all of you.”

“I know, my dear boy.” He replied as he watched him closed the door. “And so you shall.” He quietly said showing a secret smile.

After some time dancing with Rowena, and making her breathless with laughter, all of the dwarves gathered in the living room and Gandalf was in the kitchen and Rowena was sitting by the window, staring outside as a low hum began to fill the room; the air was thick with the scent of smoke from their pipes. When Thorin had arrived, the dwarves had toned down their rowdiness, but this…this was something else entirely.

Grief. Pain. Loss. It was on all of their faces. The dwarves sat all around the living room, their eyes staring outward at something she couldn't see. Her eyes drifted across them, the pain in all their eyes burning into her mind like the fires from her nightmares and lastly they landed on Thorin who stood by the fire place. His elbow carelessly draped over the mantle, a pipe clasped in his right hand as he stared down at the fire. His voice was deep and rich, mesmerizing as he hummed a gentle, and haunting tune.

"Far over the misty mountains cold,
To dungeons deep and caverns old."

All the breath whooshed out of her, stolen away the second Thorin opened his mouth and started to sing. Rowena turned her head to look at the dwarf king and listened to his voice. And what a voice! His voice was so deep and rich, it sent chills across her skin just from her listening to it. His eyes reflected the image of fire, and the haunt of death was written upon his face. For a moment, he looked vulnerable as if he was laying his heart bare in that song and allowing his grief to show through his façade of indifference. Balin's soft and emotion filled voice weaved with Thorin's to make the melody all that more haunting.

"We must away ere break of day, To find our long-forgotten gold."

Rowena felt tears fill her eyes, and she pressed a hand to her chest. The pain came off of him like tidal waves rushing towards the coastline, and she leaned against the windowpane to help keep herself up. It wasn't gold that they sung about, as the words spilled off of all the dwarves tongues as they all sung now. It made have came out as gold, but Rowena heard the word 'home'. Her chest felt tight like it was on fire and memories and emotions that she hadn't been able to handle stirred forth, and a tear ran down her cheeks before she could stop it.

The dwarves’ song traveled through the rooms of Bag End. Bilbo sat on his bed, wide awake as he listened to the song. The deep and low melody touched him beyond words; so much longing on return to their homeland and memories of what had been are never forgotten. He could not help but feel guilty of refusing to accompany on this adventure. Although he knew it would be very
dangerous, these dwarves are only trying to get home after being separated from it after so many years.

Frodo too regarded the song as he lay in bed wishing with all of his heart that he could something he could do to help these poor homeless dwarves on their quest, but what could a small hobbit child do?

"The pines were roaring on the height,

The winds were moaning in the night,

The fire was red, it flaming spread,

The trees like torches blazed with light."

On that last verse, Bilbo and Frodo drifted into a deep sleep. While Rowena suddenly stood up and hurried to her own room, with a quick 'excuse me' as she covered her mouth with her hands, fighting to prevent more tears from falling and she never noticed the pair of intense blue eyes watching her every step of the way.

As the dwarves were getting ready for bed, it had been awhile since Rowena had practically ran out of the living room on the last verse of the song, tears clearly seen in her eyes and had shut herself away in her bedroom. The dwarves, even though Thorin didn't actually show it, were concern for the tears that had slipped free and were going to go and check on her but were stopped by Gandalf, who told them that Rowena needed time to herself and she doesn't like to be seen as weak when a few tears escapes her control, and to leave her alone. So the dwarves reluctantly agreed.

Thorin, Fíli and Kíli were the last ones to go to bed as Gandalf quietly came over to them, knowing deep down that Bilbo would be angry at him for planning such a scheme behind his back and Rowena will be angry with him for not including her in such a scheme behind her father's back.

“Thorin!” Gandalf called out softly so not to wake everyone. Thorin turned to him with a look of inquiring of what the wizard wants now. “I would like to speak to Fíli and Kíli privately, if you please?”

Thorin’s eyebrow rose at that strange request, but he nodded “Very well then.” Then he called for his nephews. “Fíli, Kíli, you are needed. Gandalf wants to talk to you.”

The boys obeyed their uncle and followed Gandalf into the living room. Thorin looked towards Rowena's bedroom door as his nephew walked away, following the old wizard into the living and made the decision to check on her before he turned in for the night.

“What is it, Gandalf?” Fíli asked first as he entered.

“What did you want to talk to us about?” Kíli asked next following after his brother by his side.

Gandalf didn’t say anything at the moment as he made a last minute look round down the hallway to make sure there was no one else around to listen. After making sure the coast was clear, he gathered Fíli and Kíli closer so they could talk quietly.

“I don’t want any of the company and Thorin to know on what I want you to do at the moment. Especially not Bilbo or Rowena.” Gandalf whispered. “But I want you both to keep an absolute secret, do you understand?”
They both nodded and listened further.

Satisfied, Gandalf showed off a mystery smile. “I got a very important job for you both.”

Both the boys’ eyes widen with curiosity.

Meanwhile, Rowena woke to a knock on her door and she walked towards her door. She had taken her dress off after she had came into her bedroom and cried into the mattress, leaving her only in her chemise. She didn't bother to put on her robe as she touched the handle and opened the door, but now she wished she had when she sees the last person she had expected standing in front of her doorway.

Thorin wasn't expecting her to answer her door in her chemise either, judging from the shock look on his face as he stared at her. Rowena decided to save the King from humiliating himself by grabbing a blanket off her chair and held it in front of her. That seemed to snap Thorin out of his trance and he looked up into her eyes, which wasn't much as he did come up to the top of her lips now.

Rowena asked. "Can I help you, Master Oakenshield."

"I know you are a mercenary, Ms. Baggins." Thorin said as he shifted his weight. "I want to know what type of weapon you are most skilled at."

Rowena nodded her head. "Fair enough. I know how to use a sword but I am a better archer than swordswoman in all honesty."

"Is it because you were trained by Elves?"

Rowena looked at Thorin, hearing the distaste and distrust in his voice at the mere mentioning of Elves. She opened her mouth to say something but she heard footsteps coming towards them, and before she even aware of it, she was already closing the door and leaning her arm against the door as the footfalls passed her door and she gave a sigh of relief.

Once her heart slowed back down to its normal beat, it sped up again when she heard a throat being cleared and Rowena glanced down to see a horrifying sight.

"'Ooo, if my father or Ada knew about this, they'll kill me!' Rowena thought as she tried to move away from him.

But life decided make her its personal joke at that exact moment by causing Rowena to trip over the hem of her chemise and at the next moment, she found that her breasts were being pressed against the Dwarf King’s face.

A blush erupted through her entire face, turning it into a red mess. "Oh my Vahal! I'm so sorry! My feet and hem were formally introduced just now and my breasts were just introduce to your face! Er, I mean, I tripped over my hem and I fell on your face!" Rowena continued, not noticing the look of approval that flashed in Thorin's eyes as he looked at her dressed only in her chemise. "You're very hot, actually. What I mean, you have a hot temperature radiating from you, not your body and looks. But you are a very attractive man with a gorgeous body." Rowena just realized what she had said. "Wait? What?"

"'Oh, Vahal! Kill me now and be done with it! I can't believe I said that!' Rowena went to her bed
as she covered her face with her hands. She sat down on it and lowered her hands, her fingers started to play with a tendril of her hair. She didn't speak for a while, neither did Thorin, as she tried to get her embarrassment and composure back firmly under her control once again.

She spoke up, breaking the silence fell between them. "No, it wasn't because I was trained by Elves that made me a better archer. I already had a natural talent for it and Lord Elrond noticed it as I was using a small bow that I had made one day. " Rowena found, by not looking at Thorin, helped as she would be remind of that incident. "He wanted me to be able to protect myself so that that incident never happened again."

"And what incident would that be?" Thorin asked as he came to stand before her. He reached down and cupped her chin between his index finger and thumb, rising her head up so they were face to face. "I only knew that you were adopted by Elves but I don't know the reason how it came to be."

Rowena really had to fight back a full-body shiver from erupting through her body at the feel of his callous fingers on her chin, his index finger barely touching the seam of her bottom lip but she still could feel its touch on it though.

She lowered her lashes over her eyes, giving the appearance of timidness, before looking back up at him. "I was attacked by Orcs when I was out picking berries three and a half years living here with my adopted father. I was running away from them, badly wounded due to the wounds dealt to me by the wargs." She took a deep breath before she continued on. "I remember running deeper into the forest, than I remembered nothing." Her eyes lowered for a split second before looking up into his eyes. "When I came to, Lord Elrond and Gandalf was standing by my bed. It was decided, once I was completely healed, that I was to stay in Rivendell to be trained by the Elves. Lord Elrond and his children even treated me like I was his daughter and their sister."

Thorin mumbled in that deep, baritone voice of his. "Do not expect me to be nice to Elves when there has been nothing but bad blood between them and my people."

"I'm not." Rowena said, reaching up and wrapping his hands with hers. "Lady Galadriel told me what happened between your people and the Elves. How King Thranduil did not help you when the dragon attacked Erebor. How he did not send aide or help your people when you were wondering around middle earth." She could tell that she had surprised Thorin with her words but she wasn't done. "I just expect you to keep in mind that not all elves are like King Thranduil and his men, there are those who are willing to help out of the goodness of their heart."

Thorin slowly blinked at her as the pad of his thumb stroke her bottom lip. "You are wise despite being one so young."

Rowena laughed at that. "No, I'm just naively optimistic. Many have told me that I've trust too easily and too willing. That I believe too much in the good in people and that some people have good in them despite not being one themselves." She sighed, "and it will get me betrayed by those I trust so foolishly...." She went silent before she said. "It sounds like they won't accept me until I'm bitter, suspicious and jaded with life."

Thorin stared at Rowena as he moved his hands to grasp her hands in his and turned them over, raising both of them by to his lips and placed a chaste kiss on both knuckles of her hands, flooring Rowena with his bold move and she could only stare at him in shock. Than he slow brushed his fingers along hers, as he walked backwards, heading back to the door. His callous fingers brushed against her skin, making it overly sensitive by the slow, seductive caress of his finger pads.

Thorin didn't say anything as he walked back towards the door, facing it now, and went to the door. It was only when his hand grasped the handle and he only turned his head around to look back at her did he say something. "I wouldn't change you for all the treasure in Middle Earth,
Rowena. You are perfect just the way you are and I hope you never, ever change just because someone tells you too."

With that, Thorin opened the door and stepped out, closing the door behind him and without a backward glance at her. Rowena waited until the door firmly shut before she fell back onto her mattress, still completely dazed by his action and words.

'What just happened?'
Chapter Seven: The Adventure Begins.

Chapter Summary

Céline Dion - My Heart Will Go On

Near, far, wherever you are
I believe that the heart does go on
Once more you open the door
Chapter Seven: The Adventure Begins.

While his men were well-rested and fully energized from a good night sleep, Thorin Oakenshield most certainly was not. And it was all because of those erotic dreams of Rowena he had. After seeing her only in her chemise last night, his libido decided to take full control instead of his logic and played rampageously through the night, not allowing him to sleep.

And it was because her chemise lifted very little to the imagination.

The chemise perfectly emphasizes her breast and waist while softly draping hips. It was practically sheer when she stood before the light coming from the faint flames in the lantern in her bedroom, giving him a tantalizing hint of what's lies underneath the chemise.

Thorin groaned as he rubbed his face. *Oh, Mahal! That girl is going to drive me to distraction! I won't be able to focus on the mission completely.*

And sadly, Thorin didn't know whether that was a good thing or a bad thing.

He wasn't paying attention when Rowena walked into the room until Dwalin dug his elbow into Thorin's side, hard. And when the dwarf king raised his head to snap at his old friend, his mouth quickly snapped shut when he saw the most tantalizing view in front of him.

Rowena was dressed as a mercenary as it was her job but it merely wasn't the realization that she was a mercenary that had him and his men gaping at her. It was her clothing that did it.

She wore cotton cream white shirt with shiny silk strip across her breasts, dark brown leather underbust corset, dark brown suede and leather gloves. Rowena wore dark brown leather pants with studs. Hanging low on her hips is a decorative silver belt with turquoise blue gems and snakeskin belt with a golden buckle.
Light brown leather-heeled boots
Sword hanging on a leather belt over her shoulder
Two brown leather travel bags strapped to the snakeskin belt
Dagger strapped to the snake skin belt

Her short-sleeved tunic was molded onto the dips and curves of her upper body, as if it was made just to fit her body perfectly. The neckline was tantalizing low, showing the upper mounds of her breasts where they rose above the neckline. The was beautiful styled knotted pattern that ran diagonally down her breasts and down the hem of the tunic. A matching pattern ran along the neckline and down where a string was weaved through the holes and tied between her breasts.

Her breeches was also molded into the dips and curves of her lower body, as if it was also made just to fit her body perfectly. The breeches has ties along her hips, where it tied at the top of the breeches, where it just hang on her hips.

Her breeches revealed a hidden secret that Thorin was unaware of until now.

And that was Rowena has a well-defined butt and long, muscursively-toned, and shapely legs. It was clearly visible as Rowena's back was facing them and she was putting on the rest of her items. And it was only when she put on her brown leather skirt-belt that has chain-mail over it that snapped Thorin from his stupor and he barked orders at his men to get ready to leave.

Rowena had already put on waist-guard, armor-shine covered boots, her chain-mail neck and shoulder protection, and strapped on her shoulder armor on her person when she heard Thorin's angry voice from behind her and turned her head around as she tugged on her first glove to see the dwarves practically tripping over themselves in order to follow his orders.

She was tugging her second glove on when Gandalf walked over, smiling at her. "How did you sleep, my dear girl?"

Rowena flexed her fingers underneath the cool leather of her gloves as she said. "I slept well. Thank-you for asking." Than she thought. 'If you call tossing in turn and thinking nothing but Thorin sleeping well.'

Rowena sneaked a glance at Thorin and noticed that he didn't look well rested, unlike the rest of his men. And she wondered what could of kept the dwarf king from his sleep.

Balin called to Gandalf." Gandalf, may I speak with you in private?"

Rowena clapped Gandalf on the back. "I'm going to check on Goliath."

Gandalf said as she started to walk away from him. "Alright but please do be careful."

Rowena shouted back at him as she opened the door and stepped out. "I'm always careful!"

"Oh, that's rich coming from someone who's naturally clumsy." Gandalf called out to her.

"Break one vase at Rivendell because you tripped over your skirt and you're marked for life." Rowena mumbled as she shook her head as she finally closed the door behind her and walked down the path to led outside the village to the forest where Goliath was waiting for her.

Unbeknownst to her, one of Lobelia Sackville-Baggins’ friend had spotted Rowena stepping out of Bag End and immediately hurried away to tell Lobelia about it.

Balin had led Gandalf outside to the backyard and he turned to face Gandalf.
"Rowena is Thorin's One, the very one that he had met when the girl was fourteen years of age."

It wasn't a question or clarification, it was a statement, pure and simple. Gandalf was quite surprised by that, he didn't know that anyone else knew about them meeting in the past or having being able to the realization that Rowena the Mercenary and Thorin's One were the same person. But what actually confused him the most was the fact that Balin knew about Rowena being Thorin's One when Gandalf clearly remembered that Balin wasn't even there when the human and the dwarf met.

Gandalf asked him. "How did you come with the knowledge of Rowena? She clearly had changed over the years, so how did you know that she and Thorin's One are the same person when Thorin himself has not realized it."

"Thorin spent hours describing her to myself and Dwalin." Balin smiled up at Gandalf. "Golden hair like sunshine or pale gold, Amazonite-like eyes, a tall and slender figure, lips that shame the red rose and fair skin like polished ivory."

Gandalf's lips broke out in a wide smile. "That certainly sounds like Rowena. I'm surprised that Thorin hadn't placed two and two together when he first saw her."

"Oh, I'm sure there was a flare of recognition in him." Balin explained. "But I'm also sure that he had pushed it to the side in order to focus on the mission."

Gandalf looked down at Balin. "What do you want to do?"

"My brother and I want to see Thorin and Rowena wed together." Balin said. "I've seen how Thorin acts when someone asks about his One and he would give this smile that made his old self come back." He smiled. "She would do him good."

"Yes, Rowena is a carefree girl with a heart of gold." Gandalf hummed as he said. "I need to see for myself." He quickly explain himself when Balin frowned up at him. "Rowena is under the belief that Thorin does not share her feelings and does not want to tell him her feelings."

Balin nodded his head. "Same thing with Thorin. He knew that she liked him but he thought that was how she treated everyone and kept his feelings to himself despite giving her a courtship bead as a promise."

Gandalf stopped and smiled down at Balin. "Than I suggest our matchmaking plan begins now, my old friend."

Balin nodded his head. "I agree."

Thorin's voice came from the front of the smial. "Balin! Gandalf! It's time to go!"

Balin and Gandalf walked around the side of the hill and found the entire company waiting for them, minus a Hobbit. Once Balin and Gandalf were close, the group turn and headed down the same path as Rowena did before.

Sometime later, the dwarves started to hear children laughter mixed with a woman's laughter ahead and they quickly spotted Rowena standing by a great black Friesian stallion that carried three hobbit children on his back. The stallion was walking around Rowena, his pace slow and easy, in order to keep his precious passengers from falling off his back.

Gandalf recognized the three boys and a wide smile broke across his face. "Why bless my beard! Is that Pippin, Merry and Sam that you have on Goliath's back, Rowny?"
Rowena laughed as she started to pick the boys up and off the back of her horse. "Indeed! They gotten so big last time we've saw them, huh?"

Gandalf laughed as he nodded in agreement. "Indeed!"

Rowena placed her hands on Merry's and Pippin's head as she smiled down at the three boys. "Alright, my group is here so it's time for me to leave. We'll play again when I return."

Pippin stepped forward and grabbed her skirt. "Promise?"

Rowena knelt before him and said, pinching his cheek affectionately. "Promise." She started to wave the boys away. "Now get going before your parents start to wonder where you three disappeared off to."

Thorin stepped up to Rowena as he waited for the boys to ran off and disappear over the hill. "Are you ready?"

"Yeah." Rowena said as she climbed up onto her horse.

Meanwhile back in Bag End and after all the dwarves had lifted and started on their journey, it was early in the morning, with the sun peeking into the bedroom of Bilbo Baggins, the bright light slowly awakening him. He stretches his muscles as he yawned and then he noticed something; the house has gone strangely quiet except for the sounds of birds.

Confused, he got out of bed and crept out into the hallway, down into the tunnel towards the kitchen. There was no sign of any of the dwarves or Gandalf in any of the rooms.

"Hello!" He called out to see if there would be an answer, but there was nothing but silence.

Suddenly he felt so glad and nearly cried out with joy. Those obnoxious dwarves and that meddlesome wizard are gone. Never had he felt so relieved that never again would she be involved in this adventure rubbish and he and Frodo could return to normal.

But than he remembered that Rowena had gone with him and he was filled with a fatherly worry and concern for his daughter. She could get herself hurt or worse killed.

But after a few minutes, he began to realize how lonely he had been without any company making such liveliness in his home; never had he had such a party like that.

As Bilbo entered the living room, he wondered if he made the right decision on not going on the quest, when something caught his eye. On the foot stool of his armchair was the contract they’d showed him last night, lay opened. And he saw two signatures written at the bottom of the contract.

The first signature was signed, Thorin son of Thrain. Underneath the first signature was Balin son of Fundin signed as a witness. But on the third line where it said burglar, it was blank space that had yet to be signed.

At that moment, a strange new feeling came over him. A Tookish feeling he haven’t felt in years since his parents died and it had almost reared itself when Rowena came into his life. With this new found energy he made his final decision. But first he must write a letter to Frodo.

Some time later, it was a strange sight to witness for the Hobbits of Hobbiton, as the respectable Mister Bilbo Baggins of Bag End; ran across the fields, jumping over fences and large pumpkins in a wheel barrow, wearing beige trousers, a green waistcoat with brass acorn buttons and a
burgundy coat. And on his back was a rucksack fill with essential supplies and in his hand he carried long piece of paper that waved in the wind as he ran.

Many of the Hobbits shook their heads at such abnormal behavior.

Bilbo ran as fast as he could to make a stop at the Gamgee’s house, to talk to Hamfast Gamgee where Frodo often came to play with their son. At last he had arrived and found Mister Gamgee in his garden digging up weeds.

“Mister Hamfast!” He called out breathlessly after the running he had.

“Oh! Hello there, Mister Bilbo.” Hamfast greeted her as he lifted his straw hat in a gentlemanly way. “How are you this fine morning? I heard Rowena is back.”

“I’m quite fine, Mister Hamfast.” Bilbo replied still out of breath. “But I actually came here to ask you a favor.”

“Oh what is it?” Hamfast asked.

“Well I’m going on a very long journey, a very, very long journey.” Bilbo explained “And I wondered if you would please look after Frodo for me while I’m away?”

“Oh course I will, Mister Bilbo.” Hamfast reassured him. "Frodo can come and stay with us; he and my son can play every day, he’ll want for nothing. Where is young Mister Frodo?”

“He’s still asleep when I left him.” Bilbo clarified as he remembered seeing the shape of Frodo under the sheets fast asleep when he went to check on him. But he didn’t have the heart to wake and to say goodbye to him. It would be too much for them and he knew that if he had taken him with her, the journey would be very dangerous for a young boy. “And if you be so kind to past this letter on to him when he wakes, it will explain to him where I have gone and who would look after him.” He finished as he handed Hamfast the letter.

“I understand. You can rely on me, Mister Bilbo.” Hamfast promised as he tucked the letter in his apron pocket.

“Thank you Mister Hamfast.” Bilbo thanked. “Well I can’t stop now, I’m already late!” And with that, he started running again towards the exit of the Shire.

“Late for what, Mister Bilbo?” Hamfast called after him.

“I’m going on an adventure!” He shouted as he left the shire.

But Bilbo did wonder how Hamfast knew that Rowena was in town still when she never wondered out of Bag End during the night and she had an uncanny ability to hide her presence when she wanted to.

Bilbo had no idea how long he ran, but he caught sight of the company riding on ponies with Gandalf riding in front of them along with Thorin leading the profession. Without hesitation he raced to catch up with them.

Meanwhile, when Bilbo was getting his ransack packed and ready to go, Rowena was finding that her eyes kept returning to the Company’s leader. The daylight did nothing to make him appear any less severe, and he was poised on top of the horse like a bird of prey sitting on a turret staring down waiting to strike. The image of a predator harden in her mind as she absorbed the sight of him against rising sun. His heavy brows framed deep-set eyes that at present looked the color of midnight blue sky and unfathomable as the heavens themselves. There were harsh lines etched at the sides of his stern mouth.
Rowena immediately snapped her eyes away from Thorin when the dwarf King turned his head towards her. She pretend to take an sudden interest in the branches above her, she really did not want to be caught sharing at him by the dwarf himself. Especially not what had happened between them from last night was still fresh on her mind.

Rowena gripped her rein in her fists as she thought. *What are you doing? You're under his employee, you shouldn't be staring at him if he was a bread and you're a homeless girl. I have a job to do, I can't act on my feelings. So focus.*

Rowena was not paying attention to what was going on around her, so she didn't see that her bag was moving and a small head poked out from the lid of it and a equal small and slender body crawling off from the bag. She wasn't aware of the small furry terror on Goliath's rump until the little terror leapt up and landed on top of her head, wringing startled shriek from Rowena, startling everyone around her and causing the entire company to stop their horses.

Rowena raised her eyes up to find beautiful icy blue eyes staring out from a cat's face. "Oh! Ophelia, it's just you!" She patted her heart as she leaned against Goliath for support. "You almost gave me a heartattack."

Gandalf looked at the cat still sitting on her head. "I see you brought that little demon with you."

Rowena looked at the old man with a raised brow. "What's with the tone?"

"What tone?" Gandalf asked.

"You know exactly what tone, Gandalf." Rowena said. "You acted like she has done something to you that made her into your enemy."

"You're right, she has done anything to me." Gandalf said. "But I'm still not happy that you got you into trouble with Thranduil and he forbid you from ever setting foot in Mirkwood ever again."

Rowena stared at him for a while before she said, bewildered. "You make it sound like that was a bad thing."

Bofur laughed, drawing the young woman and old man attention to him. "What did your little friend do to him, if I may ask?"

Rowena and Gandalf looked at each other before the young woman erupted into deep belly-rolls of laughter while Gandalf started mutter under his breath angrily. The dwarves looked at each, baffled by the different reaction that came from Rowena and Gandalf.

Fili and Kili looked at each other and both started to smile as the both thought. 'Oh, we're going to like her.'

Rowena said, once she had regained her breath enough to speak before erupting back into laughter once again. "She decided to latch herself onto Thranduil's face and dug her claws into his flesh as it took four elves to pry her off of him!"

Fili and Kili joined in her laughter, as did the other dwarves. Only Gandalf and Thorin didn't join in their laughter. Gandalf was because he had not found it funny when Ophelia had done it and he didn't like the fact that Rowena had found it amusing despite never being able to enter Mirkwood. And Thorin arched a brow, the corner of his mouth lifting a fragment. Even though he still had doubts of how exactly this tenacious young woman would be of any help to the company, but he found himself reluctantly admiring her humor and boldness more than he’d admit.
“Carry on,” he ordered, and nudged his horse’s sides with his heel and the horse gave a snort before trotting forward once more.

Rowena shrugged her shoulders, taking his dismissal in strides, when a hand came to rest on her shoulder. She turned to find Balin looking up at her with a considering look. He looked her straight in the eyes for a long moment, then nodded to himself as if he found what he was looking for.

“Welcome to the Company, lassie,” Balin said, and he seemed genuinely pleased that she showed.

“Thank you, Master Balin,” she said, and gave him a smile.

He released her shoulder, and returned to Thorin’s side at the head of the company. Rowena watched as several members of the company passed, offering greeting and she twisted the reigns so Goliath, with Ophelia sit lying across her head, would fall in line along side of them. It was only then a moment later that Nori, thief by trade, if the dagger she saw his nimble fingers nick off of Dwalin only moments before was any indication, came to ride alongside of her, and Rowena felt Ophelia shifted her body on top of her head and her tail suddenly swishing in front of her face, causing the human woman to reach up and grabbed the loose skin at the base of the cat's neck and lifting her off her head and sitting her in front of her.

“I suppose you’ll be wanting in on the wager, lass?” Nori cocked up an eyebrow with a smirk upon his face.

She turned her face towards him, and a grin on her lips. “What wager?” Rowena asked, decidedly curious. There was a glint of mischievousness in his gaze, and she was entirely sure that was a good thing but probably wasn't for whoever it was directed towards.

“On Bilbo, of course!” Bofur stated, with a wild hand gesture as if it were the most obvious thing in the entire world.

“My father?” Rowena tilted her head to the side. “What does this bet have to do with Papa?” She asked, even though she had a good feeling that she knew exactly that what the bet had to do with the hobbit but she was curious more now than ever.

“On whether or not he shows up,” Bofur stated.

“He won’t,” Dwalin commented, roughly.

“He will!” Kili defended, while Fili just shook his head side to side. Other murmured in their opinions as well, eventually it all came back to them all looking at Rowena.

“Wait, you're actually betting if my papa shows up or not?” She blurted out, her eyebrows shooting up towards her hairline as she didn't shifted underneath all the stares. It wasn't unnerving to be underneath twelve gazes at once (Gandalf was merrily enjoying the scenery and Thorin vigilantly looked forward, his expression stony.) since she had a lot of people staring at her when it comes to her job and she simply can't have any unevenness on the job.

“Well, what say you, lass?” Gloin stated, loudly.

Ori spoke up than. "But it's okay if you don't want to join in on the bed, Mistress Rowena, given the fact he is your father and all."

Than Rowena heard Bofur behind her. "You know, now that I think about. Maybe we shouldn't have said anything to Rowena." Everyone looked at him and he rushed to explain himself.
"Remember when she tore into Thorin's hide when he insulted her father? We're betting against her father."

'Ah' was heard from all the dwarves and Rowena had to bite her lip from keep herself from laughing, determine to keep that disapproving daughter look on her face.

“Of course, he will show,” Rowena stated, smiling because in her heart she believed that to be true. She knew that realistically she could not truly be certain on this, but she had this feeling in her heart. A strange knowing, and she had complete faith her father would show as she had faith that dawn would break each day.

Thorin scoffed lightly, but Rowena decided to ignore him, saying. "My father has never let me down before and I highly doubt he'll do it now."

Nori jingled a bag of coins to regain her attention. “If your so confident why not put some money on it?” Nori challenged, with a roguish smirk.

“How much?” Rowena questioned, raising her chin ever so slightly.

“20 gold pieces,” Nori informed her.

“You know what...” she said, her voice ringing with clear disapproval and she watched all their faces as they looked at her with wariness and tension, waiting for her to furiously scold them, before she broke out into a wide smile and winked at Nori, inclining her head in his direction. “You have yourself a bet.” A cheer came from some of the other dwarves at her answer, while Gandalf smiled knowingly.

Bofur gave a sigh of relief. "You almost had us going there for a while."

Rowena stuck her tongue out at him. "Well, duh, I thought it was made aware that I can be quite mischievous if I want to be."

Gandalf nodded his head in agreement. "That is true."

Rowena scanned the Shire that was in the distance, and growing even further behind them with each passing second. Goliath trotted a little away from the other horses, he was a warhorse and like all warhorses, he was aggressive and dangerous.

Several minutes passed where they road. The Dwarves chatted amongst themselves. Rowena paid attention (not just to their short, dark and handsome leader) all the dwarves and looked at them thoughtfully. They were all proud, and stubborn people, unlike herself. Balin was old and wise and had a kindness about him that put Rowena at ease, her reminded her of a grandfather-figure. Dwalin was a bit gruff, but he seemed like a honest dwarf and she could also tell he was an accomplished fighter, it was her professional to tell who was an accomplished fighter or not, simply by watching them.

Bofur was openly joking, and talkative, and she had a feeling his bold personality hid a depth that few got to see and Rowena immediately bonded with Bofur, viewing him as an older brother and she knew that Bofur saw her the same way. Rowena raised her Amazonite stare, and continued to look at the group, evaluating them one by one. Bifur only spoke in Khuzdul (or with his hands) a side effect of the ax in his head, so communication with him would be strained without a translator. He gave offer her an encouraging smile. Or what appeared to be an encouraging smile, it might have been an insane one, but she returned it nonetheless. Bombur was a sweet, jolly dwarf and from the conversation he was having with Ori, he was a cook.

Oin who was had a horn in left ear was stern, and hard of hearing, but he appeared to have a kind
disposition. Ori whom was writing constantly in his book taking not everything around while Dori fretted over him, worriedly. Gloin gushed about his wife and son, and he could not be more prouder as he stared down at the pictures he had of them.

Nori was harder to pin down than the rest. He outwardly was pleasant and a bit of a rascal, though she had no doubt he could be down right dangerous given the chance. Fili and Kili held themselves proudly, reminiscent of Thorin. But unlike Thorin, they had a carefree air that surrounded them as well as a great mischief in their eyes that reminded her of a pair of twins in Rivendell and as well as herself. Suddenly Goliath threw back his mane and reared back on his hind legs suddenly, startling Rowena as she grabbed onto his neck while he gave a neigh. Rowena had her arms now completely locked around Goliath's neck and Ophelia was clinging onto his mane with her fur bristled, and looked down annoyed at his sudden movement when she heard a shout upon the wind.

“Wait!”

The wind whipped the loose strands of her hair, into her face as she sat up and twisted around to look behind her. She tucked the wild strands behind her ear, as her eyes narrowed on the green valley behind them. Her eyes widened a fraction as she seen a very familiar hobbit rushing up the hill and waving a contract wildly in his hand.

A laugh passed through her lips, and her lips were stretched into a broad smile. “Papa!” She called out.

“Bilbo?” Fili blinked.

“Bilbo!” Bofur exclaimed.

Thorin’s eyes narrowed in shock at the hobbit. Rowena found that look to be also attractive on him as well, other than having that attractive brooding look of his, and the rest of the dwarves twisted in their saddles, all to look at the hobbit that ran towards them as fast as his hairy feet could carry him.

“WAIT!” He cried out, desperately. “I signed it!”

Gandalf’s eyes crinkled, as he smiled proudly at the hobbit. Bilbo slowed his footsteps until he came to a halt beside Balin, and held up the contract. “I signed it,” he said, breathlessly.

Balin takes the contract, and pulls out a pocket-glass to inspect the hobbit’s signature before he smiled at Bilbo. “Everything appears to be in order. Welcome, Master Baggins, to the company of Thorin Oakenshield,” Balin said, and cheers erupted from the company.

Thorin arched his brow, glancing at the hobbit with a cold kind of consideration. “Give him a pony,” he ordered, roughly after a moment and Bilbo blanched.

“No, no, no, that— that won’t be necessary, thank you, but I’m sure I can keep up on foot,” Bilbo stated, shaking his head rapidly not noticing Kili and Fili’s approach.

“Not with the distance will be walking, Papa,” Rowena told him, and smiled as the two dwarves reached down and heaved the hobbit off the ground. Bilbo’s eyes bulged out, and his mouth dropped on in a silent scream as he kicked his feet wildly. The set him down on the saddle of Myrtle, their only pony and the only stead Bilbo would be capable of riding.

The hobbit looked terrified.

“Oh, Myrtle is a gentle pony. She won’t be giving you any trouble,” Bofur assured him, with a
smile.

Bilbo didn’t look particularly convinced and Rowena couldn't blame him, never trust a horse that you never rode on. She personally learned that the hard way and she almost died after that lesson.

“Come on, Nori, pay up,” Oin suddenly shouted. “Go on.”

Nori sighed, and tossed a sack of money to Oin. Bags of money flew in the air, and Bilbo watched on bemused. He looked to Rowena.

“What’s that about?” He asked, head tilted to the side.

“They placed bets on whether or not you’d turn up,” Rowena explained, with a amusement in her voice. “Most of them bet that you wouldn’t.”

“What of you? What did you two bet?” The hobbit asked, after a moment of silence.

“Well…” Gandalf began but Bilbo got his answer when two bags of money soared in their direction and he caught a pouch that had been thrown at him, but what surprised him the most that Rowena had caught the second bag of money.

Rowena caught hers, and secured it to her waist, while she quickly looked to see who thrown that at Gandalf while hers had come from Fili and caught Thorin who had turned rather grumpily.

Gandalf smirked triumphantly, holding his bag of gold. “My dear fellow, I never doubted you for a second,” he stated, as he put the money into his bag.

Bilbo was a bit touch by his faith in him.

“Bilbo, what made you change your mind, what about Frodo?” Gandalf asked as Rowena started to stroke Ophelia's head.

“I asked a friend of mine to look after him for me for a while.” Bilbo replied “Also I wrote a letter to him to explain why I couldn’t take him with me. I don’t know what I would do if anything happened to him. But knowing Hamfast Gamgee, I’m sure he’ll be safe.”

“Yes I’m sure he’ll be quite safe.” He muttered to himself, he turned to Fili and Kili who looked at him and he gave them a wink.

Fili and Kili understood what he meant, but said nothing and carried on. But Rowena caught that exchange and looked between Gandalf and the two dwarves, frowning.

Then Bilbo gave such a sneeze. “Bless you, my dear Bilbo.” Gandalf said politely.

“Thank you, Gandalf.” Bilbo answered in sniffled voice. “It’s all this horse hair, I having a reaction.”

Then he started searching through his pockets and his eyes widen as he realized what he had forgotten to pack.

“Oh no, no, wait, wait, wait. Stop! Stop!” he called to the others as they came to a halt. “We have to turn around.”

The company and Thorin were getting annoyed by this constantly stopping.

“What on earth is the matter?” Gandalf inquired.
“I forgot my handkerchief.” Bilbo spoke regretfully.

Rowena looked at her father. "Really? You scold me when I forgot my handkerchief and now you're doing it!"

Bofur, who was ahead of them, ripped a piece of his tunic. “Here use this.” He suggested merrily and threw the cloth at Bilbo.

He caught it, but he didn’t want to use it, he doesn’t know where this cloth had been or when it had last been washed.

The dwarves gave a chuckle of laughter at the expression on his face, even the traitor known as his daughter.

But Thorin had no time for such silly things like handkerchiefs; he wanted to continue on their journey without distraction.

“Move on!” He commanded and they marched on with Bilbo still holding the cloth but away from him.

“You’ll have to manage without pocket-handkerchiefs and a good many other things, Bilbo Baggins, before we reach our journey’s end.” Gandalf tells him as they rode on their way. “You were born to the rolling hills and little rivers of the Shire, but home is behind you, the world is ahead.”

Bilbo made a quick stop to look back at the shire for a final look and thought about Frodo, he must be missing him by now.

'I will come back to you Frodo.' Bilbo thought to him, even though he won’t hear him from a far. 'I promise, no matter what it takes, I will come home.’

“Uh-oh! We have trouble with a big 'T' coming our way, Papa!” Rowena announced, loudly. She had pulled her stead to a halt as her eyes spied something pink, frilly with a mess of black curls and umbrella rushing up the path in fury. “It's that old lemon-faced harpy,” she said, with a sardonic smile in warning to her father. “Lobelia,” she added, explaining to the dwarves after she noted the confused looks directed towards her.

Bilbo cursed before he could help it startling a laugh out of Kili and squeak of out Ori. Dori quickly reached over covering Ori’s ears and sent Bilbo a glare.

Rowena looked at her father with wide-eyes, shocked at his language. "where did you learn to curse like that from?!!"

Bilbo shot her a look. "Last time I checked, I'm the father and your the daughter. So it's okay for me to curse."

"What kind of crappy logic is that!" Rowena asked but quickly dropped the subject once she received the look that usually came before spunks that made her unable to sit down for a while.

“Bilbo Baggins!” The harpy came to a halt in front of the entire company--one had to at least admire Lobelia’s bravery for facing the fearsome group of dwarves, or pity her for her stupidity--and shrieked, which caused Rowena to flinched and rubbed her ears, trying to ease the pain done to them. Her green eyes were a suiting color for all the jealousy that were in her heart, and they were narrowed and her lips were pressed into a thin line of disapproval. “What in Yavanna’s green hills do you think you are doing? Parading around with these--these dwarves,” she spat out
like a curse word and several members of the company bristled, “and seen consorting with wizards! Have you no shame?”

Bilbo sputtered, his face paling and his nerve crumbling underneath the onslaught of Lobelia’s vicious words. He saw the bewilderment of the dwarves, and he also saw the stormy quality that entered Gandalf’s gaze. He glanced out at Rowena, whose expression was angry and her jaw was clenched tightly. Sensing trouble about to stir, Bilbo tried to quickly to keep peace. “Hello, Lobelia,” he said, his tone pleasantly, but the slight stutter in his words belied his nerves. “Lovely morning, isn’t it?”

“Lovely morning? Lovely morning? That is all you have to say for yourself?” Lobelia snapped, with a huff. “It would be a lovely morning if I didn’t wake up to find my garden had been brutalized by your--your band of dwarves!”

Rowena glanced over at Fili and Kili, who shared a guilty look but she smiled at them, showing to them that she proved of it. But she made a mental note to congratulate them, before she turned back to Lobelia with a glare.

“Burglar,” Thorin eyed Lobelia as if she were something he just scrapped off his booth, “what is the reason for this disruption?”

“Uh, well,” Bilbo fiddled nervously with the reins, while his face flushed red. “You see...”

“Angry fiancée?” Bofur suggested, helpfully. Rowena made a disgust grimace at that, which was noticed by the dwarves.

Kili and Fili shared a grin. “Ah, perhaps our burglar has some explaining to do,” Kili barely choked back his laughter.

“Trying to run out on a his fiancée,” Fili clucked his tongue, and shook his head in mock disappointment. His lips twitched, his face threatening to split in a smile. “Or perhaps a wedding?” Rowena made a gagging motion by Bofur, which caused the dwarf to snort out a laugh.

Dwalin snorted. "Can't say I blame him."

“What? No!” Bilbo shouted, clearly angry at the really idea.


Bilbo sighed, rolling his eyes. Of course, she would latch onto that. He could only imagine the rumors that she would start and spread and mourned the loss of his status as a respectable hobbit. Thorin pinched the bridge of his nose, quickly losing his patience over such a trivial squabble and once again cursed the wizard’s choice of a burglar.

“No, she's actually much worse than a fiancée,” Rowena cut in dryly. “Just a loud mouthed harpy who is his cousin by marriage. Good day, Lobelia,” Rowena had a forced smile on her face, as she greeted the hobbit woman. “I would say you look lovely today but that would be a lie and my father likes it when I'm honest.”

And she was right, Lobelia didn't look lovely today at all. Her wild curls sticking about and the wrinkle quality of her dress. It had appeared that Lobelia had saw the state of her garden and rushed out the door after hastily trying to put herself together. Lobelia’s head snapped towards Rowena, and her face darken in red with embarrassment and anger. “You,” Lobelia barely concealed a sneer. “I see your no-good false daughter is back, as I've heard.”
There was a couple of noise of outrage from somewhere in the group of dwarves, and Bilbo sputtered angrily. Gandalf eyed Lobelia as if he was contemplating what kind of bug to turn her into, but Rowena only rolled her eyes and shook her head.

Her polite façade barely cracked, only an eyebrow ticked upward gave away her annoyance. “I can't really argue with that, I am his no-good false daughter.” Rowena noted that looks directed towards by the dwarves, her father and Gandalf and it made her aware that she had, somehow, alerted them to how deeply hurt she was by being called and calling herself that.

Lobelia’s lip curled. “I should have known this had something to do with you,” the black-haired hobbit stated, haughtily.

“Don’t you have something better to do, Lobelia? Like plot how to steal Papa's silverware? Or Bag End?” Rowena shot back, with an air of exasperation surrounding her as she reached up and started to toy with her hair, a clear sign of growing bored with Lobelia.

Bilbo put his knuckles in his mouth to stop the laughter as Lobelia went slack jawed at the accusation then her eyes narrowed into slits. “I told them, you know. I told them that you shouldn’t be allowed to live in the Shire, with us, pretending to be one of us since you are a Kin-Killer.”

Bilbo gasped outraged. Thorin’s eyes narrowed, and his brows furrowed as he looked at the stricken and heartbroken expression that appeared on Rowena's face, it completely shattered her cheerful and feisty nature in one blow. The woman had pulled back as if she had just be struck which only piqued his curiosity further and also made him want to protect her from the hurtful words that came from this woman's mouth.

“Kin-Killer?” Ori asked, his brows crinkled in confusion.

“What's a Kin-Killer?” Oin asked, his face scrunched up and he twisted his ear trumpet as if he wasn’t sure if he heard that right.

Rowena didn’t answer. Instead, she sat froze upon her stead, and Goliath snorted angrily, sensing her distress. Suddenly Goliath reared back, once again, and kicked his front legs out, aiming his hooves at Lobelia, who shrieked in terror and moved away from the deadly hooves. The angry stead continued to stomp and kick his legs out at Lobelia, determine to hurt the one who had in turn hurt his gentle mistress. Even Ophelia was angry, angrily hissing and yowling at the hobbit woman from her perch on Goliath's head.

Gandalf shouted at a still dazed Rowena. "Rowena! Get your horse under control!"

But the old wizard could tell that the young woman did not hear him, she was too lost in the pain and self-blame that had brought forth by Lobelia's cruel words, that it seemed that she was too detached from the situation to notice that her stead was trying to kill the hobbit woman.

Rowena, at the time, was having memories flaring through her mind. She remembered her mother holding her in her arms as she danced around the throne room, causing little Rowena to laugh as she wrapped her tiny arms around her mother's neck. Than she remembered her mother brushing her hair before bed and lying with her in her bed, reading a book to her as the little girl drifted off to sleep. And just as she started to remember her mother's body covered in blood and core, Rowena felt a callous hand grasping her hand and it snapped her from her memories and the young woman looked over to see Thorin by her side, his hand grasping tightly to her hands which had gripped the rein too tightly in her grasp, making her bleed.

Rowena slowly released her grip on the rein, causing it to drop against Goliath's back. The feel of the rein against his back snapped Goliath out of his blood-lust and he stopped suddenly. He turned
his neck and he nuzzled her cheek with his lips, and it made Rowena aware that she was actually crying and she was crying in front of those who knew her and those who didn't.

Rowena shook herself and pulled her hands away from Thorin, gently though, to wipe her tears away angrily and embarrassed. She was hiccupsing and tears were still falling from her eyes, down across her cheeks. She felt Gandalf coming over and started to stroke her head and she heard Bifur started to speak soothing Khuzdul to her as she felt Gloin and Balin stroking her back, an attempt to stop her tears from falling but her tears continue to fall. Which told everyone around her that she was hurting more than they had originally thought.

"How dare you!" Bilbo's angry voice sounded, halting Rowena's tears and making everyone to look over at him to see a very angry Bilbo glaring down at Lobelia. "How dare you call her that...that hideous name!" He continued on leaving Lobelia gaping up at him. "You know damn well that is not true! She was a little girl who was filled with self-blame as she slept in my bed, deliriously with high fever and pain! She wasn't aware what she was telling us and you have the nerve to throw her words back at her?!" Bilbo shook his head at her, disapprovingly. "Here you are insulting these dwarves and name-calling my daughter, and you call yourself a hobbit."

Lobelia opened her mouth only then to close it, and looked down. Her cheeks were pink with embarrassment and perhaps a bit of shame, too. The black-haired hobbit twisted her dress nervously in her hands before she turned and walked away in silence. Bilbo sat there rigidly on top of his pony, it was silent now. The only sound that could be heard was Rowena sniffling.

Bilbo took a deep breath, the angry rushing away from him as he looked back at Rowena. "Are you alright?"

"I think the shock of seeing so scolding Lobelia that badly made my tears stop." Rowena said, patting her cheek to confirm her words. "Yeah, that definitely stopped them."

Goliath suddenly moved a movement, which caused the other steads to move away from him and Rowena. The young woman reached down and patted his neck, a soothing gesture.

Rowena looked at the dwarves and flashed them a wide smile. "I'm fine now."

"Move on," he ordered, sharply and the company did as they were bid.

Rowena rode between Gandalf and her father, and the young woman noticed the curious glances directed towards her from the dwarves. But she also noticed that no one had asked her about the incident or the 'Kin-Killer' comment, and Rowena had a sinking suspicion that Thorin had a hand at that, and she was entirely thoughtful to him for that.

Bofur suddenly appeared by her side, coming between her father and her. "So, Mistress Rowena, have you ever fallen in love with a man before?"

Rowena blinked owlishly at him. "Excuse me?"

Bofur chuckled. "I asked have you ever fallen in love in with a man before?"

"I know that, I was kind of hoping you would have dropped it." Rowena said, earning a laugh from him. "If you really want to know. Yes, I have fallen in love with a man before."

Bofur arched a brow at her. "Oh, really? What can you tell me about him? Is he a man, Elf or dwarf."

Gloin snorted. "As if a girl like Mistress Rowena can ever fall in love with a dwarf. It's unbelievable!"
Rowena looked at Gloin with a smile on her lips. "Actually he's a dwarf."

Her response shocked every dwarf around her, it even almost made Kili fall off from his pony. Out of the corner of her eye, Rowena saw that Thorin didn't fully turn around in his seat like the others are done but his slightly turned head told her that he heard her just fine.

Gloin said, dazed. "What?"

Rowena smiled at him as she spoke slowly. "I've fallen in love with a dwarf."

Bofur let a whoop of approval. "So who is this mysterious dwarf that caught your fancy, girl."

Rowena smiled, dreamily and lovingly. "Well, he's grim and stern with broad-shoulders and black hair with a fierce regard and a deep mind. He has a powerful, forbidding presence."

Fili broke out into a smile as his gaze darted towards the back of his uncle. "That sounds a lot like my uncle."

"Your uncle?" Rowena asked, looking at Fili with a frown.

"So, what? Does that make you Princes?" Rowena asked, looking at both brothers. At their nod of confirmation, Rowena than said. "Wow, I never knew! He's more mature and serious than you two immature blockheads are."

"Talk about the pot calling the kettle black." Fili and Kili both said as they looked at each other.

"Ah, that's where I most defend myself." Rowena said. "I am an immature mischief-maker."

Rowena shook her head, causing her hair to fall over her shoulder, as she sent a flirtatious wink and smile towards Thorin. "Besides there's nothing wrong with Thorin matching perfectly to it. He is very tall, for a dwarf, dark and oh-so-very handsome."

Dwalin let out a bark of laughter, having no issue with the dark glare sent his way. Fili bit his bottom lip hard while he looked everywhere, but his uncle. Kili had bent over burying his face into his horse’s neck to muffle his laughter. Balin chuckled along with Gandalf while the rest at the dwarves valiantly tried to hide their amusement. Bilbo was shaking his head, disapprovingly at his daughter.

Rowena looked at them all. "I'm honest when it comes to expressing my feelings, so I have no problem telling anyone how I really feel even if that said-person doesn't like it and I simply don't care."

Thorin gripped his reigns until his knuckles were blanched white, but he schooled his featured into a haughty expression. Her words caused to recall that his human girl had told him the same thing when they had first met, when he had told her that she was too honest with her feelings for a mere human girl. But why would this mercenary say the same thing as she did?

Suspicion started to form in his mind and his heart at the true identity of this woman and he pushed it the aside in order to journey ahead and when it came time, he could pull it back forth and he'll think about it properly.

Thorin’s face was blank, but Gandalf could see the suspicion that set just underneath his skin yet the wizard didn't know where that suspicion was directed towards. What caused with what had happened with Lobelia or was it Rowena's true identity?
Rowena suddenly laughed, while Bilbo glowered as she joked around with Fili and Kili. A sigh worked its way up Thorin’s throat, but he held it back.

"You're too serious, Master Thorin!" Rowena called from behind him. "You should be kissed in order to loosen you up."

"And are you volunteering for that, Mistress Rowena?" Thorin asked, disinterested in the topic itself.

"Yeah, I always wondered if your mouth is as hard and firm as your personality." Rowena said, boldly.

Kili falls off his pony suddenly and everyone stopped their steads in mid-walk to look down at the young dwarf prince, who was lying on his back, staring up at them. Fili was trying really, really hard not to laugh but the others, they didn't seem to care about saving the young dwarf's ego and were laughing deep, belly-rolls ones.

"What happened, Kili?" Rowena asked, humor clearly heard in her voice. "That's the second time you almost fell off your horse. Never rode one before?"

Kili pointed his finger up at her as he gave her a mock look of loathing. "I hate you so much right now."

"Me?" Rowena asked. "What did I do? I'm not the one falling off my stead and onto my ass. So don't try to save your ego by blaming an innocent bystander."

Bofur started to laugh uproariously. "You? Innocent? Not bloody likely."

Rowena mockingly glared at Bofur. "Shut-up, Bofur, or I'll make you fall off your pony."

"And I believe you, lass."

After Kili had got back up on his stead and Thorin ordering the company to start moving once again (Rowena believed that Thorin was starting to get pissed at herself, Bofur, and his nephews for constantly stopping the company), Bilbo drew to the side of Gandalf, and entered into an awkward conversation with the wizard while Rowena rode off to the side. Her gaze scanned the green fields ever cautiously. Even though an attack was highly unlikely while still within the Shire borders, that did not mean there weren’t any to be found. As her gaze moved around, it was unconsciously drawn back to the leader of their company. Thorin had an arrogant lift to his chin, and his piercing blue eyes remained trained on the road before them, unflinching.

Rowena got this weird, immediate sense that Thorin was scared of no one, that he did what he pleased and he did not care a bit what other thought of it.

'Which was not entirely a bad thing.' she thought as the corner of her mouth tilted upward in devoted admiration.

The breeze picked up and rustled through the trees before washing over Rowena toying with her ponytail in a comforting motion.

'It has begun' a voice suddenly appeared in her head, causing Rowena to jolt up in her saddle as the unmistakable image of Lady Galadriel flashed through her mind.

Bilbo turned his attention to his daughter, as he had noticed that startled movement. "Are you alright, Rowny?"

Rowena nodded her head as she smiled at her father. "Yeah, I'm fine."
And they rode on, leaving Rowena to wonder what her adopted mother had meant by her words and leaving the young woman hoping beyond all hope that it wasn't something bad or foreboding heading towards them.
Chapter Eight: The Tale of Oakenshield and The Pale Orc.

Chapter Summary

Céline Dion - My Heart Will Go On

And you’re here in my heart
And my heart will go on and on
There is some love that will not go away

After many days of travelling over hills, through woods and crossing rivers, the company decided to camp out for the night at the edge of the cliff, they got off their ponies and began to set up camp.

Fíli and Kíli had got their equipment from the saddles of their ponies; Thorin was next to them helping out when Kíli almost dropped his saddlebag while he was removing it from his pony and it made a strange muffled ‘Ow!’ when it landed on the ground with a thump.

The sound made Thorin turned to Kíli with a puzzled look on his face. Rowena also had heard it and turn around to look down at the bag.

“What was that noise Kíli?” He questioned Kíli with a raised eyebrow.

Fíli looked up at his brother alarmed.

“That was me, uncle, Sorry.” Kíli said quickly and made a pained face as he clutched his foot. “My pony just stomped on my foot as I was getting my saddlebag.”

Fíli secretly breathed a sigh of relief.

Thorin narrowed his eyes at Kíli with suspicion as if he didn’t believe him.

“Just be careful next time. Fíli go help your brother.” Thorin ordered.

Fíli came to help his brother with his saddlebag and they set up their place near the camp fire.
Rowena waited until Thorin had walked away before going over to Fíli and Kíli.

Rowena placed her hands on her hips as she gestured towards the bag. "What's in the bag? And don't even try to fool me like you did to your uncle."

Fíli and Kíli looked at each other before sighing and flipping open the bag, revealing a smiling Frodo to her. Rowena stared at the three for a while before she broke out into a wide smile.

"I knew I liked you two for a reason. Don't worry, I won't say anything to your uncle or my father."

Sometime later, Rowena had made the mistake of allowing Ophelia to hold onto her bedroll because now the evil little cat is refusing to give it back to her, thinking this as a game as Rowena tugged on the bedroll, trying to free it from her teeth. Ophelia decided to would be a good idea to suddenly let it go and catch her mistress off guard, which she did adn Rowena was pitching backwards, falling towards the ground but then she felt hands gripped around her waist and stopped her from falling to the ground and raised back her on her feet. Rowena turned round to see who saved her from embarrassing herself and saw to her surprise and happiness that it was Thorin, and then suddenly Rowena's Amazonite green eyes met an intensive ice-blue gaze.

Not knowing how long they had stared at each other’s eyes, Thorin realized that his hands were still around her, feeling embarrassed he quickly pulled away, leaving a warm imprint from his hands at Rowena's waist and he turned round about to walk to where his bedroll was.

“Thank you for helping me. That’s very kind of you.” Rowena said cheerful, Thorin stopped where he was but didn’t turn round.

“I’m just saving you the trouble of breaking your ankles.” He said in a proud gruff voice. “I’m not having you slowing us down.” And he went to his bedroll.

'Awww, I think he likes me!' Rowena thought as she snatch her bedroll up from the ground and fought the temptation of kicking her bully of a pet cat as she headed over to her father, who was having a hard time getting off Myrtle.

After the company had eaten Bombur’s delicious hot stew, they settled on their bedrolls and went to sleep, except for Thorin, Fíli, Kíli, Rowena and Gandalf who were keeping a watchful eye over the camp.

Bilbo tossed and turned on his bedroll on the hard ground, trying to get some sleep. But a very loud snore was keeping him awake. He sat up from his bedroll and saw Bombur in his sleep was breathing in live moths into his open mouth that were fluttering above his head and when he exhaled they flew out of his mouth alive.

Bilbo wrinkled his nose in disgust and stood up from his bedroll. Since he can’t sleep, he decided to wander about the camp for a bit. Rowena spotted her father getting up and stood up from her bedroll, grabbing Ophelia and placing the cat on her shoulder as she walked towards him.

Thorin who was resting against the rock, secretly watched Rowena rose up from where she was resting and walked over the sleeping dwarves and headed towards the ponies. It still amazes him how graceful and effortlessly she moves, as if she is not bothered by the uneven ground at her feet.

Bilbo slowly crept up to Myrtle, ever since the start of their journey he had grown fond of sweet Myrtle and in secret he gave her pony treats.

“Hello girl.” Bilbo greeted Myrtle as he petted her soft velvety nose. “Who’s a good girl?” He
looked around to the sleeping dwarves to make sure no one was looking and from his pocket Bilbo produced another treat for Myrtle; a shiny red juicy apple. “It’s our little secret, Myrtle.” He whispered and fed the apple to his pony. “You must tell no one. Shh, shh.” He startled when a feminine hand appeared on Myrtle’s mane and looked over to see his daughter stroking her. The two smiled as the pony ate the apple.

From where he was resting, Thorin watched the scene with a scowl. “Oh all burglars, I get a kind one who steals apples for a pony.” He thought to himself as he rested his head against the rock.

Suddenly, a faint blood curdling screech echoed in the night. Bilbo looked up in alarm, he stepped back away from the edge of the cliff and turned to where Fíli and Kíli sat by the camp fire, they tensed up when they heard the shriek. Fíli felt the saddle back next to him jump and kept his hand on to and made sure no one saw that.

Even Rowena went tensed, looking out towards the cliff, her hand on the hilt of her sword as she scanned the area below them. Goliath stomped his hooves as he went into battle mode, feeling the tension in the air.

“What was that?” Bilbo asked in terror as he pointed out into the misty night.

“Orcs.” Kíli answered

“Orcs?” he asked startled, Bilbo quickly rushed back towards the safety of the camp fire.

Thorin jerked awake when he heard Bilbo said ‘Orcs’ and looked out to the edge of the cliff. Rowena glanced over to Thorin and the pair eyes met, and both were surprised by the look within their eyes: hatred for the Orcs, pain and sorrow.

“Throat-cutters, There’ll be dozens of them out there.” Fíli said vividly. “The lone-lands are crawling with them.”

Bilbo began to quiver with dread and Kíli made it worse when he joined in. Rowena slapped her hand to her forehead, knowing for well what was going to happened next.

“They strike in the wee small hours, when everyone’s asleep.” Kíli whispered ominously. “Quick and quiet; no screams, just lots of blood.”

Bilbo looked out into the night and shivered with fear of the thought of what was out there in the sinister night.

Fíli and Kíli looked at each other and started to chuckle at Bilbo’s discomfort. Rowena sighed as she shook her head at their antics, now for sure what was going to happen next as she noticed Thorin's empty bedroll.

“You think that’s funny?” Thorin’s voice growled at Fíli and Kíli that made them stop their childish sniggering.

Bilbo looked round to Thorin who walked up to his nephews with a scowl look on his face.

“Do you think a night raid by Orcs is a joke?” Thorin asked harshly.

“We didn’t mean anything by it.” Kíli said regretfully; looking like a boy who looked down sheepishly as he had been reprimanded by his furious parent, that Bilbo couldn’t help but pity him.

“No, you didn’t.” Thorin muttered bitterly to his nephews. “You know nothing of the world.” He went past Bilbo and Gandalf who was smoking his pipe, as he headed out to the edge of camp as Rowena watched him.
Rowena's eyes followed him, she couldn’t help but notice there was something an emotion in his voice; like he had a horrifying experience with Orcs.

“Don’t mind him, laddie.” Balin reassured the boys as he went over to them. “Thorin has more cause than most to hate Orcs.”

The boys gazed up at Balin with attention; Fíli had a quick glance at Thorin lost in his thoughts as he gazed at the misty night sky.

Even Bilbo and Rowena were curious to find out about Thorin’s hatred towards Orcs, he sat down near the camp fire and wrapped his arms around his knees and Rowena started to stroke between Goliath's eyes, calming him down, as Balin began to tell his story.

“AFTER the dragon took the Lonely Mountain,” Balin started. “King Thror tried to reclaim the ancient Dwarf kingdom of Moria. But our enemy had got there first.”

Thorin listened as Balin tells his tale; he remembered all too well of that journey to Moria…

“Moria had been taken by legions of Orcs,” Balin narrated, “led by the most vile of all their race: Azog the Defiler.”

A fearsome battle between the Dwarves against an army of Orcs sprung upon the mountain side outside the mines of Moria; the air was thick with the smell of smoke and blood and the sounds of war cries and swords and axes clashed together roared out.

Among the dwarf warriors, young Prince Thorin, who was covered in dried blood and sweat, dressed in his Orcs’ blood stained armor, with a dwarven sword and shield in his hand, fought fearlessly as he battled the Orcs that crossed his path; fighting along with his grandfather, King Thror, his father, Prince Thrain and Balin and his brother Dwalin when they were younger.

While battling against an Orc solider, something caught King Thror’s attention. A giant Orc; who was taller than an average man, with skin as white as death and battle scars marked on his face, his arms, his back and chest. The giant pale Orc with a powerful battle mace in his right hand had fatally swung his mace at his best dwarven warriors knocked them away like flies. Then the pale Orc and the dwarf came face to face and begun their brutal combat.

“The Giant Gundabad Orc had sworn to wipe out the line of Durin.” Balin said gravely.

Rowena stood before Goliath where she was in complete silence, she looked to where Thorin stood staring out to the foggy valley. She felt quite uneasy as she vaguely remembered something about her childhood, the day where her mother died.

“He began… by beheading the king.” Balin continued grievously. Bilbo gasped as Rowena squeezed her eyes shut.

Prince Thorin heard a loud roar and turned to see Azog holding up the bloody severed head of his grandfather as a sign that king of the dwarves is dead.

His whole body felt suddenly numb with shock, he couldn’t believe what he saw and watched Azog roughly throw the amputated head and rolled on the ground towards Thorin’s feet.

“NOOOOOOO!!!” Thorin cried out in anguish.

“Thrain, Thorin’s father was driven mad by grief.” Balin said painful of the memory of what happened. “He went missing, taken prisoner or killed, we did not know. We were leaderless; defeat and death were upon us.”
Rowena had a slight frown on her face, as she remembered meeting a dwarf who bore that very same name during one of her missions as a mercenary and she had almost gone with the Orcs who was after him, on the pact that she would take his place instead of him. But the dwarf had refused to let her honor her pact, he had grabbed her wrist and led her away from the Orcs. He had hid her underneath large bush and told her to keep still and remain silent.

But before he had lifted, the dwarf had her him his name and hurried away, to led the Orcs away from her. Leaving Rowena staring after him.

“That is when I saw him.” Balin smiled and looked at Thorin with admiration. “A young dwarf prince; facing down the pale Orc. He stood alone against this terrible foe.” Balin said dramatically. “His armor dent, wielding nothing but an oaken branch as a shield.” Balin increased his tale.

_Thorin driven by his anger, he ran towards Azog, he raised his sword high and shield ready to fight the pale filth. Azog caught sight of Thorin running straight at him, he knew that Thorin was part of the line of Durin, and just when Thorin was about ready to strike, Azog spun round and round and then swung his mace club at Thorin’s shield and with collision, the shield was knocked away. Azog struck again and this time Thorin’s sword was thrown away, as Thorin lost his sword had tumbled down a rocky ledge with Azog followed close behind him._

Weapon less, Thorin looked round to find a new weapon, but Azog was coming in fast with his heavy mace ready to strike. Desperate Thorin grabbed a thick oaken branch that lay nearby. Thorin rolled out of way before the mace could hit him, he got up just in time for Azog swung his mace and block the hit with the oak branch like a shield. Azog swung again and again and each time Thorin blocked his attack.

_On the forth blow of the mace it knocked Thorin flat on his back, when Azog was about to deliver that fatal blow, Thorin found his sword on the ground where he fell, he gave a loud roar as he swung his sword hard and his aim was true; his sword sliced Azog’s left arm. Azog gave off a loud painful cry as his ink-black blood spilled out of the stump of what was left of his arm and kneel down in agony._

“Azog the Defiler, learned that day,” Balin concluded, “that the line of Durin would not be easily broken.”

Rowena said with admiration in her voice. "Damn straight."

Fíli and Kíli looked up at Balin with awe when they heard of their uncle’s victory against the pale Orc. Even Bilbo was amazed, he was actually happy that his daughter loves someone like Thorin (Bilbo figured out that Thorin was Rowena's dwarf when he had first met him back in Bag End); Rowena looked to where Thorin’s bedroll was and saw the oaken branch lying among his weapons.

“I see,” Rowena said, smiling at the branch. "That's why he's called Oakenshield. It's not a surname but a title."

“Yes, lassie,” Balin replied with a smile twinkled in his eye.

_Azog was pulled back into the fiery entrance to Moria by his minions as Thorin gathered the rest of his army and gave the order of command in dwarvish and lead his men in the charge against the Orcs and collided with them with a slash of their sharp swords, the smash from their tough shields, the swung of their heavy axes and fought with all their might to the bitter end._

_The battle was over and the victory belonged to the dwarves, but with a great loss of many lives. The dwarves who survived look among the wounded and the dead to look for more who lived but_
they were only a few, some of the survivors grieved of the death of their friends and families.

“Our forces rallied and drove the Orcs back,” Balin declared, “our enemy had been defeated.”

Then Balin looked down melancholy of the memory of what happened after the battle. “But there was no feast, nor song that night, for our dead were beyond the count of grief. We few had survived.” Balin remembered with sadness.

Goliath butted his head against Rowena's breasts, alerting his mistress to the fact that she had stopped petting him to hear the story. She stroked his snout, turning away from her horse to look back at Balin. Rowena couldn't even come close to knowing how losing so many people to the point that those who were still alive didn't want to either have a feast or sing.

Balin and Dwalin shared their sorrow over the loss of many lives that been taken from in battle, Balin looked up and saw in a ray of sunlight Thorin with his oaken branch shield in hand helping with the others to look for any survivors and observed him with awe and respect of new noble leader and their new hope for the dwarves.

“And I thought to myself then, there is one who I could follow.” Balin said as he looked towards Thorin with respect. “There is one… I could call king.”

When Balin finished his tale, Thorin turned back to the camp and looked upon everyone who was wide awake; they had heard the tale of their great leader and gazed upon him with wonder. Even Bilbo could understand why so many dwarves were willing to live their homes in order to serve him. And Rowena immediately realized what she had originally thought was a childish infatuation was in fact the beginning feelings of love after she had heard this tale from Balin, someone who was there.

Thorin gazed upon his companions with dignity and made his way back to his bedroll. As he walked passed Rowena, his eyes met and held hers, and the young woman briefly wondered if her love and admiration for him shone in her eyes, just as brightly and clearly as any stars in the night. She looked away from him, lowering her gaze to the ground, she wasn't ready to tell him, she wasn't ready to know if he truly loved her or not.

But something was lurking in the back of Bilbo's mind.

“But the pale Orc?” Bilbo questioned Balin when he had finished. “What became of him?”

“He slunk back to the hole whence he came.” Thorin answered in a low for him as he went past him. “That filth died of his wounds long ago.”

Rowena suddenly flinched at the sharp pain in her tempers and she slowly rubbed it as Goliath gave a soft neigh at her, she hissed out in pain, which alerted her father.

Bilbo looked at his daughter.” Rowny, are you okay?”

Rowena mumbled as she swayed. "Yeah, I think so...."

She suddenly dropped to her knees, hitting her palms hard to the ground, causing a jolt of sharp pain to shoot up her arms. Rowena raised one hand up and pressed the heel of it to her forehead as her father, Gandalf and dwarves came rushing over to her.

A memory suddenly appeared in her mind, something she didn't and couldn't recall until Balin said something about the Pale Orc. Her eyes widen as a scene flash through her mind's eye.

The barely turned Four-year-old Rowena was trembling in fear as her mother's bloodied lifeless body dropped in front of her, revealing the giant Pale Orc standing before her. Rowena was half-
hidden behind the pillar as the Pale Orc stepped over her mother's corpse and made her way towards him. He raised his metal claw for a hand towards her, beckoning towards her, soothingly, even though he hadn't just killed her mother in front of her eyes.

The Pale Orc slowly walked towards the little Princess, who's attention was entirely focus on the mangled and bloodied body that use to be her mother's. "Hello, Little Princess, My master has ordered you to be taken to him immediately."

His words lifted Rowena confused. Who would want her mother died in order to get to her? Her mother was a Queen, she had more power than her, who is just a Princess. He reached out his claw to her but was suddenly gone. Rowena looked over to see her mother's direwolf, Aislinn, attacking the Pale Orc. Rowena was jolted out of her shock at seeing Aislinn suddenly there when she felt something tugging on the skirt of nightgown. She looked down to see her direwolf pup, Imogen, standing by her, tugging on her skirt with her teeth.

Rowena looked back at Aislinn and the Pale Orc before she turned and rushed away, followed close behind by Imogen. She didn't know how long she had ran or where she was, all she knew that she needed to get away from the Orcs that was bringing her home and her world crashing around.

Rowena suddenly stripped over rocks and landed before a gate. She looked up and saw that the gate read 'Bag End' before she slipped into unconscious and remembered no more.

Rowena gasped once the memory faded away and she felt hands cupping her cheeks and raising her face up, she found herself staring into Gandalf's face. He stroked her sweat-covered face as she trembled. She suddenly got up and ran off to the bushes, retching behind them. She felt someone kneeling alongside her, holding her hair back with one hand while stroking circles into her back as he made shushing sounds as she continued being sick.

Once the vomiting stopped adn the retching slowly ceased, Rowena did raise her head to see that it was her father was holding her hair back and making shushing sounds as his free hand was rubbing her back in soothing circles.

Rowena took the cup of cold water offered to her by Gandalf and she rinsed her mouth of the nasty taste in her mouth. Bilbo leaned over and started to clean her mouth, she allowed her father to dote on her as she stayed still.

Óin walked over to them and asked. "Are you alright, Lass?"

Rowena waved her hand over at him. "I'm fine. It's nothing."

Bofur's voice from beyond the bushes. "it didn't sound like nothing."

"Shut-up, Bofur or I'll be sick on you." Rowena said. "oooo, my stomach."

Gandalf helped her up." Come on, Rowena. Time to get you to bed."

Rowena said as she put her arm over his shoulder. "I think that's the best idea you have ever since you roped me into mad scheme."

Gandalf said. "All my ideas are not mad schemes."

Rowena snorted. "Oh, I bed to differ."

"How many so-called 'mad schemes' have I ever planned?"
"Oh, I'm sorry! I don't have enough fingers to count that high!"

Bofur spoke up, humor in his voice. "Should we help ye, lass?"

"Sorry, not enough dwarves and hobbits here."

Nori laughed. "That many, huh?"

"Don't get me started. Half of his mad schemes usually end with my near-death."

"Okay, now you're overreacting."

"I am not!"

Bilbo shook his head as Rowena and Gandalf continued arguing as they made their way towards her bedroll, and settled himself back to his bedroll as he looked up starlit night sky and thought about his home and most of all Frodo. He missed him very deeply, but he knew he would be safe at the Shire with the Gamgees'.

'Sleep well tonight, Frodo.' Bilbo wished in his thoughts and slowly went back to sleep.

Gandalf asked as Rowena settled herself on her bedroll. "Are you fine, Rowny?"

"Besides the nasty taste in my mouth and my bruised ego, I'm fine." Rowena joked before saying seriously when she noticed the disapproving look on his face. "I'm fine, Gandalf. Really, I'm alright."

"Did you remember something?" He asked, concern.

She rolled on her side, facing away from him. "No, I was overheated and felt sick."

".....Alright, than make sure you don't cover yourself with a blanket." Gandalf said, standing up and leaving her alone. Rowena gave a sigh of relief, grateful for Gandalf for not pushing her to talk about it.

Ophelia suddenly appeared before her face and rubbed her face against her cheek, causing Rowena to laugh and reached over to stroke her chin. She closed her eyes as Ophelia curled up against her and slowly drifted off to sleep.

Unknown to the company, on the opposite side of the cliff, in the darkness they were being watched by a pack of Wargs and on their backs were Orcs who spied the camp fire across the valley.

"Send word to the master." the Orc leader ordered his Orc scout in black speech. "We have found the dwarf-scum."

And unknown to the Orcs, as well as to the company, a large direwolf was watching them from the bushes, her ears laid flat against her head and her fur bristled as she watched the Orcs and Wargs moved away the company who were sleeping across the valley, on a cliff.

The She-direwolf watched them disappear before she turned around and disappeared into the darkness.
Rowena was having a lovely dream, of a sternly handsome dwarf with black of hair and blue of eyes until she was rudely awaken by her damn cat, who decided to land on her stomach from the branch of tree that the mercenary was sleeping under. Her startled yelp woke everyone up and put them on high alert.

Bofur looked towards Rowena, who was clenching her stomach. "You okay, lass?"

"I'm so going to kill that damn cat once I get my hands on her." Rowena groaned as she curled into herself.

Bilbo asked, concerned. "What happened?"

Rowena shot a death glare at Ophelia, who was grooming herself, ignoring her. "That demon cat decided to use my stomach as a landing pad."

Kili looked up at the branch that the cat was sleeping on. "Wasn't she up there?"

"Brilliant observation, your Highness, anything else you missed and would like to share with us?" Rowena asked, sarcasm high in her tone and expression.

Fili laughed. "Not a morning person, are you, Rowena?"

Rowena shook her head. "Nope, I hate morning people. They always make me want to punch them."

Bilbo looked at Rowena, asking. "Do you have your brush with you, Rowny?"

Rowena nodded her head towards her travel bag. "It's in there, why?"

"Because your hair is a bird nest and I want to brush it." Bilbo told her, causing Rowena to ran her fingers through her hair, feeling that her bun was totally ruined and that some of her hair was free.

Not saying anything else, Rowena grabbed her satchel, and walked towards her father. He stood up on top of a log and Rowena sat on the log, right before him, so that he could easily get to her hair. Rowena took out her hairbrush and handed it up to her father, who took it from her. He set the brush next to her and started to undo the rest of the bun, setting down the hairpins that held her bun in place next to his feet.

Across the way, Thorin stood leaned back against a rock and lost in his thoughts, Dwalin and Balin was near him, speaking to each other. He rolled the key between his fingers, its constant weight around his neck a heavy reminder of what this all was for. Remember, the voice beckon from the back of his mind. Remember us. An order given long ago, one that he had never--not for one second--forgotten. He raised his gaze across the company of dwarves, and it froze upon Rowena Baggins, who was patiently sitting at her father's feet as her hair fell out of the halfling's grasp and cascaded down her back and around her like an golden waterfall. His mouth parted in shock, his body straightening as bolt like white hot lightning shot down his spine and clenched painfully in his gut.

He stood there transfixed by the long waves of hair, its pale golden colors flaring to life underneath the morning light. He had known that Rowena's hair was long and shined like the sun, but he never would had expected that her hair would rest on top of the log; her hair was thick, full and wavy. It glistened like sunlight, and looked as soft as silk.

Thorin watched, as Bilbo picked up the brush and started to ran its teeth through her hair. The dwarf King could tell that the burglar was being extremely gently and careful with the task of
brushing the beautiful tassels. Thorin was dimly aware that his company were stopping in the middle of their task, one by one, becoming transfixed by the beauty of the Lady Mercenary’s hair.

But it was scandalous, despite the beauty of looking at her hair and paying attention to how gently Bilbo was combing her hair. In the race of Dwarves, the brushing of one’s hair was a private act only meant to be shared amongst family or lovers. It should be done in private, not in front of everyone and anyone.

"By Mahal," Dwalin said, his eyebrows rose in surprise as he, like his sister sons and the rest of the company, were watching Bilbo brush out the tangles of her hair while she had her eyes closed and simply relaxed. He shook his head. "I vow the lass has no modesty." One side of his mouth lifted. "I like her."

Thorin’s jaw shut with an audible click as he gathered his wits about himself. He sent Dwalin a dry, dark glance. “You would,” Thorin stated, with a snort. He leaned back against the large boulder, the feel of solid stone a comfort and turned his gaze purposefully away from the woman. The painful clench in his gut did not ease up. “Is there a purpose for your intrusion to my thoughts, Dwalin? Or are you here simply to irritate me?”

The big, burly warrior had the decency to look hurt. “Me? Irritate? How can you say such about your dearest and oldest friend?” Dwalin stopped. The corner of his mouth lifted into a crooked smile, one eyebrow shooting skyward.

Thorin looked at him, his expression flat. Dwalin let out a light chuckle and patted Thorin on the shoulder. “The lads and I…were interested, is all,” Dwalin said, gruffly.

Thorin narrowed his eyes. “In what?” His tone suspiciously light, as he had a feeling in the pit of his stomach he knew exactly what Dwalin and his sister sons were interested in.

“Her.”

Thorin’s eyes twisted back at Rowena who had opened her eyes and was speaking to Gandalf, who was toying with one of her tendrils as it lay against her cheek. A burst of annoyance showered through him as hot as burning coals, because he knew as soon as he laid eyes upon her she would be little more than a distraction. “What of her?” Thorin asked, foreboding.

“She is young, yet I can tell she handles her weapons with the skill of a seasoned warrior,” Dwalin grumbled, his arms crossed over his broad chest making him look all the more intimidating. He had watched the girl with a mixture of suspicion and reluctant regard. "I can also tell that if the situation demands it, she'll loose that flirty and playful nature that she gives off and turn into a calm and collected mercenary that I heard so much about.”

“You wish to test her mettle?” Thorin arched a brow.

“It would be interesting,” Dwalin smirked. “She is going to be traveling with us for quite a spell, and there is not better way to judge someone’s worth than in combat.”

“And my sister sons? What is their interest?” Thorin asked, warily. His stomach twisted into a violent, burning knot that was unpleasant and unexpected. He shook his ever so slightly and pinched the bridge of his nose. He did not need his nephews acting like love struck fools, like they usually did when they saw a pretty woman, like how he was going to be acting soon as he continue traveling with his One, he was sure of it but he could control the urge better than his nephews. At least, he hoped he would. The amount of trouble the pair got into in the Blue Mountains was staggering, though Balin often reminded him it was no more than he used to get into with Fre…Thorin immediately cut the thought off. He would not allow himself to venture there.
“I do not believe the lads are lusting after the lass, if that is your concern,” Balin walked up to his brother and his leader with a slight frown upon his face. “I believe that sense what I sense about her.”

“And that is?” Thorin asked, quietly. Balin was wiser than any other dwarf could ever claim to be, and that is why he was Thorin’s most trusted advisor.

“I sense something about her, almost like she’s a long-lost relative who finally came home,” Balin stated, with a solemn nod. Thorin did not deny that there was something about the young human woman that inspired a sense of kinship with her, though he’d wager that she did not have a spec of dwarven blood running through her veins. It was a very, very strange feeling and one he did not like it at all, despite his attraction towards the lovely mercenary.

“Aye,” Dwalin nodded. “What are you thoughts on our burglar?” Dwalin changed the subject when Thorin’s expression turned stormy.

Thorin gave a divisive snort. “I think nothing of him. The Halfling will turn back for his green hills at the first sign of danger, mark my words,” Thorin stated, darkly.

“Gandalf and Mistress Baggins has faith in him,” Balin said, quietly. “Perhaps it would not be unwise to have a little faith ourselves.”

“I have faith in Mahal, and my people,” Thorin looked down at Balin, his lips thinned out in a grim line. “I cannot afford to have faith in anything else.”

Dwalin and Balin shared an exasperated look that only brothers could, but they did not say anything else.

"Argh!!" Bilbo's frustrated cry made the three dwarves jolted and look across the way to see Bilbo dropping Rowena's hair in absolutely frustration and annoyance, which had Rowena smiling.

Dori asked, coming towards Bilbo. "What's wrong, Mister Baggins."

"I forgot how difficult Rowena's hair is," Bilbo commented, glaringly angrily that the offending hair, "It's so thick and full that it's hard for me to put it up. so I always had her wear her hair down."

Rowena rolled her eyes in good humor before turning to Gandalf. "Want to give it a go, Gandalf?"

Gandalf nodded and Bilbo gladly handed over the reins to the tall wizard. Gandalf came over to stand behind Rowena and started to pin her hair back up in a bun at the nape of her neck.

Dori gasped. "Mistress Baggins, your hair is shining like molten gold!"

Thorin glanced over to look at her hair and realized that Dori had spoken true. Her father had brushed her hair continuously until it shone like molten gold, and it was breathtaking beautiful against her flawless porcelain skin.

Rowena glanced down at the tendrils that framed her face and touched one. "Yeah, my father likes to brush it until it takes on a shine like it."

Ori said, as he looked at her hair. "It's so beautiful, Mistress Baggins."

"Thank-you, Ori." Rowena said, Thorin noticed that there was a warm flushed on her cheeks, making him aware that she probably wasn't use to people giving her praises.
Thorin spoke up, drawing everyone's eyes on him. "It's time to get moving."

The Company traveled on for some hours, and Bilbo was desperate for them to stop for a rest. His back was aching and his thighs were starting to go numb, among other things. Next to him, Kili was expressing the same thoughts.

"I can't feel my arse anymore!" he whined, tossing his head back.

"Thank you for letting us know," said Fili flatly. He himself was making a good show of sitting up straight in his saddle, but Bilbo could see him flinch with every other step the pony took and knew it was just a front.

"You know, my arse is starting to hurt as well." Rowena commented, "I can't feel my legs as well."

Both Kili and Fili let out a laugh at her words, while Bilbo scolded. "Rowena! That is not something you should say out loud."

"But my arse does hurt!" Rowena cried out, clearly teasing her father. "And I can't feel my bloody legs!" Than she added, smiling mischievous. "And my thighs are starting to hurt as well. They're not use to saddling for this long." Bofur joined in Kili's and Fili's laughter, Rowena looked back at them. "And get your minds out of the gutter!"

Bilbo rubbed his temple. "I swear sometimes you can test the patience of an Elf."

"She has test the patience of an Elf." Gandalf commented, smiling. "And it almost got her into trouble."

"So, how did you survive the ride, Papa?" Rowena asked, turning her head to look at him after she stuck her tongue at Gandalf, causing the old man to laugh.

"Ah, Myrtle and I are, I think, coming to an agreement," said Bilbo with a small smile. "I don't pull on the reigns, and she doesn't throw me off."

Rowena laughed. "Yeah, that's pretty much like how Goliath and I came to an agreement."

They trudged on when they came to the realization that they weren't going to get any type of sympathy of their stern leader until Rowena noticed that rain clouds were starting to gather above their head.

Rowena commented. "Oh, look! Not only are we going to be hurting, we're also going to be wet!"

The rain had started gently. A drop here or there, but that with a loud rush of wind and suddenly that all changed. It went from barely sprinkling to torrential rain pouring down upon them in the blink of an eye. The Company trotted through the muddy forest. Everyone looked cold, wet, and miserable. Except for Rowena, who ever since she was child, loved the rain. A fond smile curved her lips when she remembered Galadriel scolding her one time when she caught her out in the rain. Goliath trotted about, and tossed his mane about wildly with a little neigh. He, too, was enjoying the rain.

Everyone got completely soaked to the point that Bofur had to pour the water out of his pipe, which caused Rowena to laugh at him until he waved the pipe at her, getting her wet on the face; Bilbo, meanwhile, was shivering from the cold, that rain plastered his clothes to his skin, soaking him through and began to sneeze, he couldn’t stop shivering until felt something wrapped around him and saw that someone gave him a travel cloak, and he wondered who gave it to him and than
he noticed that Rowena had rode past him not wearing hers, as she made her escape away from Bofur.

Bilbo called out to her. "Rowny! Come back here and get your cloak before you get sick!"

Rowena laughed. "I'll be fine! I'm tough, I never get sick!" That was until she sneezed.

Bilbo asked. "What was that?!"

Rowena said. "It was a snort!"

"No, it was not!"

"Will this rain never cease?" The dwarves were not enjoying the rain, and were not afraid to complain about it. Dori was being the most vocal. "Haven't had a decent spot of tea in ages, and now we have to deal with this downpour," Dori said, with a sour twist of his lips as he scowled upward at this sky.

"You had tea back at Bree this morning," Ori pointed out, quietly.

"Like I said ages ago," Dori stated as if that should have been obvious. Behind him, Nori rolled his eyes with a look of exasperation upon his face.

Bofur just snorted, and tilted his head forward to let out all the rain that had gathered on the top of his hat off. It was weighing his hair down. He paused when he caught Rowena’s smile and his eyebrows rose. "What are you smiling about?" Bofur wanted in on the joke.

Rowena glanced over at him. "Nothing," she shook her head. It was silly thing to be smiling about, but she could not help it. She had always loved the rain. The sound of it, the smell of it and the feel of it.

"It must be something to be smiling in this," Bofur gestured up at the clouds.

Rowena rolled her head backwards, and glanced up at the bluish grey clouds with a slightly wistful smile on her face. "It is because of that I smile," she told him, with a shrug of her shoulders. "I love the rain."

"You love the rain?" Bofur looked stunned.

"You cannot be telling me you actually like this storm, lass," Dwalin stated, gruffly. He craned his head so he peer over his shoulder at her and she just gave another helpless little shrug. "You are strange, lassie. Strange."

"I’ve been called worse," Rowena stated, lightly. "By my adopted brothers, no less. The jerks, the whole a lot of them."

"I personally cannot wait for the sun to come back out," Bilbo said, with his brow furrowed. His face was not in a scowl because he did not hate the rain. He was a hobbit, and hobbits loved all things that grow and things could not grow without the rain. He, however, did wish that it didn’t rain so much, or hard enough to knock him too and fro on his saddle. He feared he would fall right off.

"Those who prefer sunshine have never known the joy of dancing in the rain,"

Rowena countered, smoothly with a teasing smile on her lips.

"Dancing in the rain? You’ll catch your death doing that," said Dori, with an paralleled look on his face. His eyes snapped towards Ori and he pointed a finger at his youngest brother. "Don’t
you ever think about it.”

“Dori,” Ori groaned.

"I never get sick." Rowena commented, smiling at Dori. "Apparently I'm so stubborn and willful that colds don't even bother with me."

He turned towards the wizard because surely he would be able to do something about it. “Here, Mr. Gandalf, can’t you do something about this deluge?” Dori asked, and half of the company perked up hopefully.

Gandalf sighed. “It is raining, Master Dwarf, and it will continue to rain until the rain is done. If you wish to change the weather of the world, you should find yourself another wizard,” the Grey wizard stated, with a shake of his head.

Honestly, stop the rain, Gandalf thought as rain slip off the rim of his hat like a fountain.

Rowena smiled, showing her amusement at the situation before her. Well, she's always showing her amusement at every situation before her, so it's hardly even an surprise or worth noting. Gandalf was Gandalf, and he would never change.

Bilbo frowned thoughtfully, “Are there any?”

“What?” Gandalf slowed his horse down so he ride side by side with the hobbit.

“Other wizards?” Bilbo prompted.

Gandalf inclined his head. “There were five of us. The greatest of our order is Saruman, the White. Then there are the two Blue Wizards, you know, I've forgotten their names,” he said, offhandedly.

“Alatar and Pallando,” Rowena said, suddenly. The names had been practically beaten into her memory by Galadriel and Elrond; they both had to force Rowena when she was a little girl to sit through lessons in order for her to remember their names, and it was an constant battles of wills, which they also seem to win and her to lose. When she asked why it was so important, the elves merely stated that one day she would understand. So far she did not.

“Hmm?” Gandalf looked over at her.

“Their names. Or at least, the names they were most known by. We all know how you wizards love you great variety of names,” Rowena said, with an eyebrow arched in the wizard’s direction, smiling.

“And who are you to speak of names?” Gandalf retorted, with a good natured chuckle. “You have a terrible memory of names if I do recall correctly.”

Rowena grimaced. “You have to remind me,” she muttered underneath her breath. "Oh, and Saruman absolutely hates me."

Bilbo looked at her. "Why? What did you do?"

Rowena looked at her father. "Why did you immediately thought it was my fault."

Bilbo and Gandalf said at the same time, not missing a beat. "Because almost everything is your fault."

Rowena said as Fíli and Kíli laughed. "How rude!"
“And who is the fifth?” Bilbo asked, drawing the conversation back to the subject at hand. He had heard stories about other wizards, but gossip in the Shire was usually fantastical or dramatized (especially if it was spread by Lobelia). He wanted to know some of the truth from the most reliable source, Gandalf.

“Well, that would be Radagast, the Brown,” Gandalf said.

“Is he a great Wizard or is he...more like you?” Bilbo asked, bluntly.

“Oh, ha!” Rowena twisted her saddle away from the offended wizard in an attempt to conceal her guffaws of laughter. Rowena really didn't want to get whacked with his staff, a habit that Gandalf always seem to do when he is annoyed by her antics or didn't like the fact that she had laughed at him. But it was a complete and utter failure.

The wizard glowered at her for a long moment before he straighten in his saddle. “I think he’s a very great wizard, in his own way. He’s a gentle soul who prefers the company of animals to others. He keeps a watchful eye over the vast forest lands to the East, and a good thing too, for always Evil will look to find a foothold in this world.”

“That and he is the procure of some excellent mushroom,” Rowena couldn’t help, but to add, grinning. “If you understand my meaning.”

Gandalf just sighed. “You are incorrigible,” he huffed, and rode off to the front of the group leaving Rowena in complete laughter as Bilbo was giving her a strange look.

Rowena was able to catch her breath, shouting after the old man. "I can't help it if he missing some marbles thanks to those blasted mushrooms, Gandalf!"

"That's extremely rude." Gandalf scolded her, without looking back at her.

"It's the truth. How can it be rude?" Rowena asked.

"Mushrooms?” Bilbo asked, his eyebrows in his hairline, drawing Rowena's attention to him.

“Well, I wasn’t always this put together you know,” she stated, teasingly.

“You aren’t all that put together now,” Bilbo pointed out.

“Don’t I know it,” her smile may not have crumbled, even for a tiny bit, but her tone was a bit more solemn then she intended. Bilbo didn’t seem to catch it for he was immediately pulled into some discussion with Bofur and she was grateful he missed it. No one should have to be burden with her tangled web of emotions and troubles, especially not her father, though Rowena herself did not know the reason why she felt such terror and hatred towards orcs. The hairs on the back of her neck rose up and she fold her gaze sliding up from her hands twisted around the reigns to meet Thorin’s slate blues. He brows were furrowed in a light scowl as he regarded her from over his shoulder, and she looked back at him a bit wide eyed and startled. Then suddenly just like that, he turned away and the spell was broken.

They rode on in silence now, after Rowena had obviously won that argument between herself and Gandalf, and she didn't question why Thorin had looked at her, Rowena simply didn't want to burden her Thorin with her troubles. She's a warrior, not a maiden to be comforted. The young human woman tipped her head back, arching her neck, as the rain hit her face and slide down her cheeks. She raised her arms up, bending one behind her head and the other rose to stretch up towards the sky, taking the refreshing feeling of the rain against her skin.

The human woman wasn't aware what an tantalizing view she was making with her arm bent like
that behind her head and the other one pointed up towards the sky, with her head tossed back, causing her neck to arch back. It made the upper curves of her breasts to rise even more above the neckline of her tunic.

It was only an tantalizing view for Thorin as the other dwarves were slowly beginning to see the young woman as either a sister or daughter. And he was cursing himself in Khuzdûl for being drawn towards Rowena when he already had a One, who was still somewhere out there, lost to him. And he had to keep his promise to her, he wanted to return to her and take her as his wife and Queen. His Amrâlimê.

So he couldn't allow himself to be swayed by a young human woman who was skilled at unconsciously seducing, tempting him with every little unconscious act of sultry. No matter how ridiculously beautiful, bold and feisty she was. But problem was, just like how Rowena fancied men like him, Thorin fancied women like her a lot.

The company was camping for the night in a meadow with a boulder, Rowena went to go checking the surrounding area for dangers. She actually had to fight her father to allow her to do so, and it took both Thorin and Gandalf to assure Bilbo that she could handle herself, though she knew that her dwarf king never saw her fight before and something told her that he's going to want to see her in action.

“Fili, tend to the horses. Not you Kili,” he said when Kili made to follow his brother. “Training.”

Kili barely restrained a groan.

Sometime later, Rowena returned from her exploration of the area. The woods that surrounded the large meadow had only squirrels, foxes and birds, but she highly doubted that they would have come into the camp and slit their throats as they lie asleep.

Rowena was intent on finding Bilbo when the clash of swords and shields startled her, and the setting sun striking the metal made her grimace and advert her gaze downward for a brief second. With a hard blink, she focused her gaze away from the reflections dancing through the air and to the fighters in an age old dance. Her lips parted in surprise, and she sucked in a harsh breath. Thorin was sparring with Kili in only his boots and leggings. His bare chest gleamed with a sheen of sweat, and a trickle of blood slid down his side. She watched in fascination, unable to look elsewhere though logically she told herself it was not the first time she saw males sparing without tunics on. However, that did nothing to halt the way her eyes danced across his broad shoulders, and she noted that his massive chest sported several runic tattoos and scars. So many scars. A man like him didn’t leave to be as old as he without earning a few battle scars. She, herself, had quite a few.

Rowena felt her brain go numb as she watched Thorin spar with his nephew. *I think I've died and gone to heaven!*

“You alright there, lassie?” Dwalin came to stand beside her, with an eyebrow arched.

“What?” She jolted, her head twisting towards him while she blinked rapidly. “Uh…yes. Yes, quite alright,” she nodded, with a reassuring smile. “And yourself?”

“Ah, you don’t worry about me, lass,” Dwalin stated, gruffly. “I can take care of myself.”

“Of that I have no doubt, Master Dwalin,” Rowena said, with a slight laugh. She slapped a hand to her forehead. *I can't believe I got caught ogling Thorin by Dwalin! I want to go into a hole and hide.* Her eyes glanced over at Dwalin’s ear, or his half of one and she frowned delicately. “Are
you all so scarred?” She asked, then her cheeks went red with a flush as she slapped a hand over her face. “I am so sorry. I didn’t mean…that was very rude and--”

Dwalin dismissed her worries with a jerky wave of his hand. “I know you meant no harm, lass,” he said, with a glint of amusement in his eyes. “Scars are badges of honor to us dwarves. Reminders of how hard we fought, of all that we have survived, of what we have lost and reasons to keep going onward. A dwarf without them is considered weak and without courage.”

“Badges of honor,” Rowena murmured, her eyes swept back to Thorin. “That’s a nice way to put it,” she said, with a slight smile upon her face. He was intimidating, his face hard and his eyes cold as he fought. She hadn’t realized she had spoke out loud until Dwalin replied.


“Then they must find you downright terrifying,” Rowena said, her cheeks a bit flushed. She had not wanted anyone to know that she found their leader intimidating.

Dwalin let out a bark of laughter, then inclined his head in agreement. “Aye, they do,” he gave a roguish grin, no a lick of shame about it.

Rowena went quiet before she started to walk away. "And with that, I'm going to crawl in a hole and die."

Dwalin shouted after her. "There's nothing wrong with looking at someone when they are sparring, lass!"

"Shut-up, Dwalin!" Rowena shouted back.

Thorin’s hair clung damply to his back and his braids swung about him as he lunged forward, blacking another thrust made by Kili. His muscles were taunt and strained as he swung his heavy sword about his head and slashed downward. Kili’s eyes widened and he threw up his sword to block the blow, but it was no use. The force caused his knees to buckle and the younger dwarf was sent sprawling to the ground. Kili laid there panting softly, and Thorin frowned. He extended his hand down to his nephew, and helped him to his feet.

Kili looked visibly downtrodden by the defeat, and Thorin clasped him on the shoulder. “Kili, look at me,” Thorin ordered, calmly. Kili raised his downcast eyes, and tried to hide the trepidation that lingered there. “You have done well, Kili and have improved greatly. You lasted twice the amount that you did last time, but you mustn’t allow your emotions to rule your actions. Your enemies will use it to their advantage, understand?”

“I understand, uncle,” Kili nodded, after a moment.

“Good. Good,” Thorin nodded, allowing a trace of a smile come across his face. “Now, go help your brother with the horses.”

“Yes, uncle,” Kili replied, and picked up his sword off the ground before headed towards his brother. It was then that Thorin looked up and saw Rowena banging her head against a tree trunk, with Dwalin smirking at the human woman. His eyes narrowed as he watched her.

Rowena stiffened when she felt eyes on her and turned to see Thorin's narrowed gaze on her, she felt pinned by the force of the stare then she felt his eyes slid down to her waist where her sword was sheathed and an unsettled sensation knotted in her gut.

Thorin’s brows furrowed, and he stared at her for a long moment. “I wish to test your mettle,” Thorin stated, suddenly. Something dark flickering through his gaze as he tilted his head to the
side like a cat that was about to toy with a mouse. “You say you will be of use on this quest, that you can help us reclaim our homeland…prove to me that your word is worth it’s weight.”

The challenge lingering in the air, sharp like a guillotine poised over her neck waiting to fall. She inhaled sharply, and she could feel the tension boil in the air like hot lightning on a violent and stormy night. Her eyes stared at him, a frown on her face, confused now because Thorin had accepted her on this quest due to her job as a mercenary but she could understand that he needed proof of her skills, not just words.

“Very well,” she agreed, and she heard Bilbo’s breath catch behind her. She dropped her satchel to the ground, and unfastened her cloak. It slid off her shoulder, and the wind caught it before it took fell upon the ground. “But I will let you know this, Thorin, I’m not easily bested.”

“We shall see,” was Thorin’s reply.

Rowena dropped her bow, and quiver next to Bofur before she walked across the camp. "Keep an eye on these, will you, Bofur?"

Bofur nodded his head. "Sure, lass."

Rowena patted her father's shoulder. "I'll be fine, Papa."

Rowena reached where Thorin stood. He stood tense, and alert, his eyes grazed her from head to toe with a startling intensity.

They stood there for a long moment. A stare down where both opponents looked for the others weakness, and she hoped that her weaknesses were as well hidden as Thorin’s. The dwarf was a wall of muscles, and though he adorn no armor, she did not think he would be an easy enemy to fall. A heartbeat later and Thorin lunged forward with a battle cry on his lips. Rowena had barely a second to react, but she did. The clash of blade against blade echoed through the camp while all the dwarves watched mesmerized by the dance that unfolded.

It was a dance. The back and forth between the two. Thorin had strength and skill whereas Rowena had speed and agility. Each strike of the blade against blade was like a tune and their eyes never blinked, never let their opponent unless it couldn’t be helped. There was a strange sort of intimacy in it, it moved like a gentle current underneath the battle. It was not something that Thorin had anticipated and it hit him like punch to the gut. He shoved her backwards with all his strength, and she allowed herself to fall into the movement gracefully as if it were own design then to fall and end up on the ground helpless.

She had only gone two steps when his hand fastened on her arm. With a harsh breath, she drove her elbow into his stomach. He grunted as she pivoted to strike out with one foot, and she drew her sword up. Her heart pounded in her chest, and for a moment she felt paralyzed by the blinding speed with which he moved. He’d hit her so hard in the ribs that she couldn’t squeeze breath into her lungs. She raised her shocked and unfocused gaze up to see him lumbering towards her and she immediately shook off the haze. She rolled to her feet, picking up her sword in one swift moment and stood to face him once more.

“Yield,” he demanded, his sword raised in warning.

Rowena had to reminded herself that this wasn’t simply him wanting to break her down, he wanted to see if she could hold her on in a fight and didn’t have to worry about her safety if they do get into a fight. She raised her head, squared her shoulders and her spine was the steel of a broadsword. “Nay.”

Thorin gave her a grudging look, and perhaps there was a hint of admiration deep within his gaze.
But Rowena couldn’t tell for the next second, he lunged forward once more and began his assault. Rowena fought more fierce this time, putting more force behind her slashes hoping to have an element of surprise. She twisted around in a smooth arch, and slashed at his arm. She saw a flash of surprise in his blue eyes, as red drops ran down his arm, her heart twitching at the sight of hurting her beloved with her sword by her own hands. Then his eyes narrowed, and Rowena steeled herself against his next attack.

Thrust. Parry. Dodge. Parry again. The brutal spar seemed to have no end in sight until Rowena felt her foot slip against a root, he had her backed up to the edge of the forest. She slammed back into the truck of a tree, and barely got her sword pressed against his stomach when his blade pressed against her neck. Her heart thundered in her chest, and for a moment neither of them spoke. No words could describe what passed through them, not even them.

Thorin’s chest rose fell with his ragged breath as his gaze pressed down on her. “You will yield,” Thorin demanded. This had gone far beyond testing one’s mettle and he had known it would. It was a volatile inevitable reaction between the pair. She challenged him over everything, in front of those he was supposed to leave and leveled insults at him without blinking an eye. Part of him admired the fiery spirit, but the commander in him demanded respect. However, that was not all that he demanded. Something passed between, an awareness he had not encountered before and he felt angry and confused by what it was.

Rowena blinked up at him, her posture against the trunk had her sitting on the side of her hip, finally realizing that she had unwittingly insulted him when she had denied him the yield and she leaned her head against the trunk, and closed her eyes, taking a deep breath, in order to calm her nerves.

Rowena let out her breath and said, "Sorry, I got caught up in the movement. I remembered fighting a man with a sword because he didn't think I was warrior enough to wield a sword, and I allowed that to cloud my thoughts."

Thorin took a deep breath before he stepped back and held out his hand to her. "How many times have you fought against a man that challenges you, due to being a woman?"

Rowena sighed as she took his offered hand and allowed him to help her up. "Too many to count, Master dwarf."

Rowena looked at Thorin before she turned on her heel and moved away from him. "I need some time to myself. I need to gather my thoughts and cool my rage."

She walked away from him, feeling his eyes on her back as she moved through the woods with ease.

When dark had fallen and Rowena had returned from her long mediation period, she had the first watch, she really had to fight Dwalin and the others to get the first watch but Thorin had stepped in and reminded everyone that she was a professional and a mercenary, she knew how to handle a task given to her to the letter. And everyone dropped the subject.

But Rowena could understand why the company was reluctant to let her stay up and watch over them. Despite being an adult in human terms, she was nothing more than a baby to the dwarves and it was so the fact that she was a woman, and what she was told by Gandalf, dwarves were furiously protective of their women, being to being so few of them to beginning with, making them so rare to give birth too.

Rowena looked down and over at Thorin who was sleeping a little away from the company. His back was against a tree trunk and his chest was slowly rising and falling with each breath he took. She leaned her cheek against her knee as she stared at him, taking in his relaxed posture and face.
He was handsome like this, dropping his guard completely and relaxing into a deep sleep. Rowena does enjoy him when he's awake and alert but when he's like this, peaceful and unguarded, she couldn't help but thought herself bless to watch him.

Rowena sighed as she looked away from him. "But the problem is the Pale Orc. Thorin thinks he's dead but I know for sure he is not. He killed my mother right in front of me and almost took me if it wasn't for Aislinn saving my life. 'She rubbed her face as she fell backwards. 'But why would the Pale Orc want to take me away instead of my mother? And who is his Master?"

Gandalf and Bilbo hadn't asked her about her little incident back at the cliff, in fact, no one asked. Rowena figured it was due to her not being willing to talk about it and also being complete strangers to her, she didn't feel the need to share just yet. But she couldn't help but feel a little hurt over it, due to Thorin not asking her and he's been the only one she had known before the company and this quest.

Rowena sat on the boulder, watching the stars above her head. She closed her eyes after she had made sure that no one was up and going to hear her.

Rowena opened her mouth and her singing voice erupted through her throat and out of her mouth. ~ You will be my wings. You will be my only love. You will take me far beyond the stars...~

Thorin slowly came awake, dimly aware of someone singing. He slowly blinked his eyes open and looked around trying to find the source of the woman singing. Thorin realized that the voice was coming from the boulder and he turned his head to see Rowena sitting on the boulder still and she was singing.

Oh, Mahal. What a voice! She could have put any Elf or dwarf to shame with such a soft and lovely voice.

Rowena singed, unaware that she now had an audience, who was slowly making his way towards her. ~You will lift me high above. Everything we're dreaming of will soon be ours. Anything that we desire. Anything at all. Everyday you'll take me higher...~

Rowena stopped immediately when she heard a stone being crunched behind her and spun around, and almost fell off the boulder in the progress at seeing Thorin standing there. His sudden appearance most succeeded in giving her a heartattack and she patted her chest to ease the pounding in her chest.

"Geez! What is with you dwarves and your sudden appearing act!" Rowena whispered. "You could have given me a heartattack!"

"I didn't know you could sing." Thorin said.

Rowena looked at him. "Yeah, I can sing. I just don't see the need to reveal that I can sing."

"Do you hate singing?"

"No, I love to sing." Rowena answered. "I just never had the chance of sing for anyone."

Thorin sat down by her, resting on his side. "So I'm the first person to hear you sing?"

Rowena crossed her arms over her legs as she looked at him. "Yeah, actually. You are. Gandalf doesn't know I can sing, neither does my father."

Thorin went quiet as Rowena stared up at the stars now and than he asked. "Do you want to tell me about what had happened back at the cliff?"
Rowena worried her bottom lip, something that Thorin found enticing due to it has made her lip more colored and pump than before, speaking. "......My mother was killed by Orcs in front of me, when I was four."

Thorin looked towards her, shocked by that. He had not expected that answer to his question. He didn't think that she would have experience such trauma before, especially the slaughtering of one's kin right before their eyes, and having to experience so young.

Rowena ran her fingers through her hair. "Yeah, so that story hit me a little hard and it made me remember how she died and who had killed her." Noticing his confused look, she explained. "Gandalf and Elrond thought it was due to the trauma to her sudden violent death and being so young caused me to have amnesia involving my mother."

"Your father doesn't know?" Thorin asked.

"No, he only knew that I was attacked and lost my mother." Rowena said, pausing for a while before she added. "Now that I think about it, I must have been aware of it if I had muttered that during my healing progress."

"You're referring to what Lobelia called you." It wasn't a question, it was a statement.

Rowena sighed as she rubbed her forehead. "Yeah, I am. I just didn't remember why being called a Kin-Killer hurt me so much until I remembered what had happened to my mother."

She jolted when she felt something strong, warm and callous grasping her hand and glanced down to see Thorin's hand on hers with wide-eyes. Rowena raised her eyes back up at him and her open mouth snapped shut, forgetting what she was going to say when she saw the heated look in his eyes. It seemed to have made his blue eyes even darker, making them almost black.

Thorin muttered, her ears straining to catch his words. "You are not a Kin-Killer, Rowena. Your mother fought to keep you safe, so do not see her sacrifice as lightly." He reached over with his free hand and touched her cheek, just inches away from her lips. "And do not listen to what that harpy says about you, Rowena. Your father loves you and he does not see you as a Kin-Killer."

Thorin searched her face for a while, for what she had no clue, before he leaned over and placed a chaste kiss on her forehead. He released her before he stood and walked back to his bedrolls, leaving Rowena sitting there, thinking about his words.

"So, what's going on between you and our uncle?" said a very amused voice from by her, on the other side of the boulder.

Rowena nearly squeaked when Fíli's and Kíli's head suddenly appeared from over the edge of the boulder. She found herself once again patting her chest to ease the fast-beating of her heart.

"That's it." Rowena said. "I'm putting a bell on you dwarves to save me from keeling over by a heartattack."

Fíli stared at her with a smile on his face. "You're avoiding the topic."

"Lovely night we're having." Rowena said. "I'm not."

"Yes, it is." Kíli said. "Yes, you are."

Rowena threw her hands in an exasperated action. "Alright, alright! Fine, I'm avoiding the topic."

Kíli looked at Fíli. "That was fast."
Fíli looked at Kíli. "Yeah, I was expecting her to argue some more."

Rowena glared at Fíli and Kíli. "I'm too tired to argue, it also makes my temper much shorter than usually."

Fíli smiled as he and Kíli jumped up onto the boulder to sit next to her. "Noted and heeded."

Kíli sat down on his other side as his brother took her other side. "So what's going on between you and uncle?"

Rowena sighed as she rubbed her face. "Honestly? I don't know. He's my boss and I really don't want to make things awkward between us when it is revealed that I'm alone in my feelings and he doesn't feel the same way."

The brothers looked at each other before they leaned over and whispered. "But aren't you his human girl?"

"*His* human girl?!" Rowena whispered back, shocked. "What do you mean by being 'his human girl'?"

Fíli answered her, she turned her head to look at him. "Yeah, he always talked about you to whoever would asked about his *badgûna*."

Rowena frowned at him. "What does *badgûna* mean?"

Kíli explained to her, she turned her head now to look at him. "It means One. We dwarves are only born with one piece of our soul and the *One* holds our other half."

Fíli added in, making Rowena look back at him. "We can only love once and Our one is that only person we will love and cherish forever."

Rowena touched her hand to her chest. "You mean, I'm his *badgûna*?" than she remembered something, something very important. "Wait, how did you two figure out that I was the same human girl he spoke about?"

"Well, you look like how he describes you. " Kíli said before he continued after noticing Rowena's puzzled look. "Golden hair like sunshine or pale gold, Amazonite-like eyes, a tall and slender figure, lips that shame the red rose and fair skin like polished ivory."

Rowena felt a blush forming on her face, coloring her entire flesh the color vibrant red. "Eh? That's how he described me?"

Fíli smiled. "Yeah, exactly that. Word for word."

"Wow, that's the first time someone used such poetry to describe me before." Rowena said, before asking the most important question. "Does Thorin realize who I am yet?"

Both brothers shook their heads as Kíli answered her. "No, he hasn't."

"He's trying to focus on the mission." Fíli added. "But I don't think it's working so well."

"I'm distracting him, right?" Rowena asked.

"Yeah and doing a pretty good job at it If I might add."

"You may, Kíli."
"What should we do about this slow-pacing romance between you two?"

"Aren't you worried that we're on a dangerous quest and something could happen that could threaten the very quest, Fíli?"

"Not really. Besides, he respects that you are a worry and he knows that you are quite able to take care of yourself. So I say let this romance bloom during the quest, it would be a nice change for my uncle, and I would be honored and thrilled to call you aunt after this."

Rowena glanced at Kíli, who wore the same happy and accepting expression on his face as his brother. "Alright, I'll do it. But let's keep my true identity to ourselves and let him figure it out by himself."

Fíli looked at her with an arched brow. "You do realize this also includes him getting mad at us as well when he realizes who you are?"

"Don't you two get into trouble all by yourselves just fine without me? Rowena mentioned with a smile. "Don't blame me for this idea, if I'm going to suffer from his temper, I'm dragging you two with me." She shooed them away from her. "Now go before someone sees us conspiring up here."

The brothers laughed as they climbed off the boulder and made their way back towards their bedrolls. Rowena rested her hand under her chin, looking over at Thorin. A frown suddenly appeared on her face as she remembered what the brothers had said.

"Wait, if Thorin has talked about me to his company, describing how I look perfectly to them. Does that mean everyone besides Thorin knows who I am? '
Chapter Nine: Of Trolls, Hobbits and Wizards

Meanwhile elsewhere and far away from the company, the wizard known as Radagast the Brown was in his forest, and he was seeing a strange mold growing on the trees, he picks a dead leaf and looks at it.

"Not good. Not good at all!" Radagast said as he starts running through the forest and passing dead animals, he picks a mushroom and then whistles to some birds as he took off his hat and waited for them to land in the nest on his head before he placed the hat back on his head. Radagast then turns and sees an ailing hedgehog.

Radagast called out to the hedgehog in concern. "Oh. Oh, no! Oh, Sebastian! Good gracious." He picks up the hedgehog and runs to his home, which was built inside a great tree deep inside the forest, and gives the hedgehog something to cure him, then a bunch of hedgehogs surround the ill one.

Radagast said, shooing all the animals away from him. "Move back! Give him some air, for goodness sake!"

Radagast continues to use his magic to cure the sick hedgehog, but nothing works.
Radagast said, walking away from the ill hedgehog. "I don’t understand why it’s not working, it’s not as if it’s witchcraft!” Suddenly he realized something. "Witchcraft. Oh, but it is! A dark and powerful magic."

Radagast notices shadows falling across his furniture and looks over to large spiders crawling onto his house. He picked up the ill animal and went into a corner to protect himself as he realized what will cure the hedgehog. He gives the potion to the hedgehog as he recites a spell, and as the hedgehog is cured the giant spiders crawl away, Radagast walked outside and watches them retreat into the forest.

Radagast wondered out loud to himself. "Where on this good earth do those foul creatures come from?"

Suddenly a small bird starts tweeting something to Radagast, causing the brown-dressed wizard to look at it.

Radagast asked the small bird. "The old fortress? Show me." He turned to another small bird and said. "Tell Rowena what had happened, something tells me it involves her as well."

The small tweeted before flying off, heading towards the company.

Radagast followed the bird in a sled being pulled by large rabbits through the forest.

The sky had cleared half way through the day to everyone’s unease, except Rowena who mourned the loss of the rain. Raindrops dripped off the tree leaves, and hit the ground in a gentle rhythm. Rowena stared at the old, abandoned farmhouse that was now in ruins with a wary glance before she looked over at Thorin who drew his steed to halt. Rowena spotted that Gandalf had already gotten off his horse and made his way towards the farmhouse. She slide off Goliath and hurried after him, catching up to him once he reached the entranceway of the farmhouse.

“We’ll camp here for the night.” Thorin announced, he dropped down off the horse and his feet hit the ground with a solid thud. “Fíli, Kíli look after the ponies.” Thorin ordered. “Make sure you stay with them.”

The boys obeyed their uncle’s command and went to gather the ponies, but they didn’t even take the reign of Goliath, after learning that the great Warhorse did not like anyone but Rowena touching him and he had mocked charged Fíli and Kíli until the brothers got into their heads to well leave the Friesian alone and to have Rowena handle him.

“Oin, Gloin,” he glanced at the pair of brothers as the got down from the horses. “Get a fire going. We will need the warmth.”

“Right you are,” Gloin nodded. “Come on, Oin.”

“Go on what?” Oin’s face wrinkled with confusion as he fiddled with his ear horn. Gloin signed for him to follow him and the pair set off into the nearby woods.

Frodo, in the safety of the saddle bag, had to cover his mouth from laughter slipping out when he had heard Oin’s misunderstanding of Gloin’s words.

“A farmer and his family used to live here,” Gandalf murmured, as he walked around the ruins of the house and turned over a piece of wood with the end of his staff.
Rowena glanced around her before looking back at Gandalf. “But where are they? There’s no trace of them anywhere.”

“Something happened here,” he said, underneath his breath and his grey narrowed. He then raised his head with a sense of purpose and started towards Thorin who was surveying the area with a severe glance. “I think it would be wiser to move on. We could make for the Hidden Valley.”

“No,” Thorin said, with the sound of thunder. “I told you when you broached the subject the evening past, I will not go near that place.”

Gandalf held his patience. “Why not? The elves could help us. We could get food, rest, advice,” he commented, hoping the dwarf would see reason.

“I do not need their advice,” Thorin said, with a dismissive sneer. His jaw clenched tightly as the anger boiled in his gut. He would not lower himself to go sniveling to the elves for help when they disregarded the dwarves in their time of need.

“Thorin listen to reason,” Gandalf stated, with a heavy sigh. “We have a map that we cannot read. Lord Elrond could help us.”

“Help?” Thorin practically spat out the word as if it tasted like bile upon his tongue. He whirled around upon the Grey wizard, with fury mounting upon his face. “A dragon attacks Erebor, what help came from the Elves? Orcs plunder Moria, desecrate our sacred halls, the Elves looked on and did nothing. You ask me to seek out the very people who betrayed my grandfather and betrayed my father.”

Gandalf looked upon Thorin with a bit of anger, but most of all disappointment. “You are neither of them,” Gandalf told him, his voice stern and strained with the effort to hold his temper in check. Only dwarves could bring him so close to losing it. “I did not give you that map and key for you to hold on to the past.”

“I did not know that they were yours to keep,” Thorin countered, darkly.

Gandalf drew in a swift breath, and turned around stalking past a wide Rowena who had watched the scene from afar. She wisely let the wizard stomp off without a word.

Bilbo was helping Balin with his equipment when she noticed Gandalf with an angered look on his face and was storming away from Thorin. He knew something was wrong. Bilbo did not understand what was going on. “Everything alright? Gandalf, where are you going?” Bilbo asked uneasily, noticing that he was leaving she started to panic. “Gandalf, where are you going?”

“To seek the company of the only one around here who’s got any sense,” the wizard barked.

“And that would be…?” Bilbo continued, befuddled.

“MYSELF, Mister Baggins!” Gandalf huffed. “I’ve had enough of dwarves for one day.” The wizard stalked out of sight, and Rowena winced ever so slightly but rolled her eyes in annoyance and fondness.

“Great, he’s going to leave me with grumpy dwarves. Real mature.” Rowena replied, passing him.

“Is…is he coming back?” Bilbo asked. Honestly, Gandalf’s presences had been one of his few reassurances so far on this journey and he couldn’t help the sense of unease that fell over his journey.

Balin looked unsure.
Rowena watched Gandalf go before she looked across the ruin house at Thorin. His blue eyes looked around the broken house with a deep frown upon his face before he raised his gaze and caught hers. Rowena stared at him for a long moment, and she wanted to reach out towards him, and do something to ease that haunted shadow that flickered in his gaze. Instead, she turned her head away while rubbing absentmindedly the spot right above her head.

Thorin worked his jaw before he gathered his wits about him. “Bombur, food,” he ordered, shortly.

His ill mood had only been soured further by Gandalf’s suggestion. You are neither of them, Gandalf’s words still rang in his ears incessantly like an annoying bee buzzing about. The words hit him like a jagged blow from an enemies dagger for despite all of their faults, he loved his grandfather and his father. No amount of madness would change that. As a boy he idolized them, and as a boy he lost all those illusions. He drew in a measured breath, and glanced at the camp where everyone was carefully avoiding his gaze. He felt Rowena following close behind him, silent and give him his space.

Rowena patted Bombur's shoulder as she walked pass him. "And try not to steal some bites as you cook, the rest of us would like some to eat as well."

Bombur nodded his head, sheepishly, at her. As Rowena walked passed Thorin, she reached over and slowly and enticingly stroked her fingers across his lower back, causing the dwarf King to jolt at the sudden touch. He turned his head to see Rowena smiled, a slow and sultry one, before she turned her head away and walked towards Balin.

If the pair had thought that everyone had missed that moment between the them, they were wrong of course. All the dwarves and the fauntling, who was still hidden in the bag, witnessed the moment and shared a secret smile, they all want to see their King and the beautiful mercenary to come together in marriage and the dwarves all know that Rowena and Thorin's human girl are the one and the same person, and they're all betting to see when their King learn of her true identity and who would make the first move as they all see and notice that Rowena and Thorin are attracted to each other and they are in love with each other.

Bilbo turned to Rowena, asking her. "Is he coming back?"

Rowena crossed her arms as she gave a deep sigh. They all looked at her when they heard her, and she had to fight against flinch at their stares.

Rowena shrugged her shoulders. "He'll be back, Papa. He's just throwing an tantrum because he's not getting his way."

Bofur looked at her. "I didn't know Wizards can throw tantrums."

"I didn't either until I started to travel with him." Rowena said. "Colored me shock when it happened for the first time."

Rowena felt Ophelia jumped off her shoulder and made her way away from the group and disappeared into the forest. She looked over towards Thorin and noticed that he was now talking to both Balin and Dwalin away from the group. Rowena looked away from them, when she heard Bofur yelping and saw that Goliath was mock charging him.

Rowena yelled at Goliath. "Goliath, stop harassing the poor dwarf! And stop trying to take his hat!"

Bofur hurried behind her, putting her between him and the snorting horse. "He's been doing that a lot now, lass."
"He likes your hat, apparently." Rowena said.

"I like my hat, too, but I don't want it to be snatched by a Warhorse." Bofur said as he walked away from her, leaving Rowena laughing.

Rowena stretched as she spotted Ophelia running towards her with muddy paws. "Hey, girlie! Did you find a river for me to take a bath?"

Ophelia mewed and Rowena crouched down and stroked her head. "Yeah, I'll say you did." She stood up and gestured for her to led the way. "Let's go, I need a bath and I'm not going to let this chance to get away from me."

Rowena followed after Ophelia, speaking to Glóin. "I'm going to go and take a bath, Glóin."

Glóin nodded his head. "Alright, but be careful and mindful."

Rowena smiled as she waved back at him as she entered the forest.

It was a good twenty minutes into Rowena entering the forest when Thorin noticed that she had yet to return when she had disappear into the forest. He was looking towards the mouth of the path that leads into the forest before he turn towards his men.

Thorin looked at each and every one of them, questioning. "Where has the woman gone?"

Glóin looked at him and answered, before anyone could. "She had gone in looking for her cat."

Thorin growled as he stormed into the forest. "That damn cat is going to get her into more trouble."

Balin waited until Thorin was out of ear shoot before looking at Glóin with a raised brow. "Why didn't you tell Thorin that Rowena had gone into the forest to bathe?"

Glóin looked at him as he gestured towards the forest. "Balin, you know that, I know but he doesn't know that." Than he smiled at him and everyone else. "Besides, I'm giving Thorin and Rowena a chance to get over whatever is holding them back from admitting their feelings for each other."

Bilbo frowned, looking at him. "You know that Rowena and Thorin have met before?"

"Aye," Glóin said. "Your daughter is exactly how Thorin described her. I'm just shock that Thorin hasn't realized that she is his One."

Balin sighed as he and Dwalin looked at each other. "Thorin is too focus on the quest to see that his One was under his nose the entire time."

Bofur looked at Bilbo. "Does Rowena still have the bead that Thorin gave her?"

"Yes," Bilbo nodded. "She wears it all the time now that I think about it."

Balin looked at Glóin. "When he sees the bead in her hair...."

"He'll realize that Rowena is his One and his human girl." Glóin finished, smiling.

Dwalin smiled as he crossed his arms over his chest. "They're tell tales about these two for centuries to come."

The dwarves and hobbit laughed, and started to plan new schemes that would get the pair alone
Thorin was, at the time, searching the forest for Rowena. He had been following her footprints but grew frustrated when her footsteps suddenly wandered off the path and into the forest itself and he had been paying close attention to the ground in order to find her footprints once again.

He heard the sound of splashing water, the dwarf King turned his head towards the direction and caught the glint of sunlight upon water. Thorin quickly ducked behind bushes as he stumbled upon something he knew he shouldn't have, it meant that he would get slap if she caught him.

Rowena was bathing in the pool (of course she is naked' Thorin angrily thought to himself), and standing in waist-deep water, her upper body bared. But her back was to him, so it saved her modesty and his dignity from suffering.

Her hair was loose, following down, in waves, her back; the ends honey-dark from their immersion in the pool. When Rowena turned to the side, giving Thorin side-profile of her, he had to bite his lip in order to prevent a groan from coming out. Some of the tassels of her hair was lying over her taut and puckered nipples, somewhat hiding them from his view, as visible seen goosebumps were raised on her flesh, hinting how cold the water really is.

A wave of desire consumed him. Thorin felt himself thicken, grow hard. He bite back a tormented groan. Thorin is going to kill Glóin for lying straight to his face and telling him that Rowena was looking for her damn cat instead that she was actually, in fact, taking a bath.

Thorin was arguing either to leave the way he came and run the risk of stepping on a twig, alerting her of his presence or stay and also run the risk of getting caught by her, when Rowena suddenly turned and dove into the deeper water. A glimpse of lush buttocks and long, shapely flashed into view, then was gone.

He was most definitely going to kill Glóin for this and he was going to enjoy it immensely

Rowena resurfaced back up in the waist-deep water, sputtering, flinging her long sodden mane aside. Her arms lifted, combing back the hair from her face. The movement lifted her breasts, tightening them into delectably pert, ivory mounds. But what he saw lying over her right nipple immediately cooled his desire and replaced with shock and bewilderment.

It was a thin braid that hang next to her tight temple, and lying across her breasts, over her nipple, was a courting bead made from mithril and it has Amazonite running along the surface of the bead.

Thorin recognized the bead. How could he forget? It was the very same one he had given to his human One and now he's seeing it again. And that could mean only one thing:

That Rowena and his One were the one and the same person, and Thorin was both upset and happy. He was upset that Gandalf and Rowena kept it from him, as well as the Hobbit. He was happy that he was able to find her again, even though she had been with him the entire time, right under his nose.

Thorin slowly crept backwards keeping his eyes on Rowena as she turned her back on him once again, wringing the water from her hair. He made his way back to where he had come from, didn't even snapped a twig or disturbed any bushed as he made his way back to the path.

Balin looked over to see Thorin walking out of the forest path and made his way passed them but the dwarf king did pause enough to send a glare towards Glóin, making the dwarf, Bofur and his
nephews to laugh.

Dwalin looked at his brother and said. "I thought he would be thrilled at seeing Rowena without anything."

Balin became thoughtful before he said, standing up. "Aye, but I think something happened that made him more stoic than usually."

The elderly dwarf made his way towards Thorin who stood by his horse and started to remove the saddle. "What's wrong, Thorin?"

"Rowena is my human girl, my One." Thorin said without turning around.

"Ah, I was wondering when you'll figure out who she was." Balin said, clapping his hand behind his back.

Thorin turned around and pinned Balin with a stern look. "What? You knew? Since when?"

Balin lowered his eyes and sighed. "Since I met her back at Bag End." He looked back up and saw the shocked expression on Thorin's face. "She matched how you always described your One, down to the appearance and personality, perfectly. So it didn't take long for me to figure out."

Thorin turned his head away from Balin, moving away from him. "And of course, she remembers me while I did not."

"She remembered you, aye." Balin said in agreement. "But she won't act on her feelings, she won't threatened the quest."

Thorin looked at him and lowered his gaze once again. "No, not when she doesn't have confidence in my feelings for her."

"Why didn't you tell her about the true meaning behind that bead you gave her? Why didn't you tell her that was a courtship bead?"

"Because I am a King-in-Exile, I don't have anything to offer her."

"Oh, Thorin." Balin said as he slowly shook his head side to side. "I don't think she cares."

"Damnit, Ophelia!! Spit out that bird or I'll going to turn your hide into a scarf!" Rowena's voice appeared, interrupting Balin and Thorin's conversation. "That bird is one of Radagast's friend! Oh! He's going to kill me if he hears that you ate him!"

Everyone looked over once it became quiet after Rowena had yelled and saw the human woman carrying the cat by the scruff of her neck and she was cradling a small bird between the valley of her breasts.

Rowena walked passed her father, dropping Ophelia in his lap without breaking her stride or speed. "Can you hold onto her while I'll see why this little bird almost took me out when it was such a rush to see me."

Bilbo caught Ophelia in his hands. "You're bleeding, Rowena."

"Yeah, my damn cat thought it would be great to use me as a climbing post just to get to the small bird that was hovering over my head." Rowena grumbled as she stroked the little bird's head, softly whistling to it. "I'm tempted to skin her and make her fur into a scarf."

"Wouldn't you miss her if you do?" Bilbo asked, looking at his daughter.
"Nope, I'll be scratched free and happy!" Rowena said, and looked down at the small bird in her hands. "Alright, little guy. What did Radagast wanted me to know that was so important?"

The small bird tweeted at her and Rowena nodded her head as she listened. "Really? That bad, huh? What? Seriously? How big were they? Eh?! Well, it's a good thing that I decided to hang out with Gandalf more, because I would have fainted if I saw those. What? No, I wouldn't scream like a little girl. Keep sass talking me and I'll feed you to Ophelia."

Rowena tossed the bird up and watched it flow away from her. "Thanks, little guy! Yeah! I'll remember to tell Gandalf when he comes back." Then she turned around and mumbled. "If he comes back after his little tantrum."

Bofur looked at her. "I didn't know you spoke bird."

Rowena explained. "I speak all type of animals. Radagast taught me."

Ori asked Rowena, looking up at her. "What's he's like?"

Rowena tapped her chin with her nail. "Well, Radagast is a little different from Gandalf. He actually prefers the company of animals better than humans. And he's a little eccentric."

Dori asked. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean he's acts like he's not all there and he has bird poop on his face." Rowena answered.

Bilbo made a disgust face. "Sounds like an interesting wizard."

Rowena looked at her father. "Oh, you'll like him a lot better than Saruman the White."

Dwalin looked at her. "Why?"

"Because he's really impossible to get along with and he likes to deny anything and everything." Rowena answered before she added. "Oh, and he really does not like me at all."

"What did you do?" Bilbo asked, suspicion filling his body.

Rowena stared at her father with a hurt expression on her face. "Why did you immediately think that I did something absolutely horrible to the man? I could be absolutely innocent and he could just hate me for absolutely no reason."

"You? Innocent? You never been innocent in all your life, Rowny." Bilbo said.

Rowena pouted at her father as the dwarves started to laugh.

By the evening, the company; apart from Bilbo, Rowena, Fíli and Kíli, had all gathered around the camp fire and helped themselves with Bombur's hot stew.

Bilbo was keeping a look out to see if Gandalf might come, but there was no sign of him in the darkness. He got up from where he sat and made his way to and company and the warm camp fire. Rowena was cleaning Goliath, wiping the mud and grime away from his hooves and legs. But like her father, she would pause in the middle of grooming him to keep a look out for Gandalf, however, she knew that he wouldn't come back until he was good and ready.

Bofur was helping Bombur serve the stew and handed them to the company, he took notice Bilbo coming over to them with a face that was full of worry.

"He's been gone a long time." Bilbo said to Bofur.
“Who?” Bofur inquired as he was filling up two bowls with stew.

“Gandalf.” Bilbo clarified.

“He’s a wizard, he does as chooses.” Bofur said casually, clearly he’s not at all worried about the wizard’s sudden disappearance. “Here, do us a favour, take these to the lads.” He handed to him the two bowls of steaming stew.

Bofur said as he whacked his brother’s hand with the ladle. "Stop it, you’ve had plenty."

With a sigh, Bilbo reluctantly took the bowls and set off to where Fíli and Kíli are with the ponies, he gestured Rowena to follow him, she placed the brush on a rock and followed after her father. As she walked after her father, she spotted Thorin near the ruin farmhouse smoking his pipe. He seemed to be deep in his thoughts and Rowena didn't want to disturb him, so she silently went past him, yet she was unaware Thorin was staring after her as she left.

The ground was cold and wet, but it was nothing against the tough soles of a Hobbits foot. Rowena had a lot of practice walking silently through cold and wet ground, thanks to the Elves and living with the hobbits, so like her father, she found it easy to walk on the ground. Bilbo headed towards the ruin of what was once a stable, which was where the company placed their ponies. Bilbo stepped across the roots of trees, and tiptoed around a couple of bushes until he found Kili and Fili standing in front of the horses, whispering furiously to one another.

Rowena frowned as she noted something was off by the way they were standing and looked around, she quickly came to the realization that half of the ponies were missing and landscape around them had been redone. She slowly placed her hand on the hilt of her sword as she scanned the area around them, her senses going on full alert.

Now, Bilbo was no fool. He had grown up with several of his cousins, mostly of the Tookish variety so he knew trouble when he saw it, and raised a mischief-making daughter. “What is going on?” He demanded, primly.

Fili and Kili whirled around. There were twin expressions of shock on their faces before the brothers managed to smooth their faces into something more nonchalant. “Going on?” Fili asked, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

“What makes you think that something is going on?” Kili said, with only a faint note of unease in his voice as he leaned against the uprooted tree as if it were nothing.

Bilbo just looked at them deadpanned. “What kind of fool do you take me for? You two are acting like Rowena when she has done something that she shouldn't have.” He asked, sharply. “What on Yavanna's green hills are you up to?”

“Well…” Kili scratched his chin, sheepishly. “We were supposed to be looking out for the ponies.”

“It is only we’ve encountered a bit of a problem,” Fili said, a waspish sort of grin on his face. “You see we had seventeen ponies. But now…”

“Now we only have fifteen,” Kili stated, with a shrug of his shoulders and a quaking chuckle. “Daisy and Bungo are missing.”

Bilbo frowned, then craned his neck to peer around the two brother to look at the nervous animals. His eyes flickered from pony to pony until he realized they were indeed right. “Well, that’s not good. That is not good at all,” his voice rose with his panic. “Shouldn’t we go tell Thorin?”
Fili blanched, while Kili grimaced. “Uhh, no. Let’s not worry him. As our official burglar, we thought you might like to look into it,” Fili said, beaming hopefully at Bilbo.

Kili nodded, enthusiastically.

Rowena looked at both brothers, smirking. "You just don't want your Uncle to scold you for screwing up over such a easy task.” Both brothers glared at her as they mouthed 'Not helping' to her, which made her smirk even wider.

Bilbo blinked, then looked around and saw some trees that had recently uprooted and laying on the ground like a child’s plaything. Something big had been through here. Something big and strong enough to knock trees about. His panic only heightened, and he stuttered, “Well, uh...look, some--something big uprooted these trees.”

Kili nodded. “That was our thinking.”

"That was actually pretty obvious." Rowena put in, which earned her a glare from all three males. "Okay, okay. I'll shut up."

“Something very big, and possibly quite dangerous,” Bilbo cautioned, quietly. Oh, why did Thorin have to piss off the wizard at a time like this? Bilbo gnawed on his bottom lip worriedly. “I think we should…"

They looked through the wreckage of the trees until Fíli spotted something, interrupting Bilbo's sentence.

“Hey, there’s a light.” He alerted to them in a hushed voice. They gathered round the fallen tree trunk to see what he spotted. “Stay down.” He warned at his sibling, their mercenary and their burglar, they crouched down behind their hiding place. “Over there.” He pointed at a faint fiery glow between the woods and then they heard a low and gluttonous laugh in the distance.

Bilbo quaked from head to toe. “W-what is that?” He asked.

“Trolls,” Kili and Fili replied.

“Oh…oh, dear.” Bilbo muttered.

In a flash Rowena and the two brothers rushed towards the light. Not knowing what to do, Bilbo decided to follow them; he nearly forgotten the bowls and went back to get them and set off after the dwarf brothers and his human daughter.

Rowena hissed as she followed after the brothers. "You know, this is the first time I've ever went towards a light which obviously belongs to a trolls camp."

"How do you know?"

Rowena whispered back to him. "By the smell. Trolls don't actually believe in bathing, Papa."

They quietly raced through the woodland towards the light that was getting a bit brighter as they ran, Rowena, Fíli and Kíli reached some large overgrown roots of a tree and knelt down for cover to spy on where the light was coming from.

As Bilbo caught up with them, he suddenly heard thunderous thuds of footsteps coming from his left side, he gave a small gasped at what he saw and ducked for cover behind a tree near the where the boys and his daughter were hiding. He peeked out and saw a very big, grey bulky figure stomping through the woods and in each of its arms were a couple of frightened ponies and he recognized one of the ponies in horror.
“He’s got Myrtle and Minty!” He whispered in shock at the boys as they watch the giant creature headed to the light. “I think they are going to eat them. We have to do something.”

The dwarf brothers looked to each other and Rowena buried her face in her hands as she realized what the brothers are going to do.

“Yes, you should.” Kíli suggested and walked up to him and took his bowl from him. “Mountain trolls are slow and stupid and you’re small they’ll never see you.” He stared at him.

Rowena frowned as she commented. "I think that applies to all trolls. Remember, I've fought against many different type of trolls."

Bilbo didn’t like this idea at all and tried to tell them he refused to go along with this stupid insane plan. "Me? Me? No. No. No."

“It’s perfectly safe.” Kíli assured him. “We’ll be behind you.”

Before he could give them his refusal, Fíli began to push his towards the way where the troll had gone.

“If you run into trouble, hoot twice like a barn owl and once like a brown owl.” Fíli instructed to him as he took his bowl of stew from him, then they backed away to their hiding place.

Bilbo faced to where the troll, the ponies and light are as he muttered to himself the instructions Fíli gave him.

“Twice like a barn owl, hoot twice like a brown….” He muttered to himself as he was getting ready. “hoots like a…like a… Uh, are you sure this is a good idea?” He turns to see Kíli and Fíli have run off with their bowls of stew and left him on his own, he turns as he hears the trolls talking, but nearly screamed when he sees Rowena standing before him.

Bilbo muttered to her. "What are you doing here?"

Rowena stared down at her father. "I'll helping you before you get killed and Frodo and Bag End fall into those horrible hands of the Sackville-Baggins."

Bilbo sighed before he continued on. "Fine, but be careful."

Rowena rolled her eyes, amused that her father would worry about her when she's the one who knows how to fight, and she followed after her father.

From a distance, Fíli and Kíli watched cautiously at Bilbo and Rowena as they sets off on their own through the woods.

“What would happen if he discovers that he’s there?” Kíli asked his brother with anxiety.

“I’m more concern about his safety from those trolls.” Fíli countered with concern as he looked towards where the trolls camped. “I just hope the trolls won’t discover him before he does.”

Meanwhile Bilbo and Rowena got a little bit closer to the where the light of the fire was, they kept themselves hidden amongst the bushes and then they overheard rough and gravelly voices.

“Mutton yesterday, mutton today.” Bilbo heard the first gruff voice complained. “And blimey; if it don’t look like mutton again tomorrow!”

“Quit your griping!” The second voice scorned at the first voice. “These ain’t sheep, these is fresh
nags.” He argued.

At that moment; Bilbo parted the bushed in front of him, as Rowena leaned over him, and saw to his horror; two huge trolls sitting by the fire; one troll who wore an apron, named Bert was cooking something in a small cooking pot hanging over the flames, the other troll sitting next to him named Tom was slightly a bit thin with a dribbled nose that hasn’t been blown properly and the third one called William looked bigger that the other two, walked towards where the missing ponies are kept and joined the two ponies he had taken with the herd and went to join the others around the camp fire.

He read about trolls in his books but never had he seen one up close; their skins are so wrinkled and grey that look like they had never been outdoors in their whole life, their teeth are rotten but still intact, their face were big with a little deformity shown on their complexion and from the smell they hadn’t had a bath in days.

Rowena covered her nose with her hand. "I see? I told you. Trolls don't believe in bathing, I think they're afraid of water and soap."

He spotted the scared ponies in a small troll made fence, he turned to his daughter and said. "Wait here, Rowena. I'll get the horses, make sure there's isn't anymore of them out here. " Under cover of bushes he turned and slowly and quietly made his way towards them.

Rowena hissed as she reached out to her father. "Wait! Papa..." But he was already gone, she slapped her hand to her forehead and groan. "Thank-you, Gandalf, for leaving me here alone to deal with this situation. I could kill you."

“Oh I don’t like horse, I never have.” Tom fussed as he looked at the nervous ponies. “Not enough fat on them.”

“Well it’s better than the leathery old farmer.” Bert said as he stirred the revolting stew. “All skin and bone he was. I’m still picking bits of him out of my teeth.” When Bilbo heard that comment he felt sick of what happen to that poor, unfortunate farmer and his family.

But when got he round near the trolls he saw Tom sneeze straight into the stew. That repulsing moment made him feel queasy. Rowena gagged from the safety of the woods, watching her father.

“Well that’s lovely that is; a floater.” Bert said sarcastically as looked at the snot floating in the stew.

“Might improve the flavor!” William mocked.

“Ah there’s more where that came from.” Tom assumed stupidly and was about to snort more snot into the stew but William stopped him by grabbing his nose to block up his nostrils.

“Oh no, you don’t!” Bert shouted and shoved Tom back to his seat. “Sit down!” Tom nervously sat up and took out a dirty handkerchief that hasn’t been washed in years.

Rowena gagged. Oh, Valar. That is so disgusting!

At last Bilbo finally got the ponies and tried to untie the rope that was keeping the ponies locked in, but the rope was too tangled up and thick to break free. Rowena watched him from the safety of the woods and kept an eye on the trolls, she wanted to make sure that her father wasn't catch by the trolls.

Just then Tom turned towards the ponies and Bilbo quickly hid from sight. Rowena hissed as she
ducked down, concern that her father would be catch by them now or at any time.

“Well I hope you’re going to gut these nags.” Tom inquired as he was examined the skittish ponies. “I don’t like the stinky parts.”

Bert have had enough of his complaining and hit on the head with his ladle.

“I said sit down!” he ordered.

After making sure that they’re not looking, Bilbo went back to try to free the ponies but still he was not successful. Rowena silently prayed for her father to hurry up, the longer he was in there the closer he gets to getting caught by them.

“I’m starving, now are we having horse tonight or what?!?” William complained.

“Shut your cakehole!” Bert argued. “You’ll eat what I give you.”

*That knife will do nicely for free the ponies.* Bilbo thought as he slowly and quietly sneaked up towards the back of the snot dribbling troll.

Rowena spotted her father going towards one of the trolls and clenched her teeth in fear. *what are you doing, Papa? Don’t go near them!*

“How come he’s the cook?” William continued with a grumbled face. “Everything tastes the same, everything tastes like chicken.”

“Except the chicken.” Tom added.

“It tastes like fish!” William finished.

Bilbo tried to pluck up the courage to come nearer but as soon as the troll moved an inch and slowly walked back towards his place near the ponies to try again.

“I’m just saying; a little appreciation would be nice…” Bert justified.

Just then one of the ponies spotted Bilbo and gave a thrilled whinny. Then trolls thought they heard something and went suddenly quiet to listen. Bilbo silently, afraid to make a sound, hid himself by the ponies and shut his eyes tightly shut and held his breath; hoping that he won’t be discovered.

A few seconds of silence past by until…

“‘Thank you very much, Bert.’” Bert continued. “‘Lovely stew, Bert,’ how hard is that?”

Bilbo silently breathed out a sigh of relief. Just to make sure he doesn’t get caught; he crawled towards the trolls. The ponies were trying to get his attention. But he placed his forefinger to his lips.

“Shhh, I’m here to save you, please be quiet.” Bilbo whispered to them.

Then his hand fell on a strange object, he lifted it up to him so that he could get a good look at it and realized that it was a blood stained bone. Quickly he put it down in repulsion and saw to his dread that he was surrounded by litter of bones of the unfortunate animals or people that crossed the path of the trolls. But he knew that he must be brave he have to rescue the ponies.

Meanwhile, Rowena had ducked down and crawled away when the trolls suddenly went quiet as if they heard something, and she didn’t want to run the risk of them catching her. She couldn’t
believe that she was reduce into crawling around on her hands and knees through the woods. Rowena was crawling through a bush when she felt something grabbed her ankle and had to bite back a yelp from erupting through her mouth.

Rowena sat up and looked over her shoulder to see a man standing behind her, but he wasn’t a stranger to her. She knew him.

The man stood with broad shoulders, and draped in cloth of a Ranger. His face was sharpness and angled and his eyes held the sharpness of hunter. The man was also handsome, his skin darkened from years out in the wild and his hair dark, waving to his shoulders and a dark stubble around his strong jaw. His eyes a piercing light blue that could rival Frodo’s more brilliant sky blues. His build was lithe yet muscular.

Rowena stared gaping up at the man before her and said. "Estel! What are you doing here?"

Estel knelt by her side and said. "I've been following you and the dwarves since you lifted Bree. I wanted to make sure you are safe with them."

Rowena smiled as she went to sit on her knees and threw her arms around his neck. "Usually I would have hated it when you treat me like a little girl but this time, I'm actually glad to see you."

Estel laughed as he held her to him. "I'm glad, I was a little worried about your reaction to me being here." He looked towards the troll camp. "We need a plan if we're going to save those horses and get your father out of there."

Rowena grimaced as she remembered something. "Not just my father." She explained when she noticed his questioning look. "Gandalf sneaked my father's young nephew with us. He's in one of those bags."

Estel sighed as he shook his head. "I do not want to be you when your father finds out about this."

"It wasn't my idea." Rowena said, "It was Gandalf, and I'll gladly throw him under the wagon to get out of this mess."

Meanwhile, A large troll hand loomed over Bilbo's head and he stayed perfectly started to panic a bit that he was caught, but the hand didn’t grab him instead it wandered away from him to grab a barrel like tankard. He calmed himself down a bit and carried on his task.

"Just needs a sprinkle of squirrel dung." He heard Bert said as he was nearly almost there to Tom’s back.

Bert spotted Tom about to drink his brew. “Here, that’s my grog!”

Tom must have realized he had picked the wrong one and looked up at Bert in fear.

“Sorry.” He apologized but Bert hit him again with his ladle.

Tom fell backwards nearly squished Bilbo but luckily got away before he landed on him; he doesn’t seem to noticed him and went back to his seat again.

Bert tasted his stew to see if it was ready.

“Ooh, that is beautifully balanced that is.” He offered the spoonful to Tom. “Wrap your laughing gear around that, eh? Good isn’t it? That’s why I’m the cook.”
While Tom was busy sipping the revolting stew, Bilbo finally managed to get behind Tom’s back and his knife. But he realized there was a problem. *How on earth could I get this knife from this thing without him noticing me?* He thought with frustration.

While he was trying to figure out how to take the knife from Tom’s belt, then he felt Tom started to sat up, he crouch down and saw to his nauseate was Tom scratching his filthy, stinky bottom.

*That’s disgusting!* Bilbo thought with a scrunched face.

He quickly got back to work to figure to unattached the knife as he overheard one of them talking.

“Oh me guts are grumbling.” William complained. “I got to snaffle something. Flesh, I need flesh.”

Just when Bilbo managed to nearly unraveled the knife, when suddenly he was grabbed from behind and next thing he knew he was face to face with one of the troll and gave him a huge snotty blow from his nose.

Never In all his life had something revolting like this happened to him by a troll using him as a handkerchief and now him clothes were covered in snot from head to foot. Rowena and Estel grimaced as they had seen this from the safety of the woods.

“Argh!!! Blimey! Bert! Bert!” The Troll positively squealed with a look of glee and awe on his face that made Bilbo quiver from his head to his toes. “Look what’s come out of me ‘ooter! It’s got arms and legs and everything.”

The other two trolls gathered around to take a look. Bert frowned, his face scrunched up. “What is it?”

“I don’t know, but I don’t like the way it wriggles around!” Tom shouted, and William shook Bilbo, covered in snot, off the napkin and onto the ground. As soon as his feet hit the ground, he scrambled to them and twisted around to face all the trolls.

“What are you then? An oversized squirrel?” Tom asked.

“I’m a burglar--uh, Hobbit,” Bilbo sputtered.

“A burglahobbit?” William squeaked.

Fíli looked at his brother. "Kíli, stay here. I'm going to back and get help."

Kíli looked at his brother. "You do realize that Uncle will kill us for endangering the burglar and Rowena, right?"

"I think he'll kill us more for endangering Rowena than her father." Fíli told his brother, and Kíli nodded his head in silent agreement.

Fíli turned and hurried away from his brother, silently making his way towards his uncle and the rest of the company.

Meanwhile, the camp had been silent since Bilbo's and Rowena's departure. Thorin had pulled on his armor, with a dour look on his face. He latched his gauntlet tightly around his forearm before he lifted his gaze to the forest around them. Thorin clenched and unclenched his fists, then shook
his head stubbornly. He rose from the log and squared his shoulders, prepared to head back into the woods when Fili burst from the tree line, an expression of pure panic across his face. He took in a deep gulp of air, and as soon as he caught his breath he spat out a single word.

“Trolls.”

Alarm flared through Thorin, sudden and with a white hot intensity. “What?” He barked out, his blue eyes widening. “Where is your brother? Where is the hobbit? Where is Rowena?” He demanded, darkly.

Fili flinched ever so slightly. “I…I left them back there. The trolls…they stole the ponies. Bilbo is trying to steal them back and Rowena went with him,” Fili explained, hesitantly.

Gut wrenching fear hit him swiftly and without a second to comprehend it. Then Thorin’s face darkened with anger, and he ripped his blade from scabbard as the others shot to their feet. “How dare you leaving my One back there, as well as her father, to deal with the trolls! She may know how to handle trolls due to mercenary job but her father does not! He is a gentlefolk, he doesn't know how to protect himself nor does he have a weapon!” Thorin nearly shouted. How could the foolish Halfling be so ignorant? And how could his nephews be so foolish to allow it to happen? He wasn't worried about Rowena but it was dangerous even for her over the fact that she's going to have to keep her father safe while she fight against the trolls.

“Thorin, calm yourself,” Balin told him, sharply. “You will be no good to either of them if you let your anger guide you.”

Thorin gnashed his teeth together, biting back his anger. His blue eyes pinned Fili to the spot who looked ill with worry. “Lead us to them,” he demanded, darkly. Fili gave wide eyed look with a sharp, single nod before he turned around and led the Company into the woods.

Meanwhile....

"Can we cook `im?” Bert asked, gleefully, looking at Bilbo after they had put him down.

“We can try!” William shouted, and reached out to get Bilbo. Bilbo dodged out of the way then backed up when he was cornered by Bert.

“He wouldn’t make more than a mouthful, not when he’s skinned and boned!” Bert pointed a finger at the Hobbit.

“Perhaps there’s more Burglahobbits around these parts,” Tom suggested, with a malicious edge to his grin as he drooled for something other than mutton. “Might be enough for a pie!”

“Grab him!”

“It’s too quick!”
Bilbo gave them chase, and dodged them for as long as he could with his heart feeling as if it would beat right out of his chest when a meaty hand clasped down upon his leg. He found him hanging upside down in the air, and coming closer to the a Troll’s face than he had ever wanted to. “Gotcha! Are there any more of you little fellas `iding where you shouldn’t?”

“Nope!” Bilbo said, quickly.

“He’s lying,” William accused.

“No!” Bilbo shook his head. “I’m not!”

“Hold his toes over the fire. Make him squeal!” William ordered, then he let out a monstrous howl and fell down to the ground hard holding his bleeding leg. Bilbo’s eyes widened as he saw Kili standing there, his sword drawn and a cocky smirk on his face. There was a fierceness in his eyes that made him look more like his uncle than Bilbo had ever noticed before.

“Drop him,” Kili demanded, heatedly.

“You what?” One Troll stuttered.

“I said, drop him,” Kili said, through his teeth. His brown eyes were unflinching. At least, until Tom threw Bilbo straight at him. The two both fell hard to the ground, and then the Company burst out of the bushes with battle cries upon their lips. The Trolls yelped as the weapons slashed at their feet for the dwarves fought like they were mad, with battle cries and filled with a determination to bring the monsters down. Bilbo rolled off of Kili and looked up to see the Troll’s knife lying on the ground.

He pushed himself to his feet and rushed over towards the ponies. He sawed through the rope as quickly as he could, spurred on by the noise of fighting behind him. The ropes came free, and the horses bolted at the first sign of freedom. He dropped the knife, intent on making his own kind of escape when he felt him, yet again, snatched up by a Troll. He feels his limbs being held out like he was about to be quartered.

“Bilbo!” Kili shouted.

The dwarves all halted in their fighting when Tom the Troll shouted, “Lay down your arms, or we’ll rip his off!!”

Thorin halted, vexation and frustration on his face as he stared up at the Halfling with a grudging glare and all the Company held their breath waiting to see what their leader would do. Bilbo swallowed thickly, for a moment certain this would be the end of his journey. Then Thorin plants his sword in the ground and took a step back. The other dwarves slowly drop their sword and weapons as well.

Estel muttered as he watched the dwarves and hobbit being put into sacks. "Well, that could have gone better."

"Yes, that totally could have gone better if I was down there." Rowena slapped her hand to her forehead. "Well, this is just great! Now, we have to rescue the dwarves on top of my father and cousin."

“They must have a cave nearby,” Estel murmured, quietly. He pulled back from the bushes, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “They cannot travel by day, and the mountains are more than a fortnight’s journey from here.”
“We will ponder caves later,” Rowena shook her head. “For now, something has to be done.”

“You have a plan?” Estel arched a brow.

“Not exactly,” Rowena admitted, with a sheepishness on her face. “More like half of one…”

“Are you going to share, or keep me in suspense?” Estel said, with a sly kind of smile upon his handsome features.

Rowena gave a half smile in reply and Estel said. "I'm not going to like it, huh?"

Rowena shook her head as she said. "Nope, I'm not liking it either."

The dwarves fought hard like they were mad, which made the surrender all that more bitter. So they shouted and raged as loud as they could, but the Trolls did not pay them a bit of mind as they fought over the preparations.

“Don’t know why we bothered cooking them. Let’s just sit on them and squash them into jelly,” William suggested,

“Nah! They should be sautéed and grilled with a sprinkle of sage,” Bert countered, gesturing towards the dwarves.

“Is this really necessary?” Dori asked, not really caring to hear about ways they could be cooked.

“Ooh, that does sound quite nice,” William agreed.

Oin looked thunderous. “Untie us, you monsters!”

“Take on someone your own size!” Gloin shouted at the top of his lungs.

“Never mind the seasoning; we ain’t got all night! Dawn ain’t far away, so let’s get a move on. I don’t fancy being turned to stone,” Tom growled out. At his words, a idea formed in Bilbo’s mind and he immediately jumped on it.

“Wait!” Bilbo shimmed to his feet and hoped towards the fire while straining to keep the bag from falling off his body. “You are making a terrible mistake.”

“You can’t reason with them, they’re half-wits!” Dori shouted at Bilbo as the spit turned.

“Half-wits that caught us,” Bofur scoffed, sweat dripping down his face as he was quite literally being roasted alive. “What does that make us?”

Bilbo rolled his eyes before he faced the Trolls. “The seasoning!” The hobbit nearly shouted.

“What about the seasoning?” Bert demanded.

“Well have you smelt them?” Bilbo looked at them, incredulously. “You’re going to need something stronger than sage before you plate this lot up. I can help you there. I am a good cook myself, and I know the secrets of cooking a dwarf, if you see what I mean.”

“Traitor!”

“You wretched Halfling!”
“What until I get my hands on you!”

Bilbo barely concealed a sigh, and wondered if it was worth the trouble of saving them. The Troll called William leaned forward, and peered down at the hobbit thoughtfully. “What do you know about cooking dwarf?”

“Shut up, and let the, uh, flurgaburburrahobbit talk!” Bert poked William in the side with his great soup ladle that had been fashioned out of tree bark.

“Uh, the secret to cooking dwarf is, um—” Bilbo fumbled for a moment.


“Yes—yes, I’m telling you, the secret is … to skin them first!” Bilbo said, with a vigorous nod.

In the woods, Rowena had to press her knuckles against her mouth to keep back a laugh that threatened to slip free. Rowena was quite impressed that her father was already thinking of a plan to distract them way before she could even bring him into the plan.

Rowena looked up at Estel who was in a tree. "You ready up there, Estel?"

Estel nodded his head. "I am but I don't like the idea of you doing your part of the plan, alone."

"Well, we wouldn't be in this mess if Gandalf and Thorin hadn't gotten into the argument of visiting Elrond." Rowena snapped.

"Your One is very stubborn." Estel said, smiling down at her.

"I'm about to make a lot of noises, Estel." Rowena warned. "So shut up or you'll get caught as well."

Estel smiled at her but wisely kept his mouth closed. Rowena took a deep breath and took a step forward.

Meanwhile...

“Tom, get me the filleting knife,” William ordered.

“If I get you, you little--” Gloin struggled to get free.

“I won’t forget that!” Dwalin roared.

Bilbo winced and hoped that all would be smoothed over once this was all said and done. Tom shook his head and placed his hands upon his hips. “What a load of rubbish! I’ve eaten plenty with their skins on. Scuff them, I say, boots and all.”

“e’s right! Nothing wrong with a bit of raw dwarf! Nice and crunchy,” William said, and grabbed Bombur who shouted, helplessly in the sack.

the Troll lift Bombur towards his mouth. Her eyes were wide and her breath caught in her throat when Bilbo shouted. “No! Not--not that one, he--he’s infected!”

“You what?” Tom blinked.

“Yeah, He’s got worms in his … tubes,” Bilbo explained, lamely. William made a noise of disgust
and dropped Bombur back into the pile of Dwarves. “In--in fact they all have, they’re in--infested
with parasites. It’s a terrible business; I wouldn’t risk it, I really wouldn’t.”

“Parasites, did he say parasites?” Oin looked startled, for he was the trained healer of the group so
he should have known if anyone was carrying any kind of parasites before hand.

“We don’t have parasites!” Kili said, offended. “You have parasites!”

“What are you talking about, laddie?” Gloin asked, confused. Bilbo gave aggravated sighed, and
rolled his eyes with a baleful twist of his lips.

Thorin narrowed his eyes upon the Halfling, the cogs inside his mind furiously at work as the
outrage simmered down into a sudden understanding. He kicked the others and gave them a sharp
pointed looked that conveyed a thousand words and what would happen if they did not quickly
fall in line. Suddenly, the shouted of denial quickly change to proclamations about how they were
riddled with parasites.

“I’ve got parasites as big as my arm!” Oin shouted.

“Mine are the biggest parasites, I’ve got huge parasites!” Kili called out, as loud as he could.

“We’re riddled.”

“Yes, I’m riddled,” Ori said, nodding enthusiasticly.

“Yes we are. Badly!” Dori nodded.

“What would you have us do, then, let ‘em all go?” Tom demanded, glaring down at the hobbit
with a nasty sneer upon her face.

“Well...” Bilbo began, fighting a grin.

“You think I don’t know what you’re up to? This little ferret is taking us for fools!” Tom pointed
an accusing finger at Bilbo, and stomped forward.

“Ferret?” Bilbo stumbled over his words and his feet, offended.

“Fools?” Bert looked perplexed.

Suddenly, a beautiful and hunting feminine singing voice erupted through the woods and
surrounded the camp. The trolls turned around as the dwarves and hobbit scanned the area around
them.

~Dreams to dream in the dark of the night. When the world goes wrong. I can still make it right.
I can see so far in my dreams. I’ll follow my dreams. Until they come true~ the feminine voice
sang as it whiffed through the trees and surrounded. It was scaring the trolls while it filled the
dwarves and hobbit with comfort.

Thorin perked up. He knew that singing voice, beautiful and soft. It was Rowena! He barely
restrained the grin that threatened to spill across his face, and he bit the inside of his cheek as his
heart thundered beneath his chest.

~Come with me, you will see what I mean. There’s a world, inside, no one else ever sees. You
will go, so far in my dreams. Somewhere in my dreams. Your dreams will come true.~ Rowena
sung as she walked on silent feet towards a boulder. ~There is a star waiting to guide us. Shining
inside us, when we close our eyes.~
Gloin whispered. "Who's singing? A Tree Sprite?"

Thorin whispered back. "No, it's Rowena."

"Lovely voice she has." Gloin commented.

Rowena sung as she got on top of the boulder and waited until one of the trolls got close to her.
~Don't let go, if you stay close to me. In my dreams tonight, you will see what I see. Dreams to dream. As near as can be. Inside you and me. They always come true.~

Once she reached the end of the song, Rowena ran up the boulder and leapt forward and landed on right on the Troll’s shoulder, grasping his ear to keep her balance.

“What?” William yelped in shock. “What is on me shoulder?” He twisted his head around and Rowena kept moving to keep out of his sight and away from his hands.

Rowena smirked. "Just a harmless little woman."

Bilbo shouted up at her. "Be careful, Rowny!"

"No worries!" Rowena shouted back down at him as she rode on the back of the troll's neck. "Just like how I had to break Goliath!"

"I don't think riding a horse is the same as staying on a troll, Rowny!" Bilbo shouted at her.

Rowena rolled her eyes as she jabbed William straight in the eye. The troll hollered in pain, and Rowena jumped off his shoulder rolling on the ground when Bert tried to grab her. She was moving around the camp, keeping herself away from the trolls.

“Rowena!” Kili shouted, in shock.

“Lassie!”

“Where were you?”

“Oh, here and there. Everywhere to be honest,” Rowena huffed out, her voice ragged with emotion and exertion. The Trolls were swifter than they looked, and it was hard not to get stepped on in some way or another. "Wow, you guys move pretty good for a bunch of fat slobs! Well done, you almost got me there!"

Thorin watched, his mouth parted slightly in shock. She was more fierce than fire, with a will as strong as his own. She moved with the agility and grace of an elf, but fought with the strength and heart of a dwarf. She was like poetry in motion, her movements a deadly dance. It was easy to forget how human she was in that moment. And he couldn't believe that she was also taunting the trolls as she moved. She was both brave and foolish, but she was his One and he loved her just the same.

But when Bilbo shouted for her to look out and Rowena hesitated, and Thorin felt his heart leapt to his throat. With her attention stolen away that was all it took for one of the trolls to scoop her up, like she was little more than a rag doll and slung her against a nearby tree so hard that it cracked the tree. Thorin cried out when he saw her slumped bonelessly in the troll's grip. Rowena yelped when the troll had hit her hard enough against the tree as the pain that lashed through her body almost too much to bear. It felt as if her entire body splintered into a million pieces, and all she was in that moment was pain.

Thorin called out her name, Kili let out a shout of panic, while Fili sent several unflattering curses at the trolls. Dwalin positively roared, and Bilbo shouted, “Put her down! Put her down right
now!

Rowena felt herself being swayed side to side as the troll held in his hands and she fought to keep herself perfectly still which wasn't that hard to do so. William tossed her straight into the pile of dwarves, and she landed sprawled out upon Thorin. His blue eyes looked down at her, her face buried into his stomach and she was so still for a moment he thought her dead. A feeling of dread clawed at his chest, but then she moved, slowly and gingerly.

“Everyone alright?” Rowena groaned, her throat convulsing as she fought the urge to throw up right there on whoever she was lying on. Pain throbbed through her skull, and she felt something warm trickling down through her hair.

“Oh, yes, we are having the time of our lives,” said Fili, with a growl of aggravation. His voice was muffled for Ori was lying on top of him.

“Until we get eaten,” Kili huffed.

Rowena laughed until she hissed when a flare of pain erupted through her body at the motion. "Ooo, damn! that hurt! Don't make me laugh."

“Silence!” Thorin commanded, darkly.

Rowena jolted because when Thorin spoke, the body underneath her rumbling. Oo...you have to be kidding me! Of all the dwarves I could have land on, she thought, and shifted with great care until she lying on her side. I had to land on my One. This is awkward.

Her chest heaved with the effort, and she collapsed with her cheek pressed against his chest. For a moment, all she could do was lie there and breath, finally she gained the strength to crack her eyes open. A piercing blue gaze greeted her, and she let out a pitiful moan when she took in all of her surroundings. She could hear Dwalin, and a few others complain as they were being tied up to be roasted.

“Dwarves who are tied who and twirling above the fire pit should not complain,” Rowena croaked out, a bead of something warm running down her forehead. "Now, I, on the other hand, was treated like a rag doll and thrown like one."

Thorin’s eyes locked onto it, tracing the line of ruby red that ran down the side of her face from temple to chin and his nostrils flare while his body coiled tightly beneath her. Rowena reach over and landed her hand on his chest, right over his heart, she needed to feel his heartbeat against her palm, to assure herself that he was alright. He was like a forge, radiating from within and it was soothing despite the circumstances.

“I mean...I’ve been in worse, but,” she shifted, trying to work her limbs, but they felt as if all the energy had been zapped right out from them, “this is definitely going to be one of the more memorable ones.”

Thorin quirked an eyebrow. He couldn't believe that his One was making cracks as she laid across him. She must be in pain but she certainly wasn't showing it, or at least trying not too. He felt and saw her hand sliding up to lie over his heart, as if she wanted to feel his heartbeat against her palm.

“Unless we don’t make it out,” she coughed, her tongue darting out to lick her parched lips. Her eyes darted around the clearing and she hoped that Estel did not see that pitiful excuse of fighting.

“Do you ever stop talking?” Thorin questioned. It was hard for him to make the distinction between awe or exasperation in that moment as he stared down at her. Most likely something in between. He thought only his nephews could get him to feel both awe and exasperation all at the
same time but now it seemed that his One had a talent for it as well.

“Nope. Not even in my sleep,” Rowena retorted, with a grin that looked more like a wince instead. "Maybe I shouldn't smile, that hurt me for some reason."

“Shut up! Don’t worry about no others! Let’s eat these ones and be done with it! Dawn is approaching!” Tom nearly shouted. Rowena slowly raised her head and glance over her shoulder at the trolls, wondering what brought upon that shouting from that particular troll. She most have missed what one of the other trolls had said, as her attention had been captured by her One.

Bilbo looked towards Rowena, concern clearly be seen and heard in his eyes and voice. "Rowena! Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

"Nah, I'm great!" Rowena commented.

"Then why are you bleeding?" Bilbo asked, rising his brow at her.

"It's not blood." Rowena told him. "I landed in a bush of berries."

Bilbo said to her. "You got slammed into a trunk, Rowny."

Rowena looked up at her father. "Really? It must have rattled my brain hard enough for me to forget."

“I say we take the pretty one,” William pointed a vicious finger at Rowena, “and make jelly out of ‘er!”

Rowena stiffened, clanged onto Thorin as that troll made his way towards her. "Let's not and say you did. I don't really fancy of being turned into a jelly."

William grabbed Rowena, ignoring the angry cries from the dwarves and hobbit, and held her up in his hands. She cried out as the troll started to squeeze her.

Estel suddenly came out of hiding and put his sword right through William’s foot, making him squeal in pain and he dropped Rowena back on top of Thorin, before he dodged a hit that would have sent him sailing across the clearing.

William glared at Tom and Bert. "You fools! Why didn't you catch him?!"

“Hey! How dare you called us fools, you big oaf!” A voice that sounded like Tom’s said, but Tom’s mouth did not move. It was actually quite random.

For a moment, Rowena thought it was the blow to the head then realization and shock crept through her and her mouth parted in a circle as a gush of relief passed through them. It was Frodo! She could barely make out the childish tone in the voice and she was very impressed by his ability to mimic others’ voices. It had to be, he must have gotten out from the saddle bag, her hand pressed against Thorin’s chest to steady her as she fought to sit up.

“Who are you calling an oaf, Tom?!" William demanded at Tom who looked at him innocently.

“But I didn’t call you an oaf. Honest William!” Tom defended.

“Don’t you dare lie to me, you stupid imbecile!” William raged at Tom by grabbing him by the neck.

“Not as stupid as you are simpleton.” A voice uttered that sounded like Bert’s.
This enraged William even more and looked at Bert who was busy turning the spit.

“What did you say?!” William shouted at Bert, he was confused at why William is shouting at him.

“I didn’t say anything.” Bert said, not having a clue of what was going on.

“I’ll deal with you later.” William threatened Tom and tossed him to the ground, He headed straight to Bert.

“You just called me a simpleton, why did you call me that?” William inquired Bert in the face.

“I did not call you that!” Bert insisted.

“You did so!” Shouted the Tom-like voice.

“I did not Tom, you liar!” Bert accused at Tom.

“You did so!” Shouted the voice that now sounded like William’s

“DID NOT!!!” Bert shouted at both of them felt really angry now at this stupid game they seemed to be playing with him.

“Why did you just called me a liar, you bunch of nitwits?” Tom’s voice yelled.

Both the angry Trolls’ head turned to Tom with red in their faces, Tom face went white with fear.

“That wasn’t me I swear!” Tom claimed, but they didn’t believe him.

Rowena was looking back and forth between the three trolls before she looked at Kili and smiled. "And this is why I find trolls so easy to deal with, they are dumb enough to be fooled by false voices."

“THE DAWN WILL TAKE YOU ALL!” Gandalf called out as he appeared on a rock that the light was coming from behind. Everyone including the trolls looked at him in confusion and bewilderment. Expect for Rowena, who smiled at the sight at the old wizard.

“Who’s that?” Asked William.

“No idea.” Answered Bert.

“Can we eat him too?” Tom asked stupidly.

Rowena wheezed from the top of Thorin. "He wouldn't taste good going down."

Then with the power of his staff, Gandalf cracked the giant rock he was standing on in half and the bright light of dawn came shining out.

The light spread over the camp site and when the light touched the troll’s skin they suddenly gave a yell of great pain as if the light was burning them, rapidly their wrinkled skin started to turn solid, they tried to block the sunlight but it was too late and in a matter of seconds the trolls had stopped moving and stood still until they were nothing more but solid stone statues.

Bilbo stood there in amazement of what just happened; he and the dwarves gave a cheerful cry of laughter for Gandalf for coming to their rescue, they were very glad that he came back; Rowena leaned her head back against Thorin's rock-hard abs and sighed in relief. She now didn't know whether to hug or kill Gandalf for leaving her to deal with this lovely little problem. She turned
her head, catching a glimpse at Thorin who cracked a real smile that Rowena thought he looked quite handsome when he smiled.

Rowena allowed a smile to form on her lips as she said. "Never doubt him for a second. I knew he would come back."

Estel snorted. "I recall many times back in the woods that you were calling him a fool and bastard for leaving you here to deal with this in twenty different ways, Rowe."

"Not helping." Rowena said in a sing-song voice. Than she jolted when she realized that he was standing over her. "Shit, man! When did you appear?"

"Did that blow rattled your hearing?" Estel asked her.

"I have no clue." Rowena said, truthfully.

"Oi! get your foot out of my back!" Dwalin complained uncomfortably from the spit.

Rowena waved her hand towards them. "I'll be there in a minute! Let me catch my breath."

Kili asked her. "Do you also want a minute to catch your dignity as well, Rowena?"

"That would be hard." Rowena said, "I think I lost it somewhere between that troll grabbing me and slamming me against that tree trunk."

Fili laughed at her words while Bofur said. "I can't believe you're making jokes while you're bleeding, lass."

Bilbo shook his head at his daughter. "That's Rowena Belladonna Baggins, she makes jokes even though she's bleeding."

"Ah, it's just a flesh wound." Rowena commented, a brief pause before she added. "I hope."

Dwalin wiggled against the ropes with a disgruntled look upon his face. "A little help?" He asked, gruffly.

"Allow me, Master Dwarf."

Dwalin blinked, and jerked back in surprise at seeing the man from before standing there.

"Who is that? Who is he?" Dwalin demanded, thunderously.

Due to being tied to the spit, Dwalin had not seen him nor the way he had helped therefore had no inclination to trust him at all. Not that the dwarves who had seen the Ranger aid them were inclined to trust him either, but they would at least give them benefit of doubt.

Rowena could feel the weight of the stares heavy upon her, since he had came into the scene when her life was in danger, Thorin’s weighed the most of them all and she turned to look straight at him. “He is Estel,” she announced, her voice quiet, but loud against the silence. Thorin looked at her, a searching soulful glance as he head tilted to the side and then his eyes flickered beyond her to the man called Estel. Whatever he found made him frown deeply, and not for the first time Rowena couldn’t help, but to wonder what was going on inside of his mind.

Rowena tried sitting up but cried up when she felt a sharp pain along her ribs. Her cry stopped Estel from helping the dwarves from the spit and he rushed over to her side. Estel helped her up in a sitting position and he carefully removed her corset. Estel set it to the side and carefully lifted up her tunic.
Oin sputtered, outraged at Estel's lack of care of Rowena's modesty. "Have you no shame! Exposing the lass in such a way!"

Estel looked at Oin. "If she has an punctured lung, I need to heal the rib and prevent from bleeding out. In order to do so, I need to lift up this tunic in order to check it."

Thorin was glaring at Estel as the human man finally lifted her tunic up, revealing her waist but keeping her breasts covered. The human man reached over and tenderly pressed his fingers against her ribs, causing her breath to intake at the pain and coldness of his flesh.

Estel let out a sigh of relief. "You didn't puncture your lung, you only bruised your ribs." He looked up at her and pushed her hair out of her face, showing her temple to him. "You have a wound on your temple. It's not deep but it's going to scar."

Rowena grabbed his hand and squeezed it. "Thank-you."

"For what?" Estel asked her.

"For following me, for making sure I was alright." Rowena said. "This could have gotten much worse if you weren't here."

Estel reached over and slipped his hand under her hair to grip her neck. He brought her towards him and touched his forehead against hers. "You're precious to me, Rowena. I would never abandoned you to such a fate as this."

Thorin made a noncommittal noise in the back of his throat, and she looked over at Thorin to see him giving her a strange look, one mingled with hurt and jealousy before he turned away from them. Rowena frowned at his back, confused as to why he would stare at her in such a way when she hadn't done anything wrong. Estel released her, catching on to what had made the Exiled King react that way, and made back to the task of helping the dwarves of the cooking spit while Gandalf with a wave of his hands extinguished the flames. The dawn breaking over the horizon had never been met with such relief as it was today.

“Oi! I’m still tied up!"

Rowena muttered. "Or perhaps not."

Later everyone was helping each other out the sacks and the spit and even apologized to Bilbo for the things they said and he forgave them, while Gandalf looked around the troll statues and gave a whack from his staff in satisfaction.

“Where did you go to may I ask?” Thorin inquired as he made his way over to Gandalf.

“To look ahead.” He simply answered.

“What brought you back?” Thorin asked.


Thorin smiled a bit glad to have the wizard back.

“Nasty business.” Gandalf observed at the troll statues and the company. “Still you’re all in one piece.”

“No thanks to your Burglar.” Thorin blamed it on Bilbo’s foolishness.

But Gandalf smirked at him.
“He had the nous to play for time, none of the rest of you thought of that.” Gandalf remarked.

Thorin felt a little bit ashamed as he looked towards Bilbo, he secretly admitted that he was very clever and was quite brave to save the ponies and tried to save the company too.

Gandalf looked towards Rowena and Estel. "And you had helped from a ranger and mercenary."

Thorin nodded his head in agreement as he looked at Rowena and Estel before he turned to Gandalf again. “Well that little show you did with the voice saved our lives too.”

Gandalf gave him a mysterious smile. “Oh, but I wasn’t the one who did those voices.”

Thorin looked confused. “Then who…?” he asked.

Just then Bofur and Bifur were helping Bombur back on to his feet when he gave a yelp and tumbled backwards over the troll’s cooking pot that lay abandon and hit a tree behind him that shook and then something small fell out of the tree and landed on Bombur’s large belly as a soft landing.

“Lads look!” Bofur pointed at the small thing that was covered in a green cloth, it slowly moved to untangle itself and slowly lifts the cloth to reveal what it was that surprised the company and gave Bilbo a shocking gasps.

“Frodo?”

Estel covered his mouth to hid the smirk on his mouth as Rowena dropped her face into her hands. "Looks like the cat's out of the bag, Rowe."

Rowena mumbled from behind her hands. "And I can say with certainly this was not my fault this time."

"For the first and last time." Estel commented.
Ori asked as they looked for the troll cave. "How do we know when we find a troll cave?"

Rowena answered as she carried Frodo in her arms. "By the stench it gives off."

Well, they eventually found the trolls’ cave, proving Rowena right, and Gandalf, Thorin, Dwalin, Nori, Bofur, Glóin and Rowena went to investigate inside the cave while Frodo was lifted behind his uncle, who had calmed down by now and no longer upset with his nephew and daughter. Even Thorin was no longer angry at his sister-sons for putting his One in danger.

Bofur asked as they got a good smell of that foulness. "Oh, what’s that stench?!"

Gandalf answered him as they entered deep deeper in the cave. "It’s a troll hoard. Be careful what you touch."

The dwarves started cough from the foul smell inside the cave, but then as they go deeper inside the cave, three of them come upon the trolls’ treasure.

Bofur said nonchalantly as he kicked some coins. "Seems a shame just to leave it lying around. Anyone could take it."

Glóin said before looking at Nori. "Agreed. Nori, get a shovel."

Gandalf and Thorin discover some swords close by, covered in dust and web. Thorin picked one up as Rowena came to stand by his side, looking at the two blades in his hold.

Thorin said in awe at the beauty in the craftsmanship. "These swords were not made by any troll."

He gave one of the swords to Gandalf, who took it in interest of the sword as well.

Gandalf commented as he examined the sword. "Nor were they made by any smith among men." He slightly unsheathed the sword, in order to get a closer look at the blade. "These were forged in Gondolin, by the High Elves, of the First Age." Thorin was about to unsheathed the sword in his hands as well but stopped in disgust when Gandalf said that, and when he made a move to put it back, the wizard stopped him by saying. "You could not wish for a finer blade."

Thorin looked at Gandalf before halfway unsheathed the blade in order to get a closer look at it. Rowena watched him as he moved away from her, taking the torch from her as he went to stand near and examined the sword even better under the firelight. Dwalin looked away from watching Thorin to watch the other dwarves as they bury some of the trolls’ treasure into the ground. Even Rowena was now watching them with amused smile on their face.

Glóin said as he caught Dwalin watching them. "We’re making a long-term deposit."

Thorin spoke as he made his way towards the mouth of the cave. "Let’s get out of this foul place. Come on, let’s go. Bofur, Gloin, Nori, Rowena."

Rowena followed after Thorin with the others following after them but the dwarves and human leave the cave, Gandalf came across an elf-made dagger with his staff and unsheathed using his staff, examining the blade itself. He bent over and picked up the small dagger.

Gandalf said as he spotted the hobbit near by as he came out of the trolls’ cave. "Bilbo."

Bilbo asked as he allowed Frodo to run towards Rowena. "Hm?"

"Here." Gandalf said as he handed him the elf-made dagger. "This is about your size."

"I can’t take this." Bilbo shook his head at it.
Gandalf explained to Bilbo. "The blade is of Elvish make, which means it will glow blue when orcs or goblins are nearby."

Rowena came over with Frodo pressed close to her side. "That would come in handle."

Bilbo said. "I have…I have never used a sword in my life."

"And I hope you never have to." Gandalf said as Bilbo took the dagger from him. "But if you do, remember this: true courage is about knowing not when to take a life, but when to spare one."

Rowena and the others heard something coming from the woods before them and looked towards it.

Thorin said as Rowena pulled out her sword and placed herself in front of Frodo, who clung onto her breeches. "Something’s coming!"

Bilbo said, worried as he spotted Frodo trembling against Rowena. "Gandalf."

Gandalf shouted as he drew his sword and moved away from Bilbo. "Stay together! Hurry, now! Arm yourselves!"

Bilbo stared at his dagger for a while before he, too, drew his dagger and followed after them.

The dwarves, Gandalf, Rowena and Bilbo wait to see who is approaching, when suddenly an old man dressed in brown robes came bursting through the bushes on his sled led by rabbits, surprising everyone around him as he came to a halt in the middle of them.

Radagast shouted as he looked at them. "Thieves! Fire! Murder!"

Gandalf said as he recognized the old man. "Radagast. It’s Radagast the Brown!" He puts his sword away and approaches Radagast. "What on earth are you doing here?"

Frodo tugged on Rowena’s breeches, causing the human woman to look down at him. "Is that the same Radagast that you and Gandalf spoke about before, Rowny?"

Rowena laid her hand on head. "Aye, he’s the very same one."

"I was looking for you, Gandalf." Radagast said, "Something’s wrong. Something’s terribly wrong."

Gandalf said as he came to stand near Radagast. "Yes?"

"Just give me a minute." Radagast goes to speak but suddenly stops. "Um…Oh! I had a thought and now I’ve lost it." Rowena shook her head as she watched Radagast with amused smile on her face as the dwarves and her father was watching the brown wizard in bewilderment. "It was…it was was right there, on the tip of my tongue!" Radagast's eyes lite up as he felt something on his tongue. "Oh! It’s not a thought at all! It’s a silly old… stick insect." He sticks his tongue out and Gandalf removes the insect and gives it to Radagast, much to all the dwarves and older hobbit disgust while the fauntling and human woman were smiling at his antic.

Bofur lean towards Rowena, who bent over by her waist to hear him. "I see what you mean about being not all up there, lass."

Rowena smiled. "Yeah, I wish he stopped eating those mushrooms than everyone will start taking him seriously."

"Mushrooms?" Dori asked. "He eats those things?"
"Yes, apparently their delicious, minus the fact that they would make you act odd." Rowena said.

Frodo asked still looking up at the wizard. "Is that bird poop on him?"

Bilbo hissed, appalled at Frodo's impoliteness. "Frodo!"

Radagast suddenly laughed and everyone looked over to see that he was standing before them now. "I heard that question before. Little Wena asked me that every question when I first met her."

Bilbo asked, confused. "Wena?"

Rowena spoke up, drawing the brown wizard's attention to her. "That would be me, Papa. Radagast wanted to be different from the others, and decided to make me a new nickname."

Radagast stared up at her in stunned awe as he spoke to Gandalf. "By my beard, she looks just like her father but only more spirited and lively."

Gandalf smiled as he looked at Rowena. "Indeed."

Radagast stepped back from Rowena, when she had made a move to hug him. "No, do not come near me, child."

Rowena stopped at that and took a step away from him. "Of course. Why don't you and Gandalf talk over there."

She watched the two wizards moved away from them and began talking. Rowena felt something tug on her sleeve and looked down to see Frodo standing by her side, with her father close by.

Frodo asked as he looked over at the wizards. "Why didn't Radagast wanted you to hug him? I thought he was like a grandfather to you, Rowny?"

Rowena looked over at her father and saw that he too had a questioning look on his face, and she turned her head to see Thorin glaring at the brown wizard. He was clearly upset that he had done that to her.

"He didn't mean to hurt me, Frodo." Rowena said as she knelt down before the fauntling. "He only does that if he had came across something that could due me harm."

Bilbo asked. "So he protecting you than? From what?"

"His small friend told me that he was attacked by evil creatures before." Rowena said as she turned around to look at the two wizards. "But from what, I do not know. Like Elrond and Galadriel, Gandalf and Radagast have the habit of keeping me in the dark when it involves myself and my fate."

Bilbo frowned up at her. "Fate? What do you mean?"

Rowena opened her mouth to say something but Fíli and Kíli decided at that moment to come in and hug the young woman, startling a shriek of surprisement out of her. It caused Thorin to look to see his nephews hugging Rowena between them.

Rowena looked down at them. "What are you two doing?"

Fíli said. "You looked hurt."
Rowena asked, bewildered. "hurt? Me? What told you I was hurt?"

Kíli answered her. "You had the look about you like a wounded pup when that dreadful Radagast didn't want your hug."

Fíli smiled at her. "So we figured that we'll give you a hug in his place."

"That's sweet and all." Rowena said as she started to squirm in their arms. "But you guys are rubbing off that foul troll stench on me, let it go!"

Both brothers looked at each other before a mischievous smile broke out on their face, and Rowena felt instantly wary over it because it reminded her of the Elven twins back at Rivendell. Which usually had something to be done to herself.

Rowena warned as she looked back and forth between the pair. "Don't you do it...."

But her warning fell upon deaf ears as the brothers started to hug her tighter to them, rubbing the troll stench even more on her.

"You bastards! Let me go! No! Stop!" Rowena shrieked out in mock outrage as she started to laugh, hard and true. "Do you have any idea how long it will take to get this stench out of my clothes!"

Fíli said, smiling at her. "We know but we simply don't care!"

Thorin watched his nephews goof around with his One and was happy about how close the three of them have gotten. While they may have the same mischievous and playful nature but Rowena seemed more mature than they were, due to the events that has happened in her life and it wasn't enough to make her jaded and stoic in her views of everything around her. It seemed that she hadn't changed since the last time he had seen her and for that he was most grateful because his sister had grown fond of the human girl due to her personality and expressed her desire to met her. He wouldn't know what to do if Rowena had changed and met his sister.

He was jolted out of his thoughts when he heard yelps of pain and looked over to see Rowena running towards him and his nephews hopping on one foot as they held the other. Thorin followed Rowena with his eyes as she darted around him and stayed behind him, placing him between her and his nephews.

Kíli looked over to see Rowena standing behind Thorin. "Are you actually hiding behind my uncle?"

Rowena smiled as she wrapped her arms around Thorin, bringing him closer to her. "I actually wanted to come over and hug your uncle, and so that is what I'm doing."

Fíli glared at her. "Come here and take your punishment."

"It's almost sad how stupid you two think I am." Rowena said as she leaned her chin on top of Thorin's head. "I'm not getting anywhere close to you two." She squealed when she saw the pair move towards her. "Help, Thorin! They're going to kill me!"

Thorin pinned his nephews in their place with a warning glare. "Don't, sister-sons. You deserved that because Rowena did tell you two to let her go."

Kíli mumbled before he thought about it. "It's because she's your One that you're taking her side."

Fíli slapped his hand over his brother's mouth but the damage is already done. It was out there and everyone heard it. It was quiet and still. No one spoke. No one moved. They all waited with bated
breathe to see what Rowena would do, though Thorin was glaring daggers at his nephew, not pleased that he put his foot in his mouth and spoke up.

When they realized that Rowena hadn't said anything for quite a while after that incident, the dwarves looked over to see Bilbo with Frodo on his shoulders standing behind her. The flaunting had his hands over Rowena's ears, preventing her from hearing anything. The human woman was frowning as the hobbit removed the flaunting off his shoulder and set him back down on his feet.

Rowena turned to frown down at her father. "Why did you cover my ears, Papa?"

Bilbo pinned a disapproving look on Kíli before looking up at his daughter with an innocent expression on his face." I didn't cover your ears, my dear girl."

Rowena rolled her eyes. "Fine than. Why did you have Frodo cover my ears?"

"What makes you think that Frodo did that all by himself and without me telling him too?" her father asked with a raised brow.

Rowena's expression turned comical as she pointed to herself. "Do you think I was born yesterday? I know what you were doing."

"With how you act sometimes, I wouldn't surprise me if you were born yesterday." Bilbo commented and walked away from her, leaving Rowena stun.

Thorin breathed a sigh of relief and gave Bilbo a grateful smile as the hobbit walked passed him. He didn't actually wanted to let Rowena about about Ones and courtship until after they get even further in their quests, and it would seem that her father also shared his thoughts, he probably didn't think this was the best time to bring it up and reveal to Rowena that Thorin remembered her, which the dwarf king was in total agreement with.

Rowena looked at Balin. "Did I just get sass by my own father?"

"Well, to be fair," Balin said, smiling at her. "You've been sassing your father the entire time we've been traveling."

"Lies! You have no proof that I was sassing him!" Rowena said, earning her laughter from the other dwarves.

At that point, Radagast was telling Gandalf, who had his back turned towards him, about the events that had occurred. Radagast was quick to tell Rowena not to come, as the human woman had made a move to follow after them, as she's always been by Gandalf's side. And luckily, Rowena obeyed him though confusion and hurt shone clearly in those expressive eyes of her.

"The Greenwood is sick, Gandalf." Radagast said, looking back at Gandalf. "A darkness has fallen over it, nothing grows anymore. At least nothing good. The air is foul decay, but worse are the webs."

Gandalf smoked his pipe, asking him. "Webs? What do you mean?"

Radagast blinked owlishly at Gandalf for a while before turning around. "Rowena? I thought I told you to tell Gandalf about them."

Rowena cursed, which got the two brothers to start laughing and Ori to gasp, before she said. "Yeah, about that. Gandalf wasn't around when your buddy came to tell me. He was off throwing a tantrum like a toddler."

Balin said, amused. "See? You're sassing now, lass."
"I'm sassing Gandalf. I always sass him. It keeps him on his toes."

"Spiders, Gandalf. Giant ones. Some kind of spawn of Ungoliant, or I'm not a wizard." Radagast answered him "I followed their trail. They came from Dol Guldur."

Gandalf finally did turn and look at him at that name. "Dol Guldur? But the old fortress is abandoned."

Radagast shook his head as he looked at Gandalf with grim confirmation. "No, Gandalf. It is not."

"A dark power dwells in there, such as I have never felt before." Radagast said, beginning his tale. "It is the shadow of an ancient horror. One that can summon the spirits of the dead." He continued, shivering visible now in fear more than in cold. "I saw him, Gandalf. From out of the darkness, the Necromancer has come!" After telling his story about the Necromancer, Radagast looks shaken and snapped out of it, looking up at Gandalf. "Sorry."

Gandalf advised as he cleaned the stem of his pip with his beard. "Try a little old Toby. It'll help setting your nerves." He placed his pipe in Radagast’s mouth who inhales from the pipe. "And out." Radagast lets out the smoke through his nose and looks more visibly relaxed.

"Now, the Necromancer. Are you sure?" Gandalf asked.

Radagast looked at him before he reached into his robe and pulled an item that was covered with a cloth and held it out to him. Gandalf took it from him and unwrapped the item, revealing a sword lying within the cloth. The gray wizard looked towards the brown wizard that was standing before him.

Radagast said. "That is not from the world of the living."

Suddenly they hear a howling noise coming from some place close by. Rowena immediately tugged Frodo to her side and kept him there as she walked to stand close to her father, looking around through as her hand reached up and touched the hilt of her sword.

"Was that a wolf?" Bilbo asked as he looked towards where the howl had come from. "Are there…are there wolves out there?"

"Wolves?" Bofur commented as he walked passed Bilbo, he also looking in the same direction as Bilbo. "No, that is not a wolf."

Suddenly something growls from behind them, causing everyone to spun around quickly to see a warg above them and it started to ran towards them. Kili shot it with his arrow and Dwalin finished it off with his axe. A second one appeared and charged at him, Thorin was quick to slash at it with his sword and followed it down with a killing blow. Rowena covered Frodo's eyes, her eyes widen in undisguised shocked and admiration at how quick and effortlessly the dwarves had moved and killed those wargs. She had almost expected one of the wargs to kill one of them but she didn't expect that both wargs to die at their hands.

Bilbo caught movement from the corner of his eye and looked over to see a third creature leaping out of the bushes and running towards Rowena and Frodo. He shouted at them. "Rowena! Frodo! Behind you!"

Rowena turned around to see the warg coming towards her and Frodo. She shoved Frodo towards Bofur and grabbed the hilt of her sword.

Rowena thought as she realized something. 'I'm not going to make it!'
But just as the warg leapt up into the air to pounce on her, something red and black blurred out of the bushes and struck the warg, knocking it away from her and into bushes near them. They heard growling and snarling mixed with yelping and whimpering before they heard a sickening crunching sound and gurgling, than it was silent. Rowena stared at the bushes and held her breath, she hoped that who won was who she thought it had won.

A red and black horse-sized direwolf female came out of the bushes, surprising everyone present there. The dwarves weren't expecting to see one in the flesh, they had thought that the direwolves were creatures of legend not reality.

Rowena held out her hand towards the she-wolf. "Hello, Imogen. I didn't realize that you were following so close behind us."

Frodo asked as he looked at the large wolf. "That doesn't look like a wolf, Rowny. She's too big to be one."

"That's because she's a direwolf." Rowena said as she stroked the she-wolf's head. "All direwolves are horse-size and they're the natural enemies of wargs."

"Warg scouts!" Thorin pulled out his sword from the warg's corpse. "Which means an orc pack is not far behind!"

Bilbo asked as he came to stand by Frodo and Rowena. "Orc pack?" He startled when the large she-direwolf growled but calm down when Rowena stroked her fur.

Gandalf asked as he looked at Thorin, walking towards him. "Who did you tell about your quest, beyond your kin?"

Thorin answered him, looking around. "No one."

Gandalf repeated himself. "Who did you tell?!"

"No one, I swear!" Thorin glared at him but quickly cooled his temper when he felt Rowena's hand now lying on his shoulder. "What in Durin’s name is going on?"

Gandalf answered him as he looked around. "You are being hunted."

Dwalin advised as he came to stand by his king. "We have to get out of here."

"We can't!" Ori spoke up from atop of a rock, everyone looked over at him. "We have no ponies. They bolted."

Suddenly something large was crashing through the bushes towards them and everyone pulled out their weapons and pointed them towards the noise. Rowena was going for her sword but stopped when she noticed that Imogen wasn't growling, she was panting and wagging her hair as she was looking at the noise. She looked back as Goliath came charging out of the bushes with Ophelia safely on his back.

Goliath was rearing and stomping his hooves, clearly agitated and Rowena could barely make out gore on his hooves and legs. The young woman made her way towards him and held out her hand, whistling softly. The sound caught his attention and Goliath calm down, walking towards his mistress.

Rowena stroked his snout as she leaned over to inspect his legs closely. "It seemed that he came across Orcs and killed them on his way to us." She grabbed Frodo and set him up on Goliath's back. "Stay up here, Frodo. He'll keep you safe."
Radagast spoke up, drawing everyone attention on him. "I’ll draw them off."

"These are Gundabad wargs." Gandalf advised against, shaking his head. "They will outrun you!"

"These are Rhosgobel rabbits." Radagast smirked as he jabbed his thumb towards the rabbits behind him. "I’d like to see them try."

Suddenly broke out of the woods, startling the orcs and wargs waiting there, Radagast raced on his rabbit sled across the open plain and the wargs and orcs started to pursued him.

"Come and get me!" Radagast laughed.

Elsewhere, Gandalf comes out from behind a large rock and looks towards where Radagast was drawing the orcs away from them and off their trail. Rowena poked her head out from under Gandalf. She looked over to see her father close by her and passed him to see Frodo cling tightly onto Goliath's mane, with Ophelia and Imogen standing by the Friesian's side. Rowena knew that the warhorse, wild cat and direwolf would fight to keep her cousin safe and she trusted enough to let them handle him themselves. She looked towards Thorin and saw that he was watching her. Rowena stared at him for a while before she smiled reassuring at him before she looked back ahead of her and Gandalf.

Rowena commented as she watched Radagast laughing and leading the orcs and wargs on a merry chase. "You know for a guy who's using himself as bait, he seems to be a little too cheerful."

Bofur said from his spot below her as he watched Radagast. "Aye, I'm in agreement with that."

Gandalf looked at the large group behind him. "Come on!"

Gandalf, Rowena, her father and the dwarves hurried in a different direction from the orcs. Bilbo looked behind him to see if Goliath was still behind them with Frodo still safely perched on his back and saw that both horse and flaunting was still close behind them and still safe. Thorin was running ahead of the group and he knew Rowena was running along side him, keeping up with him as they ran across the plains. But Thorin came to a complete stop when he saw Radagast and the orcs close by to them. His One came sliding pass him, stopping a little ahead of him as the others came to a stop behind the dwarf king.

Rowena said as she turned on her heel and ran the other way. "Nope! Not this way!"

Gandalf turned the other way, following after Rowena. "Stay together."

Thorin ordered his dwarves. "Move!"

They all turned and hurried after the wizard and human woman, Goliath was running ahead of them with Frodo clutched tightly to his mane as Imogen and Ophelia followed close by the warhorse side. The group rushed along, trying to remain hidden and to keep out of sight from the orcs, when they suddenly come across the orcs and wargs once again. Thorin, this time, was able to catch Rowena before she came skidding passed him. She clung onto his arm as they watched Radagast led the orcs passed them.

Rowena looked over her shoulder at Gandalf. "I don't think Radagast is doing such a good job at leading them away from us."

Thorin grabbed Ori as he noticed that the dwarf was going to run ahead of him. "Ori, no! Come back." He pulled Ori behind the rock with him and the others as they waited until the orcs disappeared out of sight.
Gandalf advised. "All of you, come on, come on! Quick!"

Thorin asked Gandalf, looking up at the wizard. "Where are you leading us?"

Gandalf merely looks at Thorin, giving no reply and moves on ahead. Thorin watched him leave and his dwarves followed after the wizard, expect for Rowena, who stayed behind as she looked around her. Something was nagging at her, like she knows this place but she couldn't place it. Rowena felt something grabbed her wrist and looked down to see Thorin, taking it in his hand and leading her away, following after the group.

One of the orcs that were chasing after Radagast felt something is amiss and bringing his warg to a halt as he looked around. His gaze landing were the company were at.

At the time, the company ran towards a large rock, trying desperately to remain away from the orcs and wargs that hunted them down. Rowena stopped suddenly, falling behind the group when she heard Imogen's growl from behind her and looked towards the direwolf to see that her fur was standing up and she was crouched down with her ears lying flat against her skull.

Rowena turned out and shouted to the company. "No! Not that way! Get under the cliff, now!" She turned to Goliath and grabbed his reign, leading him towards the cliff as well as the company doubled back to her and pressed under the cliff, hiding themselves.

Dwalin hissed towards her. "Why are we hiding here?!"

Rowena placed her index finger to her lips, shushing him, as she pointed up. The dwarves were alerted to the sound of claws walking above them on the cliff surface. Bilbo gasped as he pressed even closer to the cliff wall.

Rowena suspected that the Orc had came over to investigate where they were at. Rowena looked down, towards the ground and watched the shadow of the Orc and warg on the ground before them. She looked towards Thorin and she glanced up and over her shoulder to see the Orc drawing closer to where they were hiding at. Thorin looked at Kili and glanced down at his bow and inclined his head towards it, indicates to Kili to take the orc and his warg down they are spotted.

Kili took his bow from it's place over his shoulder and notched a arrow on it. He stepped away from the cliff, turned and quickly fired the arrow at the orc. The orc fell off the warg as it leapt at them but Imogen prevented it from going any further and clamped her powerful jaws on it's head. Rowena shield Frodo's eyes as she watched Imogen's jaws tightened as her teeth sunk into the warg's skin and skull. She looked over to see the dwarves kill the orc with their swords.

Rowena winced at the loud squealing that was coming from the orc, she even winced when she heard that sickening sound of crunch and wet that was coming from Imogen's end as the direwolf finally killed the warg.

Meanwhile, the other orcs that were chasing after Radagast stopped, hearing the squealing of the orc the dwarves were still trying to kill.

Hunter Orc shouted as his eyes landed on where the company was out. "The Dwarf-scum are over there! After them!"

Gandalf turned as the dwarves stopped, after finally killing the orc, to hear the wargs howling and see the orcs racing towards them. Rowena turned to Goliath and slapped his rump, causing the great warhorse to charge forward to a full out run. She scooped up Ophelia and looked at Gandalf as Imogen placed herself between the company and orcs, growling at them.
Gandalf shouted as he turned the opposite direction. "Move! Run!"

Rowena, her father and the dwarves ran after Gandalf. She looked behind her to make sure Imogen was still with them, the direwolf was following them but she was also killing the orcs who were getting too close to them. Rowena quickly spotted her father lagging behind them and she grabbed his hand, pulling him after her and ahead of her. She placed herself between her father and the pack of orcs that were chasing after them.

Glóin came to a complete halt, spotting orcs ahead of them. "There they are!"

Gandalf led them the opposite way. "This way! Quickly!"

Kíli spotted orcs coming from their side. "There’s more coming!"

Thorin looked at his nephew as he unsheathed his sword and wield his axe. "Kíli! Shoot them!"

Gandalf noticed a large rock behind the company and hurried towards it. Rowena watched him for a while before she heard Frodo cry out and she looked over to see him surrounded by wargs, who were trying to kill Goliath and get to the flaunting.

Rowena pulled out her bow and notched an arrow to her bow, and fired it. The arrow struck an warg in the eye, killing it instantly, as Imogen came rushing at them, knocking one away from Goliath while the warhorse killed the last two with his hooves.

Rowena yelled at Goliath as she used her bow to hold the clashing jaws of a warg. "Goliath! Come!"

Goliath quickly turned around and ran towards her, he slammed his head against a orc that was coming towards him. He kept running off with Frodo holding tightly to his mane, towards Rowena. Imogen kept close to Goliath, killing the orcs that came to close to the flaunting riding on his back. Ophelia clawed at the orcs that rode on the wargs, and leapt back up on Goliath, hissing at the wargs and orcs that follow them.

Rowena slammed her foot into the warg's chest and kicked him away from her. She unsheathed her dagger and plunged it into the warg's neck, cutting it's throat easily. She went to stand back to back with Thorin. She watched as Goliath stopped and bent at his knees before her father, who took the flaunting off the warhorse's back. The black Friesian straightened back up and went to attack the wargs who were coming to close to them.

Fíli looked around them. "We're surrounded!"

Kíli shoots one of the orcs with his bow. Rowena fired her arrow at one of the orcs, dropping it instantly as Imogen finished off the warg. Goliath kicked at an warg that got close to them.

Bilbo looked over at Rowena. "Rowny! Stay with Frodo!"

Rowena looked over at her father and cousin, and hurried towards them and placed Frodo behind her as Bilbo came forward, standing before them. Ophelia had jumped off Goliath's back and was running towards them. She stopped by Bilbo and arched her back, hissing at the wargs and orcs.

Fíli then noticed that they were missing one key member of their group. "Where’s Gandalf?"

Dwalin snapped as he looked around as well. "He’s abandoned us!"

Thorin commanded as the orcs got nearer. "Hold your ground!"

Imogen snarled and bared her teeth, as her fur bristled and her ears lie flat against her skull, as the
orcs and wargs came closer to them. Rowena placed her bow back on it's place and grabbed the hilt of her sword, pulling it up and out of it's sheath. She pointed the sword towards the orcs, holding the handle with one hand as she unsheathed the dagger from it's sheath. The dwarves and the hobbit all took out their weapons and prepared themselves to fight for their lives, when suddenly Gandalf appears from behind the large rock he'd noticed earlier.

Gandalf shouted at them, causing the human, hobbit and dwarves to look at him. "This way, you fools!"

Thorin looked at his men, the hobbits and human. "Come on, move! Quickly! All of you!"

The dwarves and the older hobbit followed after Gandalf, who went back behind the rock and found that beneath the rock is an underground tunnel. Rowena stood over them, holding Frodo in her arms.

Rowena arched a brow at that. "Well, isn't this convenient."

Thorin shouted at them. "Go, go, go!"

Rowena shouted back as she held Frodo tighter to her. "We're going! We're going! Don't rush us!"

Rowena, the hobbit and the dwarves all start jumping inside the underground tunnel; Frodo was still holding onto Rowena and Gandalf started to count the dwarves as they landed before him on the natural titled rock that acted as a slide for them.

Gandalf mumbled. "...nine, ten..."

Thorin shouted to Kili as he kills another orc with his bow. "Kili! Run!"

Kili turned and makes a run for it as the orcs came closer. Rowena whistled for Imogen and Ophelia, she whistled again to Goliath. Three animal companion ears twitched towards the sound and the direwolf and wild cat turned and hurried towards the sound, while Goliath turned the other way and ran off. Friesian knew where they were heading towards and he was going to met them there.

Thorin, Imogen and Ophelia jumped into the hole and slide down the title, hitting the ground and turning around as they waited for the orcs to come. But than the dwarves, hobbits and human hear a hunting horn and the noise of arrows being shot. Outside the elves have arrived and started to kill the orcs. When one of the elves killed an orc, he toppled off the warg, who was also killed, and slide down into the underground tunnel before the company, causing most to move away from the dead orc.

Thorin leaned over and removed the arrow from the dead orc. He spat out once he examined the arrow point. "Elves."

"I cannot see where the pathway leads." Dwalin said as he stood before a pathway that leads out of the chamber that they were in. "Do we follow it or not?"

Bofur said as he walked towards Dwalin. "We follow it, of course!"

Gandalf mumbled as the dwarves walked between him and Bilbo. "I think that would be wise." His comment made Bilbo look at him with suspicion and Rowena also looked at him as a sense of dread fill her, she set Frodo down and took his hand in hers as she followed after Gandalf, hoping beyond hope that they weren't where she thinks they are at.

They follow the path inside the tunnel, even though it was a tight fit for most, especially for
Bombur. It took Bofur, Bifur, Nori, and Glóin and Rowena, even Frodo helped, to get Bombur unstuck.

Rowena commented after the sixth and final time. "You know, this pathway was certainly not made for big dwarves in mind." She and the others were pushing and pulling on Bombur, trying to get him unstuck.

Dwalin, Balin and Thorin was standing behind her with Frodo, while Óin, Ori, Dori, Bilbo Baggins and Gandalf were on the other side of Bombur with Glóin, Nori, Bifur, Bofur, Fíli, and Kíli standing before them. They were pulling on him while Rowena and Frodo was pushing against Bombur.

Dwalin asked with his arms crossed. "What's taking so long?"

Rowena snapped as she pushed against Bombur. "Well, if you would stopping gawking at my butt and help, then this would go faster."

Dwalin wore a comical expression of shock and brotherly disgust at her words, which caused the entire company to erupt into laughter. "I wasn't gawking at your butt!"

"Oh, that was you, Dwalin." Rowena said, throwing mischief smirk over her shoulder. "I thought that was Thorin talking."

If Rowena didn't know any better, she could have sworn that Thorin had blushed at her words as Balin chuckled heartily and Dwalin roared with laughter.

Bilbo scolded from his side. "Rowena Belladonna Baggins!"

Rowena winced at the use of her full name and turned away from the three dwarves behind her. "Oh, bugger! I'm in trouble now."

Bofur peered over at her. "Rowena Belladonna Baggins? That's a lovely name."

"It is a lovely name." Rowena said in agreement. "But just not when you're in trouble and you hear that full, lovely name."

Thorin came over with Balin and Dwalin and started to help her push against Bombur, but the human woman find it difficult to help the stuck dwarf with Thorin draped over her back with his hands on either side of her, trapping her within the circle of his body and arms. She had to crouched down to help Bombur but Thorin didn't have to do anything, he was at the right height to help and the even perfect height for Rowena to simply turn her head and lean up to kiss him.

Rowena felt her face burn as Frodo looked up at her and asked. "Are you okay, Rowny? You're turning red?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just a little overheated. "Rowena mumbled.

Bofur smirked. "Is the exercise getting to you, lass?"

Rowena looked at him before she said. "Yeah, I'm not going to say anything because I could take that and turn it into something that could me in very deep trouble with my father."

It was a long pause after she had said that and the human woman realized what she had said and groaned, ducking her head as her face went an even darker shade of red. Then the dwarves started to roar with laughter, telling her that they had got what she actually want to go with it, making her face even redder.
Kíli laughed. "You were right to keep that to yourself."

Rowena groaned. "But why did you dwarves know what I was unwilling to say out loud."

Frodo was looking back and forth between everyone in confusion before he spoke up, asking. "What are you guys talking about?"

Rowena and the dwarves forgot that the flaunting was there and they looked down, or over Bombur, at the young boy. Dori fell down in shock at Frodo's question.

Dwalin looked down at the lad. "I'll tell you when you're older."

"I can't believe I forgot that Frodo was here." Rowena moaned. "I really should stop putting my foot in my mouth."

Gandalf spoke up, drawing their attention to him. "We really should get moving. Help Bombur."

The dwarves, the two hobbits and human woman got Bombur unstuck, but the suddenness of it caused the ones pushing Bombur to fall forward and landed on the ground. Rowena went absolutely stiff when she felt Thorin's body pressed against her back. He was completely on her, not half-way on her or what, but full on her, so she felt very wonderfully delicious inch of that warm and hard body pressed against her back.

But before anyone could see the embarrassing position that they were in, Thorin got up and helped Rowena up, who was blushing like crazy as she took his offered hand. She was starting to notice that she was blushing a lot more than usually and it was all her dwarf's fault. Rowena never blushed this much on a mission before.

The company returned to following path and the exit appeared before them, and they all stepped out of the exit, one by one and found themselves looking at a beautiful scenery before them. And Thorin was not happy at the sight of it, the handle of his axe touched the ground before him as his men moved ahead in order to make room for the others. Rowena, Gandalf, Frodo and Bilbo were the last ones to step out and saw the sight before them. Frodo and Bilbo were in awe at the sight before them while Rowena had the sudden urge to kick someone's ass and it was directed towards a certain gray-wearing wizard.

She really had hoped that she was wrong, that Gandalf wasn't really going to led them here but once again, she was proven wrong and Rowena was really beginning to think that life was simply out to get her and make her life difficult.

"The Valley of Imladris." Gandalf told the company as he came to stand behind Bilbo and Frodo with Rowena standing behind him, who had her arms crossed over her breasts. "In the common tongue, it's known by another name..."

Bilbo finished for him, in awe. "Rivendell."

Gandalf continued. "Here lies the last homely house, east of the sea."

Thorin walked towards Gandalf and stopped before him, saying to him. "This was your plan all along, to seek refuge with our enemy."

"You have no enemies here, Thorin Oakenshield," Gandalf said, disapproving as he looked at Thorin. "The only ill-will to be found in this valley is that which you bring yourself."

"You think the Elves will give our quest their blessing?" Thorin asked. "They will try to stop us."

"Of course, they will. But we have questions that need to be answered." Gandalf explained. "If
we are to be successful this will need to be handled with tact, and respect, and no small degree of charm, which is why you will leave the talking to me."

But just as Gandalf took a step forward, Rowena reached over and grabbed his arm. Gandalf stopped and turned to her, he immediately noticed the disapproving look in her eyes and on her face.

Rowena spoke, but she spoke in Elvish and her disapproval was also in her voice. "You knew what Thranduil did to him and his people but yet you still brought him here. He's not going to welcome Ada's help, Gandalf."

Gandalf spoke back to her in Elvish. "But this was the only way to come to get help from Lord Elrond, he's the only one who could read old dwarvish."

"Thorin has a deep hatred and suspicion of Elves, Gandalf." Rowena hissed. "Just because Ada will help him with this won't change that. You have to put that into consideration as well, not because of what you want or think is best."

Gandalf looked at her. "I'm simply trying to help Thorin find a way into Erebor."

Rowena nodded, a smile replacing the disapproval that was on her face, eyes and voice. "I know you are, Gandalf. And you're right, Ada will be able to help with this and give aide. But don't be surprised if the Elves are met with suspicion and hate."

"Agreed." Gandalf said, and Rowena released him, and he turned to the company. "Come, let's us go and seek shelter from there."

Rowena watched as Gandalf walked away from her and went ahead of the company. She sensed someone watching her and looked down to see Frodo looking at her.

"What is it, Frodo?" Rowena asked as she laid her hand on his head as they all started to follow after Gandalf.

Frodo asked. "What were you and Gandalf talking about, Rowny?"

Rowena stroked his hair. "It was nothing to concern yourself with, Frodo. I was simply telling Gandalf something that he needed to be aware of."

Frodo wisely accepted that answer even though it didn't answer his question and looked ahead as they followed after Gandalf, starting to make their way towards Rivendell.
Rowena was carrying Frodo in her arms as the company crossed over the bridge to enter a pillar surrounded circle courtyard. She looked over at her father and found him looking at him in awe at
the beauty of Rivendell. She set Frodo down and watched him head over to her father, who picked the boy up once the flaunting got close. She looked away and spotted Dwalin standing by Thorin's side and the two dwarves were watching the area around them with suspicion.

Rowena said as she looked around. "Well, this place hasn't changed one bit." She went thoughtful before she peered towards some buildings to the lift of her. "I wonder if they ever fixed that busted window."

Bilbo looked at her. "Why did they have a busted window in the first place, Rowny?"

Rowena looked down at her father before looking at Fíli and Kíli. "Did I say that outloud?"

Both brothers nodded their, confirming her question, and Rowena slapped her hand to forehead. "Blast! I really should think before I blab. It's always getting me into trouble."

Bilbo placed his hands on his waist. "Rowena Belladonna Baggins."

Rowena flinched and she immediately placed Thorin between her and her father. "This time I can say with confidence that it wasn't my fault. I was sorta roped into it."

Bilbo frowned at her. "Who would rope you into something, Rowny?"

Rowena commented, crossing her arms over her breasts. "Elladan and Elrohir."

"Spawns of Evil." Rowena said but was whacked on the head by Gandalf's, by the use of his staff. "Ow! What?! I'm not lying, they truly are evil. They make me look like a proper lady."

Gandalf opened his mouth but snapped it shut and dropped his face into his hand. Rowena and her father looked at him as he did that, before Bilbo looked at her.

"By his action, I assuming what you said about those elves are true." Bilbo said as he looked back at Gandalf.

Rowena looked back at Gandalf and patted the wizard's back. "Yeah, it's true. They're worse than me." She suddenly looked towards Fíli and Kíli, she looked at the wizard and gestured towards the brothers. "Should we be worried about Fíli and Kíli meeting up with Elladan and Elrohir?" She noticed Thorin's frown and explain. "Elrond's sons act just like Fíli and Kíli that's it's a little creep."

Fíli and Kíli looked at each other before they asked, looking at Rowena. "But you like us better, right?"

Rowena blinked owlishly at them before she threw her head back and laughed, bringing them to her for a hug. "Yeah, even though we barely just met, I feel more of a kinship with you two than Elladan and Elrohir. She looked at the other dwarves, smiling at them as well. "I feel the same kinship with the rest of you as well."

Gandalf looked at Thorin. "I advise that your nephews and Lord Elrond's son never met."

"They're going to met eventually." Rowena said. "I'll advise more against leaving them alone together."

Bofur looked at her. "Wouldn't you be able to handle them?"

Rowena opened her mouth to response but one minute she was standing the next, she was gone. It
happened so fast that it lifted everyone stunned at her sudden disappearance and immediately looked over to see two identical male elves sitting on top of her back.

Rowena asked, a little winded. "What knocked into me? A rock?"

Gandalf stared at the two elves on her back in shock before he regained his sense and yelled at them. "Elladan! Elrohir! Get off her before you crush her with your combined weight!"

Imogen suddenly came running at them, yipping at the Elven twins, who cried out and ran off. The direwolf chased after the brothers and Rowena was still sprawled out on her front on the ground.

Rowena groaned out as Bilbo and Frodo helped her up. "You know helping Bombur out didn't hurt that much. It felt like they were wearing their armor."

Bilbo gently laid his hand on her back. "Well, they were wearing armor."

"I'm going to kill them." Rowena growled as she ran her fingers through her hair. "When I see them again, I'm going to kill them and I'm not going to listen to Arwen's pleading to spare them."

Frodo asked, "Who's Arwen?"

"Those evil creatures' sister." Rowena said as she dusted herself. "She's a wonderful lady elf."

Gandalf mumbled. "Yes, the very opposite of Rowena." Something struck Gandalf on the back of his head and he turned around, rubbing the sore spot as he look towards Rowena.

Rowena noticed his stare. "What?"

Gandalf looked away from her when he heard footsteps coming down the stairs and spotted a very familiar brown-haired elf walking down the steps before them. Rowena smirked as once as the gray wizard as his back turned on her, and she waited for Bofur to bring back the small pebble that she had thrown at Gandalf's head for the insult. She took the pebble from Bofur and returned it to her pouch.

The brown-haired elf said as he walked down the stairs. "Mithrandir." Gandalf and Rowena walked toward the descending elf.

Gandalf smiled in recollection of the elf. "Ah, Lindir."

Thorin whispers to Dwalin. "Stay sharp." He noticed at Rowena, who was standing with Gandalf and those two Elven twins

Lindir said. "We heard you had crossed into the Valley."

Gandalf stepped up to him. "I must speak with Lord Elrond."

Lindir looked wary even he told Gandalf. "My Lord Elrond is not here."

Gandalf asked when he looked towards Rowena, who merely shrugged, before looking back at Lindir. "Not here? Where is he?"

Suddenly an Elven hunting horn sounded behind them and Gandalf smiled before he turned around, as did the company, and Rowena looked over her shoulder. A returning elf war party rode across the bridge. Rowena and Gandalf glanced at each other, concerned with how fast they were coming towards them.
Thorin shouted as he moved towards his men. "Close ranks!"

Bilbo and Frodo was placed in the middle with Ori, Thorin, Fíli and Kíli, and the rest of the dwarves formed a circle around them with their weapons drawn and held at the ready of battle. Rowena had been expecting that she was going standing outside the circle but boy was she surprised when Bifur grabbed her and pulled into the inner circle, where Thorin, Fíli and Kíli placed her between them. She was standing next to her father and cousin now.

Frodo asked as the elf war party circled around them. "What are they doing?"

Rowena jokingly commented. "Probably sizing us up for coffins." She yelped when her father smacked her bottom and looked at her father, who sent her an disapproving look. "I was joking. No need for sudden violence on my person."

The elf war party stopped close to them, still circling the company. Rowena placed her hand on Frodo's head, and Imogen growled softly, standing close to her mistress. Ophelia was being held by Frodo, the wild cat and the flaunting had gotten quite close to each other. The human woman rested her other hand on the direwolf's head, calming the she-wolf down instantly.

Elrond smiled as he spotted the gray wizard. "Gandalf!"

Gandalf said as he smiled back at him. "Lord Elrond."

"My friend! Where have you been?" Gandalf asked.

Elrond answered as an elf held his horse in place. "We've been hunting a pack of Orcs that came up from the South. We slew a number near the Hidden Pass."

Elrond got off his horse and embraced Gandalf, speaking again. "Strange for orcs to come so close to our borders." He held up an orc arrow. "Something or someone has drawn them near." He was now standing before the dwarves.

Gandalf looked back at the dwarves. "Ah, that may have been us."

Elrond noticed Thorin coming towards him. "Welcome Thorin, son of Thrain."

Thorin looked confused by him knowing him. "I do not believe we have met."

"You have your Grandfather's bearing." Elrond explained. "I knew Thror when he ruled under the mountain."

"Indeed?" Thorin questioned before he commented. "He made no mention of you." His words caused Gandalf and Elrond to look at each, though the gray wizard looked a little put out.

Elrond said something to Thorin in Elvish, and the dwarves were immediately suspicious of the Elven words.

"What is he saying?" Gloin asked, angry and suspicion heard in his voice and seen on his face. "Does he offer us insult?"

Gandalf sighed before he explained. "No, Master Gloin, he's offering you food."

Gandalf and Elrond watched as the dwarves turn and discuss amongst themselves, sharing amused smile with each other. Rowena watched Thorin as he and Dwalin spoke, she was smiling at their antics, finding amusement of their actions. He must have felt her eyes on him because Thorin looked her way and Rowena smiled at him, before she looked towards Gandalf and Elrond. After much talking, the dwarves turned back to Gandalf.
Gloin nodded his head. "Ah, Well. In that case, lead on."

Rowena finally laughed. "Wow, that's the first time I've seen you dwarves discuss whether to accept food or not."

Bofur placed his hands on his waist. "What's wrong with that? You act like we're uncivilized people and we'll do terrible things in the name of food."

Rowena tapped her chin as she mocked recollect something. "Hmm, I having this weird flashback that you came into my father's smial, wrecked the place and also ate all his food. I think you completely destroyed the pumping as well. And I seem to remember that there was absolutely no discussion before you did any of that."

Bofur looked at her and shrugged. "Well, you'll be correct in that recollection, lass."

"It's a good thing I don't have a place to call home, I shudder just thinking about what damage you could do to it." Rowena said, smiling still, telling them that she had found humor in what they did to her father's smial.

"We're not stupid enough to ruin your home if you did have one, lass." Bofur told her, smiling up at her.

Rowena arched a brow at him. "Oh? And what makes me different from my father?"

"Well to be completely honest, I don't fancy getting a direwolf sic on me if I ruined your home. " Bofur said, tipping his hat towards Imogen. "We'll be on our best behavior."

"Do you even know what 'best behavior' mean, Bofur?" Rowena asked.

"Of course I do! It's...er.." Bofur said with confidant before trailing off. He looked at Nori. "I don't know what best behavior means? Do you?"

Nori shook his head. "Nope, my brother gave up on teaching me manners."

Rowena laughed but quieted when she saw that Elrond was watching her. She walked over to him and stopped before him.

She smiled at him. "Hello, Ada."

Elrond looked at Gandalf in shock before looking back at Rowena and cupping her face between his hands. His eyes moved across her face, looking in her woman appearance.

Gandalf returned Elrond's smile. "She's grown quite beautiful, has she?"

Elrond released her before pulled her into a hug. "I didn't even recognized her until she spoke. It was like looking at someone else with her voice." He looked back at her and then he noticed her eyes. "But it's her eyes that is the only way to tell someone that's it's really her. Her eyes are mirrors to her soul and they still show that same mischievous and curios shine."

Rowena returned his hug. "Miss me?"

Elrond laughed as he pulled back. "Even I joyed the peace and quiet, it wasn't quite the same without you here causing mischief."

Rowena laughed as she looked between him and Gandalf. "You two act like I always caused mischief."
Elrond said as Gandalf laughed. "But you do, Rowena."

Rowena was quick to defend herself. "But half the things I get caught for wasn't even my fault. It was Elladan and Elrohir's fault!"

Elrond looked at Rowena with a fond exasperation on his face. "Well, that may be true and I've already scolded them for basting that window, you were not totally innocent in some regards."

"You have no proof that I did even half of that mischief-making that I'm excused of." Rowena commented.

Gandalf looked down at her. "Then that incident with Saruman wasn't your doing?"

"Nope! That totally wasn't me!" Rowena said. "Besides how did I put mice into his robe when I was with Arwen? Totally impossible for a mere human such as myself."

Elrond asked as he led the dwarves, hobbits, wizard and human up the stairs. "Thorin, would you like to eat first or bathe?"

Rowena sniffed her clothes and made a gagging sound. "I would personally like to bathe first. I smell like I've been traveling with dwarves, got put into a smelly bag by trolls and crept around a troll cave....Oh, wait! We did that!"

Gandalf shook his head at Rowena's words but agreed with her no of the less. "A bathe would be for the best."

Rowena noticed the heavy depressed look on Bombur's face. "Oh, cheer-up, Bombur. Taking a bathe won't make you starve to death."

Bofur said. "We don't smell that bad."

"Oh, I beg to differ." Rowena said. "You could curl paint from the walls with your smell and my Papa is absolutely covered in troll mucus."

Thorin turned to look at his company before any more complaints can be heard. "Enough! We're going to bathe and that's the end of it."

"Well, on that note." Rowena said as she started to walk away from them. "I'll head to my bedchambers and take a bathe, and I'll see you fine dwarves and hobbits at dinner time."

Sometime later, Rowena found herself in her old bedroom and looked around, finding that nothing has changed since she had lifted. Everything looked to exactly where she had lifted it before. She closed the door behind her and made her way toward the bathing chambers.

Rowena stripped out of her clothes and touched the bathing pool, finding it perfect to the touch. She went to sit at the vanity in the bathing chambers and picked up a brush. She ran the teeth of the brush through her long, wavy hair, combing out the tangles that made themselves into her thick waves. Rowena's eyes were dragged towards the beautiful green crafted locket medallion pendant necklace nestled between her breasts.

Her fingers reached up and brushed against the face of the locket, she stroked it as Rowena remembered when she got it.

It was the morning of her fourth birthday, before the orcs came and destroyed everything she loved and cherished. Her mother had given it to her, as a symbol that she would be the next Queen and therefore to be able to control the direwolves who live within the forest and caves that surrounds the kingdom.
No, it wasn't control, it was more like a kinship between the direwolves and humans. Her mother was considered to be Queen to both human and direwolf. So it wasn't uncommon to see humans and direwolves working together in the fields and forests around them. The only time that the direwolves weren't seen was when travelers entered kingdom, seeking shelter and food.

The necklace she wears was the only thing that would reveal that she was Queen Rowena Cairistíne Sinclair, Daughter of the Line of Isolde, and she keeps it hidden under her tunic so that no one will. She couldn't afford to have people know, some of them could be the ever ones who are working for Him, the Dark one. He's been looking for her ever since she had escaped the Pale Orc, and he never had stopped his search for her. Her only saving grace was that she brought into Bilbo Baggins' smial and he adopted her, but because her necklace was hidden in her clothes when that orc pack attacked her in the forest, they didn't know that the human child that they were hunting was in fact the very one they were looking for.

Rowena removed the necklace from her neck and set it in the jewelry box on the vanity. She got up and went to the bathing pool, she stepped into the pool and gave a sigh of relief as the warm water hit her sore muscles. She sink even deeper into the water, until only her head was visible.

Rowena heard the door to her bedchamber's opened and called out to the visitor. "I'm in the bathing chambers!"

The door opened revealing a beautiful brown-haired elf maiden, she was carrying a basket filled with jars and small vases.

"Hey, Arwen. It's been awhile." Rowena tipped her head back to smile at the Elven maiden.

Arwen smiled down at her as she ran her fingers through her hair. "You became such a beautiful woman."

Rowena stick her tongue out as she raised her head back. "Nah, when I'm around you. I feel plain and awkward."

"Oh, no, Renie." Arwen said as she powered orange blossom scented shampoo into her palm and started to lathered it into Rowena's hair. "You are very beautiful, even Lindir had commented on it."

"Lindir did?" Rowena asked. "I didn't even know that he had a soft spot for me. I always felt that I was one of those responsibilities that Ada pushed on him to take care of."

Arwen winced at that. "Well, my father does that when he doesn't want to deal with something or someone but Lindir does joy your company, Renie."

Rowena tipped her head back as Arwen worked the shampoo into her scalp. "Really? I never accept Ada would ditch responsibility to someone else." She looked at her. "And it's always Lindir?"

Arwen nodded her head and Rowena whistled. "Wow! I didn't think that Ada had it in him."

"So, I see that you were reunited with your dwarf." Arwen said, smiling down at her. "And he's a King."

"Yeah, but I didn't know that he was a King, rather a King-in-Exile." Rowena said.

"But he doesn't know either." Arwen commented as she picked up a pitcher and duck it into the water.
Rowena looked at her. "Know what?"

Arwen said as she poured the water out of the pitcher and onto her hair. "That you are a Queen yourself."

"I'm a Queen with no kingdom and no people, Arwen." Rowena pushed back her wet hair from her face and sighed. "So I'm no Queen."

"He doesn't have a Kingdom either, Rowena." Arwen soothed, brushing her fingers across her brow.

Rowena looked at her. "But he's a King who is on a quest to get back his Kingdom." The human woman trusted enough to tell Arwen everything and the elf maiden knew not to repeat anything that Rowena tells her to her father. Arwen and Rowena had a very strong and deep bond, the elf maiden saw the human woman as a younger sister that she never had and the human woman saw the elf maiden as a older sister that she never had.

Rowena brought her legs up to her chest and wrapped her arms around her knees. "I don't have a kingdom that was taken from me and I don't have people who survived a dragon attack and escape." She remembered her childhood friends from her home. "Well, expect for those two. But we're only three survivors." Rowena looked at Arwen. "I'm a Mercenary now, no longer a Queen and I have a curse on me that makes me scared to tell him that he's my One but I will die on our daughter's fourth birthday."

Arwen wrapped her arms around her neck. "Oh, Renie. I didn't know you had thought about this."

Rowena patted her arm but changed the topic. "I didn't see Estel? Where is he?"

Arwen smiled at the mention of the man she loved. "He became a ranger but according to my father, he should be on his way back here."

"Can't wait to see him, huh?" Rowena grinned, happy for her Elven sister's happiness. "I'm glad that you found your soulmate."

"Estel is the descendant of Elendil and Heir of Isildur." Arwen said after a long pause between them.

Rowena slowly turned around to look up at her. "He's the descendant of Elendil and Heir of Isildur? Doesn't that make him King of Gondor?"

"Yes, but he's a King without a crown." Arwen answered her, than she smiled suddenly, realizing something. "And your One is a King without a home."

Rowena smiled as well. "Sounds like our Ones are similar to each other."

Arwen touched her forehead to hers. "Who would thought that we could love the same type of man."

"Well, in my case, my Love is a dwarf." Rowena corrected.

"Now, let's get you ready and looking even more beautiful for your King." Arwen said, and Rowena nodded her head in agreement, smiling.

As they waited for Rowena to finish her bath, the dwarves sit around the elves dining table, Ori
picks up a lettuce leaf and looks at it with dislike on his face.

Dori told his younger brother, encouraging his brother. "Try it. Just a mouthful."

Ori slowly shook his head. "I don’t like green food."

Kíli is making eyes at a female Elven harp player, gives her a smiling wink, and gets a stern look from Dwalin.

Kíli tries to play it off: “Can’t say I fancy Elf maids myself. Too thin. They’re all high cheekbones and creamy skin; not enough facial hair for me. Although…” Just then another elf walks by. “That one there’s not bad” Kíli says.

Dwalin replies, “That’s not an elf maid”. The elf in question turns to reveal that he is indeed not an elf maid.

Kíli looks a bit shocked, then Dwalin winks at him, and everyone bursts out laughing. "It's not funny."

Bofur commented from between laughter. "Man, too bad Rowena isn't here. She'll laugh the hardest than all of us."

That made Kíli go pale and the others laugh harder than before.

The dwarves was starting to find that the elves’ supper consists of only fruits and vegetables, and no meat.

Dwalin asked as he looked through a bowl that only consist of lettuce. "Where’s the meat?"

Ori asked looking down the table. "Have they got any chips?"

Elrond and Gandalf walked towards the dinner table. They had just stopped at Rowena's bedchambers and they were practically chased away by Arwen, who told them that Rowena wasn't ready yet and they weren't allowed to see her before the dwarves did. Both men knew that Arwen was trying to get Rowena suitable for Thorin. So they turned and walked away, chuckling at the match-making skills of an Elven maiden, but the both of them agreed with Arwen's wish and will help Rowena gain confidence enough to speak to Thorin and tell him the truth despite how heart-breaking they can be. Though Elrond was more cautious due to the madness that lives within Thorin's line.

"Kind of you to invite us." Gandalf said as he gestured to himself. "I’m not really dressed for dinner."

Elrond smiled back at him as they climbed up the stairs. "Well, you never are."

They walked towards their seats, joining the dwarves and two hobbits. Elrond suddenly looked up when he heard Arwen talking. He spotted his daughter standing next to the pillar and she was trying to coaxed someone out from behind the pillar, and the Elven Lord immediately knew who it was. Gandalf noticed that Elrond's attention was drawn elsewhere and he followed his gaze, his eyes landed on Arwen. One by one, the dwarves and hobbits noticed that Elrond and Gandalf was looking somewhere else and followed their eyes.

Arwen said, soothing. "Come on, Renie. It's dinner and you need to eat."

"I feel and look ridiculous." Rowena spoke from behind the pillar. "I hate wearing dress, they don't look good on me."
"Who told you that?" Arwen asked, frowning at her.

Rowena sighed. "Fine, let's go and have dinner."

It was clear to everyone that Rowena had purposely changed the subject and Arwen offered her her arm and they see Rowena's arm appear and slip through her arm. Both women stepped out from behind the pillar and made their way towards the dining table.

Thorin was speechless when he finally got a clear view of the human woman after she fully stepped out from behind the pillar. It was pretty for an Elven dress and the pale green color of the fabric made her pale green eyes even paler than before and made them more noticeable. It also looked well against her ivory skin, bringing the color out.

It was not her dress that had amazed him though. It was her hair! He hadn't realize how long it was. It was long, with loose curls, instead of the natural waves from her ponytail adn braid, near the end of her hair, where it hangs to her lower back. It was lush, full and a gleaming pale golden blond color, it was simply beautiful. Though her hair was done in a very elvish style for her gleaming loose curls, though that did not detract from her beauty. He was sure his sister's maid could come up with something more elaborate, similar to how dwarf ladies wore their hair, that would show them off.

Rowena smiled at him and took the seat to his left. She thought Thorin cleaned up well, even if he had re-donned his armor and the blue velvet tunic. They did look slightly cleaner though.

What was that? Rowena thought as she took a deep breath in through her nose and the scent of sandalwood drifted into her nose. She smiled as she pulled away from him, straightened up. I wonder if he knows he always smells like sandalwood and he doesn't need to add more to his skin. She wasn't surprised that she wanted to pull his locks to her face and smell them.

Rowena noticed Arwen looking at her and smiled at her as a blush colored her cheeks. She immediately dropped her eyes to the plate before her and chewed on her bottom lip, and on top of that, Rowena could still feel Thorin staring at her and her cheeks darken even more.

Realizing he might be staring the King-in-Exile cleared his throat and looked the other way. His heart was racing, his breathing was irregular, and he had to fight down a blush. Thorin didn't know why seeing Rowena dressed beautifully wold affected him so. She always been beautiful and she shone with that inner beauty that no other woman had ever possessed and now that he's sees her like this, dressed like a Queen, he could not resist looking at. Thorin had never wanted to touch anyone's hair this badly before. The human had been beautiful even when she had been covered in dirt and scratches from when she was fourteen and especially after fighting the trolls to save her father. Now? Now. She. Was. Stunning!

The table where the rest of the dwarves were sitting had quite a bit of elbowing and smirking as more than one dwarf enjoyed watching their King's reaction to the human Mercenary.

Elrond introduced the Dwarf King to his daughter, Arwen, a dark haired elf maid that took the seat on the other side of the human woman. Thorin took little notice of her, most of his attention still claimed by the beauty at his side, though he tried not to stare.

Rowena looked at Elrond and bowed in her in apology. "I'm sorry it took so long, Ada. I didn't realize how bad my hair was until Arwen had to bathe it multiple times to order to get back that shine it had once."

Elrond looked at her. "Yes, now that you mention it and I see how it looks after, your hair was dull and lacked it's usually brightness."

Arwen teasingly scolded Rowena. "I don't think she was taking such good care of her hair."
"I honestly wanted to cut it." Rowena said. "It got in my way when I was in the middle of fighting."

Rowena wasn't expecting the shout of outrage or gasps of disapproval coming from the dwarves. Yes, she had expect them from her father, Elven father, and Gandalf, but not of the dwarves as well. So she was quite surprise to hear them voice quite animated their disapproval of her wanting to cut her hair.

Rowena quickly held her hands. "It was just a thought, nothing more. I really wasn't going to cut it." She looked towards Balin, asking. "Why did it seemed like I just committed murder by the way you reacted to me saying that, Balin?"

Balin smiled at her as he explained. "In our culture, to cut one's hair short is a sign of dishonor, lass."

Rowena touched her hair. "So it's not because you gents are so fond of my hair?"

"Oh, we are, lass." Balin answered her. "But someone is more fond of it than the rest of us."

Thorin shoot Balin a warning glare while Rowena nodded her head. "I see. Okay, though I would never actually really cut my hair. It would dishonor my mother if I did."

Thorin looked at Rowena, frowning at her. "Why?"

Elrond answered instead of Rowena. "Because she wears it long in honor of her mother."

"Also because my mother loved my hair." Rowena added in. "She would brush it for hours until it shone like molten gold."

Bilbo nodded his head in agreement. "Yes, I can agree with that. I also spent hours combing her hair until it shined. It was quite pretty to see."

Arwen looked at Rowena, asking. "Where is Imogen? I heard she was with you?"

Rowena blinked owlishly at her before she looked around. "Dunno. What happened to her? Ophelia is here, she's sitting with Frodo, my cousin."

Gandalf sighed as he dropped his face into his hand. "She chasing after Elladan and Elrohir for knocking you to the ground, Rowny."

Rowena stood up go look for Imogen but stopped when she saw a young man, her age or younger than her, walking towards them with Imogen walking alongside him with the twins walking a good two feet or so behind them. Rowena wasn't really focus on the twins or her direwolf, but more focus on the young man before her, and she was shocked to see how much he had changed.

The man was handsome, his skin darkened from years out in the wild and his hair dark, waving to his shoulders and a dark stubble around his strong jaw. His eyes a piercing light blue that could rival Frodo's more brilliant sky blues. His build was lithe yet muscular.

Rowena's mouth was hanging open as the man came to stop before her, smiling now at her stunned reaction. "Hello, Rowe."

Rowena snapped her mouth shut and looked at Arwen, pointing at the tall young man before her. "Estel?"

Arwen nodded, smiling at her sister's reaction at seeing him after such a long time away from
them. Rowena snapped her gaze back at Estel and looked at him up and down.

Estel broke out into a wide smile at her speechlessness. "I never thought that I lived to see the day
that Rowena would be rendered speechless."

His words snapped Rowena from her shock. "Well, don't get use to it. It's not like anything else
would render me speechless."

Estel gave her a disbelieving arch of his brow, half-grinning now. "Oh, Really?"

"Yes, really." Rowena said. She finally noticed the twins appearance. "Why do they have leaves
and twigs in their hair?"

Estel spared them a glance before looking back at her. "Oh, Imogen simply chased them up a
tree."

Rowena roared with laughter, clenching her sides. The twins blushed as Estel crossed his arms,
chuckling. Arwen, Elrond, Bilbo and Gandalf were trying really hard not to laugh or show any
mirth on their face. But the dwarves were joining with Rowena's laughter, even Frodo was
laughing, though, Thorin was covering his mouth, trying to stop his chuckles from being heard.

Elladan snapped, crossing his arms over his chest. "It's not funny."

Elrohir added in, crossing his arms over his chest as well. "And how is being chased up a tree by a
direwolf be called simple?" Rowena was still laughing hard, she was holding onto Estel, using
him a leverage to keep her up and not on the ground, rolling around.

Estel looked down at Rowena, before smiling at them. "Rowe thinks it's funny and I do think
being chased up a tree by a direwolf is simple."

"I think this is the longest time I've seen Rowena laugh this hard." Bilbo commented.

Elladan glared at the human woman. "Well, she should stop."

"Yeah," Elrohir said. "She should show some concern for our feelings."

Rowena did stop than and looked at them, before she erupted in laughter once again."

Both twins looked at each other before looking at their father. "Why is she laughing now?"

Estel laughed now, joining in Rowena's humor. "Because you put 'concern' and 'Rowena' in the
same sentence."

Bofur looked at Arwen. "I'm guessing she doesn't express concern towards those two, right?"

"Yes." Arwen confirmed. "But they do deserve it, they have a habit of picking on her."

"That's only when I'm wearing this bloody death-trap." Rowena said, finally regaining her breathe
and stopping her laughter.

"But you're wearing a dress." Dori said. "How is that a death-trap?"

"It's always getting under my feet ever time I walk." Rowena said as she gave the hem of the dress
a small kick. "It's trying to murder me."

Estel smiled at her. "That's the first time I heard about a dress that is plotting murder."
Rowena frowned at him. "You try wearing one and you'll understand my pain."

"No, thanks. "Estel said with a laugh. "I couldn't make it work like you and Arwen can." He held up his leg. "Besides I don't have pretty legs, like you two either."

Rowena burst out laughing at the mental image in her head. "You're right! It wouldn't look good on you."

Rowena sat back down, and Estel and the twins took their places at the table, though the human woman noticed that Estel and Arwen shared a tender and gentle smile before he took his seat across from Rowena. The mercenary ducked her head, smiling as she started to eat.

As dinner progress, with Rowena joking and teasing Estel, Elladan and Elrohir, and making Arwen laughed, Elrond examined the sword that Thorin had taken from the trolls’ cave.

"This is Orcrist, the Goblin-cleaver." Elrond revealed as he look at the finely crafted blade. "A famous blade, forged by the High Elves of the West. My kin." He gives the sword back to Thorin. "May it serve you well." Thorin takes it from him and inclined his head to him, impressed by the sword now than before. Than Elrond takes Gandalf’s sword. "And this is Glamdring. The Foe-hammer, sword of the King of Gondolin. These swords were made for the Goblin wars of the First…"

As Elrond is explaining how the swords were made, Bilbo takes out the dagger that Gandalf had given him earlier and looks at it curiously.

Balin noticing that Bilbo was looking at his sword. "I wouldn’t bother, laddie. Swords are named for their great deeds they do in war."

Bilbo asked, looking at him. "What are you saying, my sword hasn’t seen battles?"

"I’m not actually sure it is a sword." Balin answered, looking down at the sword. "More of a letter opener, really."

Elrond referred to the swords. "How did you come by these?"

Rowena suggested, which caused Estel to laugh. "By sheer dumb luck?"

"I thought it was sheer dumb luck that you won against those Mountain trolls." Estel said, than he smiled, adding. "Or beating the twins in a spurring match."

Rowena smiled as the twins grimaced. "No, it was sheer dumb luck me winning that fight with those trolls. It was sheer skill me winning that fight with the twins." Than Rowena remembered something and she looked at the twins. "Oh! That reminds me. Bríghid knew that I won that mock fight against Elladan and told some guy."

Elladan frowned at her. "How did she know?"

Rowena held up her arms. "This time, it wasn't fault. I didn't open my mouth and blab."

Elrohir looked at his brother. "But who would told? The only ones who were there were Arwen, Rowena, Estel, myself and Elladan."

Arwen said. "Don't look at me, I didn't tell."

"Yeah, Arwen never blabs." Rowena said, smiling at her sister-elf.

Elladan glared at Rowena. "Than it was you, Renie."
Estel smirked before Rowena could defend herself. "Actually it was me who blabbed."

Rowena snapped her eyes to him. "Really? You know how much trouble you got me into by blabbing that, Estel."

"So men didn't believe that you beat an elf, so what?" Estel said. "But I bet you like proving them wrong, Rowe."

Rowena slapped her hand to her face. "Sadly, I can't deny that because I do like proving arrogant, small-minded men wrong."

"Second only to sassing everyone who cares for you like a daughter or sister." Estel added in, smiling at her.

"I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about." Rowena said. "Me? Sassing? I'm sure you're getting me confuse with someone else. I never sass, I don't have that in me."

Estel smiled. "So you're denying it, huh?"

Rowena smiled back. "Denying? Me? Never! How can I deny something that I don't have? It's kind of hard to do so."

Gandalf answered but he was smiling at Rowena and Estel. "We found them in a troll hoard on the Great East road, shortly before we were ambushed by orcs."

"And what were you doing on the Great East road?" Elrond asked, looking at them all. "13 dwarves, a human woman and two Halflings." Elrond remarks. "Strange travelling companions, Gandalf."

"These are the descendants of the House of Durin! They're noble, decent folk." Gandalf explained as Nori picks up what appears to be an ornate salt shaker and discreetly puts it in his coat. "And they're surprisingly cultured." Bombur stuffs his face with food. "They've got a deep love of the arts."

Nori turns to the harp player behind him and says. "Change the tune, why don't you? I feel like I'm at a funeral!"

"Did somebody die?!" Óin exclaims.

Rowena sighed as she said. "Nobody dies, Óin. That's just Nori being an ass."

"What does an donkey got to do with funerals." Óin asked. Rowena looked at him and erupted into laughter.

Bofur says. "Alright lads, there's only one thing for it!" jumps onto a plinth next to the table, and starts to sing. ~There is an inn, a merry old inn beneath an old grey hill, And there they brew a beer so brown That the Man in the Moon himself came down one night to drink his fill. The ostler has a tipsy cat that plays a five-stringed fiddle; And up and down he saws his bow Now squeaking high, now purring low, now sawing in the middle. So the cat on the fiddle played hey-diddle-diddle, a jig that would wake the dead: He squeaked and sawed and quickened the tune, While the landlord shook the Man in the Moon: 'It's after three!' he said.~

As he was singing, The other elves join in, and also start throwing food around. Thorin was now standing away from them, with Rowena, Frodo Arwen, Elladan, Elrohir and Estel. He did it to not get hit by the food and also to drink but he was enjoying himself, watching his men. Something comes very close to hitting Lindir!
Estel looked at Arwen and gestured towards Rowena with his eyes, the elf maiden smiled and nodded her head. The man walked over to Rowena and bowed to her, offering his hand to her. "May I have this dance, Milady?"

Rowena beamed as she swept into a graceful curtsey. "You may, Milord."

Estel sweep her into his arms and started to do a lively jig around the dining table, getting Frodo to laugh cheerful at the sight of Rowena dancing around the table. Bilbo was getting worried until he spotted Elrond watching Rowena and Estel dancing, he was shocked to see that the Elven Lord was smiling as he watched the human woman twirl around the floor, laughing and wearing a large beaming smile on her face.

Arwen smiled as she watch her human sister dance. "I've forgotten how beautiful her smile was."

Elladan smiled as well. "It's almost like the sun was captured in her smile."

Elrohir spoke, and Thorin was closest to him so the dwarf king heard him. "I don't think it's dancing that is making her smile."

"Yeah, it's the fact that she's finally reunited with her dwa-OW!!" Elladan began before Estel swept Rowena passed him and she kicked his shin. Hard.

Rowena blinked her eyes, innocently and false concern for him. "Oh, my! Elladan! What happened?"

Estel and Elrohir were fighting really hard not to laugh, as was Arwen, though she was staring at Rowena in disapproving way.

Elladan looked at her. "Why did you kick me? I'm just happy that you're finally reunited with your dwa-OW!!" Once again Estel swept Rowena pass and she kick his shin.

"I'm not kicking you." Rowena said. "I developed an involuntary leg spasm over the years. Nasty business that."

Fíli and Kíli roared with laughter at Rowena's antics, though Bilbo was trying really hard not to laugh at his daughter.

Elrond spoke once again, but this time it was in Elvish and his children, both born and adopted, stopped their antics to listen to him and stopped the music, singing and dancing. "Enough! Behave yourself!"

"But Ada." Arwen spoke up, placing her hand on her human sister's shoulder. "Elladan almost revealed that Rowena was Thorin's human and his One to Thorin himself. She was merely stopping it from happening."

Elrond stood up and walked over to Arwen and Rowena, stroking their hair. "You are right, Arwen. Yet it's Rowena's right to tell Thorin who she is and I suggest she do so soon before she misses her chance forever." Elrond looked down at Rowena and spoke the common tongue. "Rowena, you should not fear falling in love, a true and pure love. Do not allow yourself to be tied to your fate, just as your mother had done. Break free of those chains and be with your One, and live happy."

Rowena's jaws dropped as he and Gandalf walked away. Thorin frowned at Elrond's words, and he wasn't the only one. Her father and the rest of his company were frowning, baffled at the Elven Lord's words.
Elladan pointed after his father as he stared down at Rowena. "Oh, so I get a foot to the shin for almost blabbing but my father doesn't."

Rowena muttered. "First, he didn't blab. Second, you deserved it. And third, I actually do have the urge to kick him in the shin now."

Elrohir smiled at her. "But you're not going to kick him, right?"

Rowena pinned a glare at him. "I'm not stupid nor am I suicidal."

Estel watched as Rowena softly bang her forehead against the pillar near by. "What are you doing?"

"Cursing my fate." Rowena responded.

"I see." Estel said. He continued to watch her to do so a couple minutes before he asked. "Doesn't that hurt?"

"Actually, it's starting to hurt now." Rowena admitted. "I think I should stop."

Arwen slipped her hand between her forehead and the pillar. "That would be nice."

Lindir offered his hand to her. "May I escort you back to your bedchamber?"

Rowena inclined her head towards him. "You may."

Lindir helped her up and led her out of the dining area. Arwen and her brothers watched them leave.

Elrohir looked at his sister. "Does Lindir have a tender spot for Renie?"

Arwen stared at her brother as if he grew a second head before rolling her eyes. "I forgot how oblivious you two are. But yes, Lindir does have a tender spot for Renie."

Estel smirked. "I wonder if he knows that Rowe doesn't have a thing for Elves thanks to Thranduil."

Elladan shook his head sadly, but his eyes were smiling. "I don't think so. He would be absolutely heartbroken when he learns that she's in love with a dwarf."

"...So who wants to tell him?" Elrohir asked.

"We'll have to break it gently to him." Estel put in, smiling.

Elladan asked with a raised eyebrow. "How can you break it gently to someone who loves someone while that someone loves someone else?" There was a pause before he pinched the bridge of his nose. "I think I broke my brain saying that."

Elrohir rubbed his temple. "I broke my brain just listening to you say that."

Arwen finally spoke up, sending disapproving glares to the three men. "I don't think any of you should tell Lindir. It's none of your business, it's between Rowena, Lindir and her dwarf."

Estel smiled, inclining his head towards her. "Very well, we'll leave it to Rowena. I simply want to see my adopted sister happy."

Arwen smiled at him. "So do I, Estel."
Thorin noticed that Estel and Arwen were together, and he also noticed the love they held for each other. He especially noticed when the man immediately dropped his wish to tell Lindir about Rowena and her dwarf, which was him, in order to make Arwen happy and to see her smile. The dwarf King could see the love and adoration in the man's eyes as he look at the elf maiden, his heart was completely in her hands and he lived to see her smile.

Thorin understood how the man felt, it was the same for him towards Rowena. He enjoyed seeing Rowena smiling and laughing, showing her carefree and cheerful nature. He lived to see her smile and it broke his heart to see her cry, her tears cause him pain.

The dwarf king rubbed his chin in thought as he stood up and walked away from the table, leaving his company behind and wanting to be alone in his thoughts. He thought about what he had heard. According to Elrond, Rowena is afraid of falling in love due to something that had made her mother wary of doing so. It was something that only Gandalf, Elrond and Elrond's children knew about, and it was something her father didn't even know about, as Thorin had seen the confused look on Bilbo's face when Elrond had said that.

He didn't really care about that elf, Lindir, having tender feelings for Rowena. Thorin knew it wasn't going to go anywhere, not when she cherishes the courting bead that he had given to her eight years ago. And he knew that she wears it always and never takes it off, even when she's bathing.

Thorin groaned as he remembered seeing her bathing. 'Oh, Mahal! That image is never going to give me peace on this quest! It's going to torture me!'

Later that night Gandalf, Bilbo, Thorin, Rowena and Balin meet privately with Elrond. Rowena allowed Frodo to stay with the dwarves but not before leaving the company with a very threatening warning. Anything happens to her cousin and she's going to use them as target practice. And they believed her, they've seen her how she'd fight, and they absolutely don't want to be on the other end of her sword.

Rowena even hard to warn away Elladan and Elrohir from Fíli and Kíli, she simply didn't want to deal with the twins corrupting them any further than they already are. But she had a feeling that they won't listen to her and they'll do what they want.

Elrond had led them to his study, Balin, Thorin and Bilbo, while Gandalf stood with the Elven Lord and Rowena stood by a pillar, leaning against it. Bilbo was very impressed by how large and beautiful Elrond's study was, he was looking around him.

Thorin said, glaring at the Elven Lord. "Our business is no concern of Elves."

"For goodness sake." Gandalf huffed. "Thorin, show him the map!"

"It is the legacy of my people." Thorin snapped. "It's mine to protect! As are its secrets."

"Save me from the stubbornness of dwarves. Your pride will be your downfall." Gandalf stated, cautiously. "You stand here in the presence of one of the few in Middle-earth who can read that map. Show it to Lord Elrond!"

Thorin looked towards Rowena, who noticed his stare and finally stepped forward, away from the pillar, and moved to stand before him.

Rowena placed her hand on his shoulder. "It's okay for you not to trust him, Thorin." She looked at her adopted Elven father before looking back at the dwarf king. "But I trust him and I'm asking
you to trust him as well. He won't trick or deceive you, it's not in his nature."

Thorin looked at Rowena before looking at Balin, and finally looked at Elrond standing behind Rowena. He reached into his coat and took out the map.

Balin sees what Thorin has done and stepped forwards, grabbing his arm. "Thorin, no!"

Thorin held up his hand, calming his friend with the simple gesture before he gave the map to Elrond. The Elven Lord took the map from Thorin, looking at Rowena the entire time before he open it and take a look. Elrond, Bilbo, Gandalf and Balin had noticed that Thorin had looked to Rowena for her opinion on the matter and when she had given it, he must have sensed the genuine trust in her words towards her Elven father because he had given the map over to Elrond without saying anything else.

"Erebor." Elrond looked at Thorin, asking. "What is your interest in this map?"

But just as Thorin opened his mouth to response, Gandalf beat him to it. "It's mainly academic. As you know, this sort of artifacts sometimes contains hidden text."

Thorin looked at Gandalf gratefully for not giving their quest away.

Gandalf looked at Thorin and faintly smiled at him before he asked. "You still read ancient dwarvish, do you not?"

Elrond reads from the map after a long pause. "‘Cirth ithil’.

"Moon runes. Of course." Gandalf smiled, than he noticed Rowena and Bilbo staring at him. "An easy thing to miss."

Rowena leaned towards him, whispering. "You're the best who thought up this mad scheme we're on, Gandalf. It doesn't actually stroke my trust in you when you say that."

"Well in this case, that is true." Elrond said as Rowena rolled her eyes. "Moon runes can only be read by the light of the moon of the same shape and season as the day on which they were written."

Thorin asked. "Can you read them?"

Elrond referred to the map as he led them out into a cliff that was behind a waterfall. "These runes were written on a mid-summer’s eve by the light of a crescent moon nearly two hundred years ago." He added as he came to stand before a stone slab with Thorin and Rowena on one side of him and Gandalf, Bilbo and Balin on the other side. "It would seem you were meant to come to Rivendell." He looked towards Thorin before gesturing towards the moon. "Fate is with you, Thorin Oakenshield. The same moon shines upon us tonight."

He placed the map on a stone slab right under the moon, and as the moon's light shines on the map, it reveals the runes and Rowena and Elrond leaned over to read the runes.

Elrond translates the runes on the map. "‘Stand by the grey stone when the thrush knocks, and the setting sun with the last light of Durin’s Day will shine upon the keyhole.’"

Bilbo asked as Rowena frowned at that word. "Durin’s Day?"

Gandalf explained as he looked at Rowena and Bilbo. "It is the start of the dwarves new year, when the last moon of Autumn and the first sun of Winter appear in the sky together."

"This is ill news." Thorin said touching his chin before looking at Balin. "Summer is passing,
Durin’s Day will soon be upon us.”

Balin was quick to reassure his king. "We still have time."

Bilbo asked. "Time, for what?"

Balin looked at Bilbo, Rowena was watching her Elven father. "To find the entrance." He looked back at Thorin as he said. "We have to be standing at exactly the right spot, at exactly the right time. Then, and only then, can the door be opened."

Elrond: spoke up finally, causing Rowena to flinch. "So this is your purpose, to enter the mountain."

Thorin asked looking up at Elrond. "What of it?"

Elrond warned. "There are some who would not deem it wise."

Elrond hands the map back to Thorin, who snatched it from his hands.

Gandalf asked, frowning as Rowena had a sudden bad feeling erupted through her. "Who do you mean?"

Elrond answered, looking at him now. "You are not the only guardian to stand watch over Middle-earth."

Elrond turns and leaves, leaving everyone watching him walk down the corridor. Gandalf looked at Rowena before he hurried after Elrond as she touched her chin with her fingers, thinking over his words.

Bilbo looked up at his daughter when she had dropped her face into her hand. "What's wrong?"

Rowena mumbled. "Because I know who Ada was referring to when he said that." She ran her fingers through her hair and pulled on it. "Oh, Valar! I hope I'm wrong!"

Balin looked at her, asking. "Who is it?"

"Well, one is my adopted mother, Lady Galadriel." Rowena said. "And the second is Saruman the White."

Bilbo frowned at the last name. "Is this Saruman the very same one who doesn't like you?"

"Yeah, the very same one." Rowena said. "Though I did nothing to get him to not like me. I'm such a likable young woman who's a little too honest for some people."

"Well, that's too bad." Bilbo said, smiling at his daughter. "That honesty is what makes you so special and real, Rowny."

Rowena stared at her father before leaning over and wrapping her arms around his waist, and lifting him up. "I have such a sweet Papa! He's the greatest and there's only one like him!"

Bilbo yelled as he squirmed in her arms. "Rowena! Put me down!"

"Nope!" Rowena said as she walked away, Balin and Thorin looked at each other before following after them.

Lindir was waiting for them once they have returned to the study. "Your bedchambers have been prepared."
Rowena set her father down and looked at them. "I'm going to go get Frodo and have him sleep with me."

She bent over to kiss her father on the cheek before she walked away them. Lindir was watching Rowena sweep out of the room, her dress trailing after her. He felt eyes on him and looked down to see the dwarf King looking at him. The Elven man returned his stare with one of his own, it didn't set well with Lindir that Rowena has showed interesting in Thorin and he could see the same interest in the dwarf's eyes.

Lindir spoke, gesturing for them to follow him. "I'll led you to your rooms. Please, this way."

Bilbo followed after and the two dwarves waited for a while before following him.

Elsewhere, the surviving orc scouts returns to their master. The Hunter Orcs were very nervous when the wargs growled at them, the beasts have already sensed that they had failed in their missions. There was large white warg lying across a stone slab with a large Pale orc, standing behind it, looking out at the vast wilderness below him. His missing arm has been replaced with a spike.

Azog was very much alive and well, and Thorin Oakenshield does not know of his existence until it's too late.

Hunter Orc spoke, cowering. "The Dwarves, Master…we lost them. Ambushed by Elvish filth, we were…"

Azog cut him off. "I don't want excuses. I want the head of the Dwarf King!"

Hunter Orc tried to save his life as the Pale Orc walked towards him. "We were outnumbered, there was nothing we could do. I barely escaped with my life."

"Far better you had paid with it." Azog furiously said as he picked up the scout and threw him to wargs, who than proceed to attack and kill him. "The Dwarf-scum will show themselves soon enough."

An orc that was in the pack step forward, wanting to tell the Pale Orc one bit of good news. "Master, we've found the human woman."

Azog turned to him, sudden causing the orc to flinch. "What?!"

"She travels with Thorin Oakenshield and his dwarves." The Orc hurried to explain himself. "She still travels with her direwolf bitch."

Azog turned to the orc scouts. "Send out word, there is a price on their heads! But the human woman who travels with them is to remain unhurt and untouched."

The orcs set out again on their wargs, to carry out their master's orders and determined not to fail him.

Back in Rivendell, in Rowena's bedchambers, Rowena was tucking Frodo into bed and she was dressed in a thin natural flax linen chemise, which has drawstring in a collar so she could adjust the decollete depth and the straight sleeves give her enough flexibility for her arms, and there is a
tiny eyelet in the shoulder seam, which can be used to lace her biceps or upper part of her sleeves. And on the front part of her chemise there are pleats pinched on their top which emphasize trapezoidal silhouette of her chemise.

She was carrying a brass taper holder in her hand as she covered the fire on the candle with her other hand, protecting the flames from the night. Rowena was blowing out the rest of the candles as Frodo burrowed deeper into her blankets.

Frodo asked as he looked at her. "Can you sing me a song, Rowny?"

"How did you know that I can sing, Frodo?" Rowena asked.

"I heard you singing that one night, cousin." Frodo answered her, smiling at her.

Rowena chewed on her bottom lip, thinking about it before she saw movement and saw Thorin sitting outside of the balcony where he and the company were sleeping in. She smiled immediately, she knew what song she wanted to sing.

She turned to look at her cousin. "Yes, of course. I'll sing for your, Frodo."

Rowena started to hum before she opened her mouth. ~I know there’s someone. Someone. Someone who’s sure to find me soon. After the rain goes.~ Rowena noticed that Frodo was slowly drifting off to sleep. ~There are rainbows I’ll find my rainbow soon. Soon it won’t be Just pretend. Soon a happy ending.~ She noticed from the corner of her eyes that Thorin and the rest of the company was outside on the balcony, listening to her sing. ~Love, can you hear me If you’re near me. Sing your song. Sure and strong. And sooooooon~ At the last verse, Rowena leaned over and kiss Frodo's forehead before she blew out the flame on the candle, casting her bedroom into darkness.
Rowena slowly opened her eyes as the morning sunlight entered her window and laid across her and the sleeping flaunting next to her. She sat up and stretched as she yawned. The human woman tossed the blanket to the side and climbed out of bed. Rowena turned her head when she heard a knock sounded on her door and opened the door to reveal her hobbit father, standing there.

Rowena smiled as she leaned over and kissed his forehead. "Good Morning, Papa. Frodo is still asleep."

"I see." Bilbo said. "Well, I'm going to have a look around. Can you watch him in the meantime?"
"Yes, of course." Rowena said.

She watched her father walk away from her and closed the door. When she turned around and she saw that Frodo was sitting up and yawning, stretching as well.

Rowena walked over to him and stroked his hair. "Good Morning, cousin. Papa has gone to explore and he lifted you in my charge."

Frodo smiled up at her. "Can we go exploring as well, cousin?"

"I don't see why not." Rowena said. "Let's bathe and get dress first."

"Okay!" Frodo said as he climbed out of the bed and hurried into the bathing chamber.

Meanwhile, Bilbo wandered around the Last Homely House, and he entered a room and spotted a statue up a landing. He climbed up the stairs, and approach the statue holding the shards of a sword. He only glances at it, before turning toward the painting on the wall – a Man was battling against a tall, dark armor wearing, helmeted man. Bilbo’s eye goes directly to a gold ring on the black armored man's finger. Bilbo heads outside, hearing laughter and he followed the laughter and chatting, but he was still gazing around him at the beauty of Rivendell. He came to a balcony and looked over it to see Rowena and Frodo playing in a small river that runs through Rivendell, they were splashing together. Bilbo could see Arwen, Estel, Elladan and Elrohir sitting on the rocks near the banks, watching them. As Bilbo stood on a balcony, watching them and Elrond approach him from behind.

"Not with your companions?" Elrond remarks as he came to stand by Bilbo's side.

"Ah, I shan’t be missed", Bilbo replies. "The truth is most of them don’t think I should be on this journey."

"Indeed" Elrond says. "I’ve heard that Hobbits are very resilient."

Bilbo laughs, and then realizes that Elrond isn’t joking. "Really?"

"Mmm. I’ve also heard they’re fond of the comforts of home." Elrond said, looking down at the hobbit.

Bilbo thinks about that for a moment and then confides to Elrond. "And I’ve heard that it’s unwise to seek the counsel of elves, for they will answer both yes and no." At first, Elrond does not seem amused by this as he stared down at Bilbo, but then a soft smile appears on this face, and Bilbo gives an uneasy laugh.

"You are very welcome to stay here, if that is your wish." Bilbo consider Elrond's offer until his attention was drawn towards Rowena's laughter and spotted her twirling Frodo in her arms, causing the flaunting to laugh. He smiled as he watch her. "But I don't want to leave her alone with these dwarves yet I can't have Frodo traveling with us."

"I can understand Frodo," Elrond said. "He's too young to be on this quest and his life can be put in danger."

"And Rowena?" Bilbo asked.

"Rowena is, well I may not like her profession, a mercenary who is famous for her archery and swordsmanship." Elrond answered, looking down at Rowena. "Frodo can stay here with you, but sadly, Rowena will be going on this mission because it is her duty and she never breaks her honor.
when it comes to helping those who need her service."

With that, Elrond turned and walked away, leaving Bilbo to his thoughts.

"The kitchen's under enormous strain, we are almost out of wine." Lindir says as he and Elrond walked alone, just the two of them. "How long do you think they will be with us?"

Elrond responded. "That has yet to be decided."

Elrond suddenly stopped, his attention caught by something in the distance. Lindir followed his gaze and his eyes widen in shock, his expression mirrored that of his master.

The company was bathing in the fountain, rough housing or jumping into the water. Two were out of the fountain, but still just as naked as the rest of their comrades.

Elrond and Lindir looked at each other and sighed.

"OI! Get out of that fountain!" Rowena's voice suddenly appeared and both elves saw her standing next to the fountain and her sudden appearance caused the dwarves to duck under the water or covered themselves with their clothing. She clapped her hands together. "Come on! Don't dally, gentlemen!"

Elrond gestured towards Lindir. "Come, let Rowena handle this."

Both elves moved away and Rowena caught their movement and watched them leave.

She slapped her hand to her forehead and groaned. "I can't believe you fools decided to bathe in the fountain." She held out towels for the dwarves. "Don't take forever, we'll miss breakfast by the way you dwarves are taking so long to get out of the fountain." Rowena looked at Balin. "Where's Thorin?"

Balin answered her as he wrapped himself in a towel. "He took his bathe in the bathing pool."

"And why didn't the rest of you follow his lead and took your bath in the bathing pool?" Rowena asked, handing out a towel to a furiously blushing Ori.

Kíli asked, looking at the fountain in shock. "You mean that's not a bathing pool?"

Fíli looked at his brother. "I thought it was because how big it was."

Rowena slapped the back of Fíli's and Kíli's head. "You damn well know that is a fountain and not a bathing pool. I called it a fountain when I told you to get out of it."

Dwalin snickered. "I knew I liked you for a reason."

Rowena threw a towel to his face. "Dry up and cover yourself up. I'm going blind just looking at you dwarves."

Kíli looked at her. "You're taking this well, though."

Rowena looked at him. "What do you mean?"

He gestured toward their naked bodies. "You're not blushing or covering your eyes at the sight of our naked bodies. So are you a vir-OW!!" Rowena had boxed his ears before he could even finished his sentence, blushing now.
"You finish the sentence and I'll make sure you'll never have children, got it?" Rowena hissed out.

Fíli sighed before he said to his brother. "I think the reason why Rowena is able to handle us being naked is because none of us is her One."

Kíli looked at his brother. "So, if Thorin was here, she'll be a blushing mess right now."

His comment made Nori, Fíli and Bofur snicker while Óin, Glóin, Balin, Dwalin, Dori, Bifur and Bombur to glare at him. His comment made a memory flashed through her mind and it was something that Rowena didn't know that she had a memory of until Kíli had said something about a naked Thorin.

A Fourteen year old Rowena ran towards Thorin's forge and came to a stop in the entrance when she saw that he wasn't in his forge, working his crafts. Rowena looked around in his forge before she ran out and hurried towards the baker, his neighbor.

"Hey, do you know where Thorin?" Rowena asked the baker, an elderly jolly man.

"I think he was heading towards the river to fill up his bucket." the Baker told her as he continued to bake his breads.

Rowena shouted as she snatched one of his honey breads and took off. "Thanks!"

She ran passed the villagers as they walked around the market, talking and laughing among themselves. Rowena waved at the baker's wife as the old woman was talking to the fishermen's wife. The baker's wife waved back at her before she turned back to the conversation she was having with the fishermen's wife.

Rowena followed the dirt path into the forest, where it connected to the forest path. She skip down the path, humming as she went along. Her fingertips brushed along the tips of the leaves on bushes and flower petals that grew along the dirt pathway.

Rowena spotted the river at the end of the pathway and hurried towards it. She stopped at the mouth of pathway and looked around for Thorin, Rowena cocked her head when she spotted the two filled water buckets next to a boulder and moved towards it. She knelt by the buckets until her attention was caught by the sound of splashing, she frowned and wondered if he got a third one and was filling it. Rowena stood up and peered out from behind the boulder, and her jaw dropped open and her eyes widen at the sight before her.

Thorin was there and he was in the water, but he was naked and the water where he stood at reached to his waist. A blush formed on her cheeks as she continued to stare at the dwarf as a dreamy expression crept across her face.

Thorin was made up of only hard muscled lines, his was a body carved by gods of old themselves. His thick and muscular arms, the size of thick branches, and muscular and broad chest. His broad shoulders could every well block out the sun and moon. The well-sculpted muscles on his back, the curves of his biceps, and the flat plane of his stomach. Hard lines of thick muscle. Dark hair is splattered lightly over his chest fading into a trail that was entirely too dangerous to follow.

Rowena covered her mouth and duck behind the boulder when Thorin tossed his hair back, sending water droplets flying over him.

Her heart was beating fast against her rib-cage and her breathing was erratic, her face flushed.
and her woman place was throbbing between her thighs. Rowena chewed on her bottom lip as she squeezed her thighs together, in hopes to ease the throbbing but it did little to help.

Rowena glanced over when she heard splashing coming towards the shore and quickly made her escape, running back into the forest and headed back to the village. Vowing to never speak or think about naked Thorin ever again.

"Why is she blushing like that?" Ori's voice snapped Rowena from her thoughts.

"I've never seen her blush that hard before." Dori commented.

Rowena groaned as she covered her entire face with her hands and turned around, she walked away from them, not wanting answer their questions about the reason why she was blushing.

She thought as she rubbed her face. *Oh, Valar! I can't believe I forgot that! But I wish I didn't remember it because now I'm going to throb for the rest of the day!*

Rowena was able to eat breakfast without embarrassing herself but she was blushing whenever Thorin would speak to her or look at her. But she was proud of herself for actually talking to him normally without sputtering or blabbing like a fool.

But her blushing face didn't go unnoticed. Thorin, Elrond, Lindir, Gandalf, Bilbo, Estel, Arwen, Elladan and Elrohir noticed and wondered about it. And the rest of the company were trying to hide smiles as they were able to figure out what had made Rowena leave them, blushing. But they didn't want to embarrass Rowena any further than she already was.

Rowena was now walking around Rivendell, wanting to have time to herself so that she would be able to compose herself and regain control of her hormones. She rubbed her face as she walked passed a room but stopped and step back. She entered the room and walked towards the stairs. She approached the statue holding the shards of Narsil, which are still sharp till this day. She only glanced at it, before turning and walking towards the painting on the wall

Isildur as he is about to cut the One Ring from Sauron’s hand.

Her eyes were drawn towards the tall, imposing and dark figure of Sauron and stared at the painting until she entered a trance-like state. It was because of her trance that didn't alert Rowena to someone entering the room until she heard Thorin's thick baritone rich voice.

"So that Isildur and Sauron?" Thorin asked as he stared at the painting. "I've heard this story many times from our storyteller back in Erebor."

Rowena muttered as she stared at Sauron. "I wish it was a merely story for me."

"What do you mean?" Thorin asked, looking at her now.

Rowena looked at him before looking back at the painting. "Before the final battle against Sauron, there lived a beautiful and wise mortal woman, a daughter of Man. Her beauty was legendary and her gentle and compassionate nature was well-known. Her name was Sinéad and she was the Queen of the Chrechte, a race of humans who have a very strong and spiritual bond with the direwolves that lived on their lands." She reached out and brushed her fingertips along Sauron's side. "The Dark Lord had fallen madly and truly in love with the mortal Queen and wanted her as his wife. So he began to court her while he burned and slaughtered kingdoms and villagers. Sinéad was aware of this but she did not try to change Sauron, she had believed that there was good in him still and she wanted him to realize this by himself." Rowena glanced at Isildur.
"Isildur's father, the King, caught word that the Dark Lord had fallen in love with a mortal woman and had her marry one of his son's men. Sinéad was also locked away in a tower, where she was kept and it was also revealed that she was pregnant with the man's child. Both the King and Isildur believed that Isolde would be safe, away from Sauron, inside that tower, surrounded by guards."

She glanced over her shoulder at Thorin and smiled, sadly, as she got to the end of her tale. "But they didn't count on the beasts that was around them to be Sauron's spies and they told the Dark Lord. And he flew into a jealous, hateful and hurtful rage. His jealously was directed towards the man who married Sinéad and got her pregnant. His hateful was directed towards the King and Isildur who took his Love from him and his hurt was directed towards Sinéad who did nothing to stop the marriage from happening." Rowena looked back at the painting. "So Sauron cursed his Beloved as she lie in her bed, just moments before giving birth to her daughter. And his curse was this - " She took a deep breath, steeling herself from crying before she began once again. "Your daughter will suffer from the choice you have made when you denied my marriage offer for another man. On your daughter's fourth birthday, the very same year that you will be twenty-four, you will die at Sunset and your daughter will grow up without ever knowing who you are or what you look like. It will be only a faded memory. Your bloodline will no longer be able to carry sons, only one daughter will be born from you. This curse will carry down to your daughter to her daughter and so on. The only way for your descendant to break the curse I have placed on your bloodline, is that if one of them falls in love with me out of true and genuine feelings and of her own willingness. Until than, my curse will follow your descendants forever and your bloodline will be mine forever.'"

Rowena stepped away from the painting and head towards the statue and Narsil. "His curse and One Ring had started to the final battle. But when he was defeated by Isildur, his curse on Sinéad did not break, as many had hoped it would. And her Kingdom was force to watch their gentle and wise Queen die when she was twenty-four years old on her daughter's fourth birthday." Her hands squeezed into fists as she finally spoke the part that she had been dreading to tell Thorin, as she did not know how he would react to it. "His curse passed down from generation to generation. Only daughters were born into the Line of Sinéad. Sons were no longer born into it. From Mother to Daughter, the curse has been passed....until it was pass down from my mother to myself."

Rowena took a even deeper breath and slowly turned to face him. She gently grabbed the thin chain that she wears around her neck and tugged on it, pulling it up. The medallion locket pendant freed itself from the bodice and Rowena held it in the palm of her hands as she knelt before Thorin, holding the medallion to his gaze.

Thorin's eyes widen at the sight of the beautifully crafted green medallion rested on her palms. He knew this necklace. He had seen it around the Warrior Queen, who had welcomed the survivors of Erebor into her Kingdom and allowed them to stay in order to resupply their food and water, and regain their energy. The dwarf King remembered the mortal Queen, who had a three-year-old daughter. Thorin had grown fond of the little girl, who had always honest in her emotions, actions, thoughts and words. Her name was....

"You're Teàrlag Daughter of Morrígan, Queen of Chrechte." Thorin said looking at Rowena, who's eyes widen.

"Who do you know my old name?" Rowena asked.

Thorin touched her hands, folding his fingers against hers so that covered the medallion in her hands. "I met Queen Morrígan, your mother, before. She allowed us to stay in her kingdom when winter was upon as we were traveling through your lands." He reached up and touched her cheek. "I remember a three-year-old girl, her daughter, always by her side. She had welcomed us into her mother's kingdom when her people were wary of us at first but when they saw her playing with
the dwarflings and helping the elderly dwarves, her people also became welcoming of us."

Rowena blinked owlishly at him before she smiled. "I see. So we met before."

"Yes, we met before we met when you were fourteen." Thorin smiled as he slipped his hand behind the back of her neck and grasp it, gently bumped his forehead against hers and kept it there.

"So, you figured out I was your human girl." Rowena said as she rubbed her forehead against his, still keeping hers against his. "When?"

Thorin sighed as he explained. "I saw you bathing at the pool before we encountered the trolls."

"And you saw your courtship bead." Rowena said, blushing.

"You're not mad?" Thorin asked, bewildered by her reaction. "I would have thought that you would have strike me when I told you about it."

Rowena blushed even harder as she nibbled on her bottom lip. "Actually, I have a confession to make." She opened her mouth but she snapped it shut as her blush and she became uncharacteristically shy as she reached up and twirled a strand of her hair around her finger.

A slow smile spread across his face, giving him a roguish appearance and making her heart beat faster. "What's wrong? I thought you had a confession to make, Rowena." He had released his hold on her hands and neck, and he stroked his fingers along her jaw, causing Rowena to shiver.

Thorin was enjoying Rowena's reaction to him and he began to exploit it to the fullest. His fingers reached to her ears, brushing her hair away from her earlobes to reveal the red tips. He smiled as he leaned down and whispered into her ear, his breath brushed against her skin, causing a shiver to erupt through her body. "Your ears are red, why is that?"

Rowena buried her face into his chest and said. "I saw you bathing in the river that one day when you went down to the river to refill your water buckets." She said it in such a rush that Thorin didn't hear her at first but once he understood what she said, a smug smirk appeared on his face.

"So you're fine with me peeping on you because you peep on me first, is that it?" Thorin asked.

"Shut up, it's not funny!" Rowena said into his chest, hating how his warm breath caressing her earlobes and his deep, baritone voice whispering so close to her ear could make her blurt out what she had chicken out. She sighed and asked. "What do we do now, Thorin?"

Thorin stroked her hair, pulling the braid that he had braided into her hair, the very one that was next to her temple, and raised it up to press a chaste kiss to the bead. "I mean to court you now that I have found you and you are of age."

Rowena raised her head up and he kept a hold on her braid. "So you mean to make me your Queen Under the Mountain is that it?"

Thorin smiled at her. "Well, you are a Queen, Rowena. But even if you weren't one, I would have still married you because you're a strong, courageous and compassionate woman." He kissed her forehead. "And I would be honored to have you for a wife and Queen, Rowena."

"So my curse doesn't affect your feelings for me?" Rowena asked as she laid her head back against Thorin's chest. "I love you, Thorin, and I don't want to lose you just because of my accursed fate."

"No, your curse doesn't affect my feelings for you, Rowena." Thorin said as he cupped her face
between his hands and pressed his forehead against hers. "I have loved you before you were old enough to fall in love." He smiled down at her. "I think you were my One when we first met before I was aware that you were my One."

Rowena smiled back at him. "So when I was three-years-old, I was your One, huh?"

Thorin explained to her. "A dwarf's One is an infant or youth not of age, someone they wouldn't have felt The Longing for because they were too young."

"The Longing?" Rowena asked before something sparked in her eyes and she answered her question herself. "Oh! The Longing is probably what you dwarves call The Calling as we, the Chrechte, call the feeling we get when we sense that our One is near by." She stroked his face as she said. "We also can't feel The Pulling when our One is young or an infant." Rowena held onto his tunic as she look down. "Sauron has a bounty on my head, he wants me alive because I am, as of right now, the Last Line of Isolde. And he's never going to stop until I am in his grasp."

Thorin hugged Rowena to him. "I won't lose you because of this curse that Sauron placed on your Line." He cupped the back of her head and held her closer to him as Thorin buried his face into her hair. "I will fight any bounty hunter who comes after you to keep you by my side. I'm never going to let you go." Thorin wrapped his arm even firm around her shoulders, holding her to him. "I'll fight to keep those after you away, I'll kill to keep you out of his hands, and I'll die to keep you by my side."

"And I'll die with you, Thorin." Rowena whispered as she cupped his face. "My life wouldn't be the same without you in my life and I wouldn't be able to go on with my life, knowing that you are no longer here with me."

"Don't die on me just yet, Rowena." Thorin ordered into her ear. "I'm not going to die, not until I reclaimed my home and become King Under the Mountain."

Rowena laughed as she straightened up and held out her hand to him. "I promise but that may be difficult since we have orcs hunting us."

Thorin chuckled as he took her hand. "Don't forget we're going to Erebor to steal from a dragon."

"Oh, silly me!" Rowena commented as she slapped her hand to her forehead. "I completely forgot about picking a fight with fire-breathing lizard who can fly. Where has my mind been on this entire quest? I need to remember such an important detail!"

Thorin threw his head back and laughed at her words, and Rowena joined in, as the pair walked out of the room. And for the first time ever, Rowena did not glance behind her at the painting of Sauron as she walked out of the room with Thorin by her side.

Arwen was waiting patiently for Rowena to leave Thorin to his dwarves and when the human woman walked pass her hiding spot, the elf maiden grabbed her bicep, surprising Rowena, and dragged her away with her.

Rowena frowned at her. "Were you actually waiting for me to leave Thorin so that you can pounce on me like a direwolf on a deer?"

Arwen said as she pulled her along after her. "I want to know what happened that got that smile permanently stuck on your face."

"Oh! That's why my cheeks were hurting." Rowena said as she touched her cheek. "I was
wondering why they were hurting."

"Don't be sarcastic, Renie." Arwen said, smiling at her. "You have to tell me what happened!"

Rowena sighed in defeat. "Alright! Alright! I'll talk."

Arwen led her into a private section of the garden and set her down on the bench there and lean towards her. "Well?"

Rowena sighed before she told Arwen what had happened between her and Thorin. She could tell that her sister by soul was happy for her and Thorin as Rowena continued to tell her about the incident between her and her dwarf.

"And I think now Thorin will be starting his courtship of me." Rowena finished her story. "But I don't know when he's going to do it or how he's going to do it."

Elladan's voice sounded from below them and both women looked over the railing to see Elladan and Elrohir sitting below them. "But doesn't he not like your hobbit father, Renie?"

Elrohir shushed his brother as he rammed his elbow into his side and Estel appeared on the side-railing close to Arwen, saying. "That's going to be a problem once Thorin makes it known that he wants to court you, Renie."

Arwen shoot them a warning a glare, which made her brothers flinch back and Estel held up his hands up in a defeat. But Rowena's good mood had already died and she worried her bottom lip as she thought about that. While she loved the fact that Arwen was doing her best to stop her beloved and her brothers from saying anything more, Rowena also loved the fact that Estel, Elladan and Elrohir brought her back into reality, making her remember that Thorin did not like her father, that he didn't accept her father as a member of his company and that he wouldn't be much help on the quest.

Rowena reached over and patted Arwen's hand, smiling at her. "It's okay, Arwen. I need that healthy dose of realism poured on me." She sighed as she stood up and smiled at Estel, Elladan and Elrohir. "Thank-you, brothers of my heart. I can't find happiness until Thorin learns to accept my father for who he is."

With that, Rowena walked away from them, heading back to her bedchamber.

Arwen turned a glare on her beloved and brothers. "Why did you say that! Rowena was happy for once in her life! True happy! And you two had to ruin it by opening your mouths!"

Elladan and Elrohir flinched back once again but it was Estel who spoke up. "Arwen, she can't possibly find happiness while her Beloved does not like nor accept her father. It will tear them apart." He jumped off the rail and grabbed Arwen's hands in his. "Thorin needs to work out his dislike towards Bilbo in order for him to have a happy life with Rowena, as she would never marry him when he doesn't like her father, nor does he accept him in his company."

Arwen sat down with a sigh of defeat. "I know. Rowena is very loyal to her family, especially to her adopted father."

Estel sat down next to her. "He was the one who adopted Rowena into his life and treated her like his own daughter. He was the first to love a homeless and orphaned little girl and Rowena sees the hobbit as her father and she loves him as such."

"Yeah, Rowena will never find her own happiness when it's right there when her father is suffering." Arwen said as she laid her head against his shoulder.
During the conversation between Rowena and her adopted siblings, Thorin walked into the company's bedchambers and saw that Frodo and Bilbo was not in the room. Balin and Dwalin looked over and immediately walked over to him.

Balin asked. "What happened between you and Rowena?"

Thorin frowned at him. "How did you know I was even with Rowena?"

Dwalin gestured towards Fíli and Kíli. "Your sister-sons saw you with Rowena in a chamber."

"Were they eavesdropping?" Thorin asked as he pinned a disapproval glare at his sister-sons.

"No. They noticed that it was an important conversation between you two and they had walked away." Balin answered, quick to defend the boys. "They didn't hear anything between the two of you."

Thorin sighed before he stepped into the center of the room and gestured for his dwarves to come in. "I have something to tell you all and we need to be understanding and accepting of Rowena's fate."

The mentioning of understanding and accepting Rowena's fate caused all his men to frown, and Thorin knew that the older dwarves saw her as a daughter while the younger ones saw her as a sister. And he knew that they would not like what he had to tell them, what Rowena had relied to him about her cursed fate.

So Thorin told them and he watched as concern, angry not at Rowena but directed at Sauron and his curse, fear and shock washed over their faces as he told them the story of Sinéad and Sauron, and he told them that Rowena is Princess Teàrlag, the daughter of Queen Morrígan.

Balin said after Thorin had finished his tale. "So Rowena is Teàrlag Daughter of Morrígan. I should have seen the resemblance between the lass and the late Queen Morrígan."

Dori frowned as he asked. "But why would she change her name to Rowena from Teàrlag?"

"Could Bilbo named her Rowena when he found her?" Dwalin asked looking at Thorin.

Ori answered before Thorin could. "I think she did it as a remembrance and a symbol."

"What do you mean, Ori?" Glóin asked.

Ori explained himself. "Well, she was Teàrlag when she was the Princess of Chrechte but when the orcs came and killed her mother and her people, and burned her Kingdom to the ground, Teàrlag died when her mother, her people and her Kingdom was destroyed." He continued as he noted the nods of his King and fellow dwarves. "So when Bilbo found her and she began a new life in the Shire, Rowena was born and Rowena is who we now know her as."

Óin muttered. "So that sweet and compassionate little girl we knew is no longer around. It's sad that she had to watch her Kingdom burn."

"She also saw her mother killed in front of her." Thorin mentioned, causing everyone to look at him.

Balin closed his eyes in pain and slowly opened them. "So she lost her innocence after witnessing her mother's death in front of her. Poor Lass."
Bombur commented. "I'm surprise that she's still so sunny and bright, never seen without that smile on her face."

Bifur spoke up finally, his voice filled with pain and awe. "It's probably due to her mother. I remember that Queen Morrígan had always told her that her smile resembled the brightness and radiance of the sun and that like the sun itself, it should always be a light that pierces the darkness and that she should never ever lose that smile no matter what pain life brings her way."

Bofur nodded his head. "Aye, that sounds like Queen Morrígan, bless her soul."

"Queen Morrígan always loved her daughter, so doted so much of her time on the little girl." Nori said. "And now we know why she did. She just didn't have enough time to form a ever-lasting bond with her daughter, like most mothers can."

Fíli spoke, looking at his Uncle. "I don't like this curse that the Dark Lord had placed on the Line of Sinéad, just because she had to marry someone else and have a child from that very same person."

Kíli asked. "Is there a way to break it? Besides her having to accept him and love him."

Thorin shook his head. "No, I don't think Sauron made a way to break it. He wants a Daughter of the Line of Sinéad." Than he added as he looked at his men. "But I'm determined to break this curse, I will not lose her once I've been reunited with her on this quest."

Dwalin looked at him. "You're planning to make her your Queen and wife."

Thorin looked at him, he didn't make it a question, he made it a statement. "I am planning on making her my Queen and wife."

Dwalin clapped him on his back. "She's make fine Queen for us and an even finer wife for you." Than he added as the rest of the dwarves came forward. "Don't worry, when we do take back at the Mountain and if any of our kin tries to give you lip about your choice in bride will have to answer to us."

Balin nodded his head. "Aye. We couldn't ask for a finer Queen and wife for us and for you. She'll bring the sun into all our lives."

Thorin nodded his head, smiling. "I agree."

It was night when Frodo realized that he was lost in Rivendell. The flaunting had wondered away from his uncle and found himself lost in a part of Rivendell that he never been in before, and he was trying his best to find his way back to familiar scenery. But Frodo was getting more and more lost and he decided just to sit in one place and wait for someone to find him.

Frodo yawned after a while and leaned against the stone behind him, falling asleep instantly as soon as his head touched the hard surface behind him.

And it was how Rowena found him ten minutes later. She stopped when she saw a sleeping Frodo sleeping under the statue of a woman. He was sitting on the bench in front of it, with his head resting on the stand that the statue was perched on.

Rowena raised her brass taper holder so that the flame from the candle would cast light on the sleeping flaunting and the statue. She quietly walked to him and looked up at the statue of the
woman. She stared at the statue for a while before she knelt by Frodo's side and gently stroked his hair until the flaunting started to stir to awareness.

Frodo rubbed his eyes as he sat up, spotting his cousin before him. "Hi, cousin."

Rowena ruffled the flaunting's hair. "Hello, Frodo. I see you found my sleeping place."

"Your sleeping place?" Frodo asked, bewildered by her words.

"Yes, my sleeping place." Rowena confirmed and pointed at the stature behind and above him. "I always sleep here whenever I have a nightmare or can't sleep."

Frodo asked as he looked up at the marble woman. "Who is she?"

Rowena paused before she answered him. "My Mother."

"Really?!" Frodo asked as he jumped off the bench and took her hand in excitement. "What was she like, Rowny?"

Rowena laughed as she looked down at her cousin. "She's just beautiful, kind and just, serene and compassionate, strong and bold, courageous and wise."

Frodo asked her as he looked up at her. "Where is she? Do you see her all the time?"

"No," Rowena said as she laid her hand on top of his head. "She's dead. She died on my fourth birthday."

Frodo flinched and looked up at her. "I'm sorry, Rowny, I didn't know."

Rowena smiled down at him and held out her hand to him. "It's okay, Frodo. Of course, you didn't know."

"So we're alike, huh?" Frodo asked and he explained himself when he noted her frown. "Both my parents died in an accident."

"Ah. That would explain why you were staying with Papa than." Rowena said and she picked up Frodo, kissing his cheek. "Yes, we're very much alive." She turned and walked away. "Come, it's time for you to get some sleep."

Frodo waved at the statue, calling out. "Good-night, Rowena's mama!"

Rowena stopped and looked back at her mother. "Good-night, Mother."

She turned and walked away, carrying Frodo in her arms, as they made their way back to her bedchambers.

During this, the dwarves were settling in for the night and they were also cooking their own food that they have brought with them on the quest. Bofur is cooking a sausage for himself and when he brings it up to his nose to sniff, he hears creaking. He looked up to see Bombur sitting on a table and it was the table that was creaking due to his massive weight. Bofur looked at the sausage before taking it off the fork.

Bofur called to his brother as he threw his sausage at him. "Bombur!"

Bombur catches the sausage and he looks down as the table underneath him breaks and crashes,
making all the dwarves laugh. Outside their bedchambers, Bilbo was walking alone. He walked up the stairs and was still looking around Rivendell. When he came to the landing, he hears voices and looks across the way to see Gandalf and Elrond walking and talking.

"Of course I was going to tell you." Gandalf was saying. "I was waiting for this very chance. And really, I – I think you can trust that I know what I am doing."

"Do you?" Elrond replies, looking at the gray wizard. "That dragon has slept for sixty years. What will happen if your plan should fail? If you wake that beast…"

Gandalf cuts him off. "But if we succeed! What if the dwarves take back the mountain, then our defenses in the east will be strengthened."

Elrond said. "It’s a dangerous move, Gandalf."

As Bilbo listens to them, he turns to see that Thorin is standing behind him, listening to the conservation between Gandalf and Elrond. Rowena, at this point, had came to stand above her father and Beloved and was listening to them as well, Frodo had fallen asleep during their walk.

Gandalf said. "It is also dangerous to do nothing! Oh, come – the throne of Erebor is Thorin’s birthright! What is it you fear?"

Elrond commented, stopping to look at Gandalf. "Have you forgotten, a strain of madness runs deep in that family. His grandfather lost his mind. His father succumbed to the same sickness." As he was saying this, Bilbo had turned back to look at them at this point and Thorin turned away, his worry about this same fate that his grandfather had fallen into showed on his face as he listened. "Can you swear Thorin Oakenshield will not also fall? Gandalf, these decisions to not rest with us alone. It is not up to you or me to redraw the map of Middle-earth."

As they started to walk once again, Thorin looked up and spotted Rowena standing there, watching them leave. She must have felt his eyes on her as she looked down at him and met his stare. Rowena continued to stare at him before she lowered her eyes and turned away, walking away. Thorin watched her leave and looked away, believing that he had lost his One to this fate that could fall on him.

Gandalf said as he and Elrond walked up the steps to the balcony. "With or without our help, these dwarves will march on the mountain. They’re determined to reclaim their homeland. I do not believe Thorin Oakenshield feels that he’s answerable to anyone. Nor for that matter am I."

Elrond commented, turning to face him. "But it’s not me you must answer to." He look towards the balcony and Gandalf followed his eyes to see Galadriel standing there. She had turned to face them.

Gandalf said in awe and shock. "Lady Galadriel."

Galadriel responded in her soft voice. "Mithrandir."

"It has been a long time." Gandalf said before he bowed to her. "Age may have changed me, but not so the lady of Lorien."

Galadriel smiles at the flattery before asking him. "How has my Winë been? I’ve not seen her since she had lift here."

"She’s been well. Rowena still the same, also causing mischief and laughter where she goes." Gandalf answered her before looking at Elrond, bringing them back to the topic at hand. "But I
had no idea Lord Elrond had sent for you."

Gandalf closed his eyes when he heard the Saruman’s voice behind him. "He didn’t. I did."

Gandalf turns and sees Saruman. He bowed to him. "Saruman."

Saruman looked at him with clear disapproval and amusement in his eyes. "You’ve been busy of late, my friend."

Meanwhile, Rowena had laid Frodo down on her bed and covered him with the blankets when she spotted movement below in the courtyard. She walked towards the window and peered down, leaning out the window. She spotted Thorin walking across the courtyard, he wasn’t heading to the bedchambers that he shared with his company.

Concerned for his behavior, Rowena grabbed her scrawl and wrapped it around her shoulders, grabbing her taper holder, lighting it as she walked out of her bedchambers in her night chemise and walked down the stairs. She followed, silently, after Thorin, curious to where he was going at this time of night.

Thorin found himself standing before the marble statue of Queen Morrigan. He had taken to walk around Rivendell in order to think about what he had overheard Gandalf and Elrond discussing and he hadn’t been paying attention to where he was going, lost in his thought. It was only catching the white from the corner of his eyes did Thorin finally became aware of the unfamiliar scenery around him and it was than as he looked towards the white that he noticed that he was looking at the beautifully marble crafted statue of Queen Morrigan.

He walked up to the statue and stared up at her, the dwarf King was wondering why there was a statue of her here in a private and secret section of one of Rivendell’s many gardens. But it looked like the statue was well-kept, cleared from the overgrown vines that crept up across other statues and he began to wonder who keeps this statue cleared of vines.

"Ada keeps vines from overgrowing on my mother’s statue." Rowena’s voice from sounding behind him and Thorin turned to see her standing behind him, looking at him. "She has a place of honor in his garden and she was known as Elf-Friend due to her friendly and open-hearted nature."

She stared at the statue for a period of time before she looked down at Thorin and asked. "What's wrong, Thorin?"

"Nothing is wrong." Thorin told her, sitting down at the bench before the statue.

"Liar." Rowena said, staring at him with her arms crossed. "You're worried that you might follow in your grandfather's footsteps and fall into the madness just like he did and you're also worried that you'd lose me when you noticed that I heard what Elrond said." At his shock expression, Rowena laughed and sat down next to him. "I'm very observant of people around me, but I'm better at observing those I love and care for." She became serious and Thorin saw the concern shining in her eyes. "Now tell me the truth. What's worries my King and Beloved."

Thorin spoke, standing and moving away from her, not looking at her. "When my grandfather was falling into the madness of the gold around him, he was withdrawing even more of late. He barely appeared in Court. Much less beyond. That he prefers the company of gold and jewels to his living kin worries me to no end and it shames me to admit, with his blood flowing through my veins." He looked at Rowena than. "I fear that his compulsions will be mine to inherit."
Rowena was quiet after he revealed what had happened to his grandfather and what he was most afraid of. Than she spoke, staring at him. "Perhaps it is your fate as it is my fate to die on my daughter's fourth birthday. Perhaps it is not your fate as it is not my fate to fall for Sauron." Than she smiled, a mischievous light shone in her eyes and smile, gracing her voice as well. "But this I do know. The future is such a greedy mistress."

Thorin looked at her, confused at her words and sudden mischievous aura. "Eh?"

Rowena stood up and walked towards him, her hand outstretched as she moved towards him, gracefully and elegantly like an elf maiden. "She hoards your smile from gracing the present with its brilliance." She touched his cheek and stroked it before cupping it.

Thorin smiled as he rubbed his cheek into the warmth and softness of her touch, kissing it and grasping her hand in his. "You silver-tongued vixen."

"Ah. There it is." Rowena said, smiling as she stepped closer to him. "Even brighter than all the stars, Moon and Sun in the sky." She continued as she raised her free hand up and touched his braid. "Why vex yourself with what that has yet to be?" Thorin stared at her as she spoke softly to him. "The future will reveal itself in time, for good or ill, either which you won't have to face alone." Thorin rubbed his cheek against her palm, scraping his beard against her skin, her fingers twitch slightly at the coarseness of his beard against her soft flesh. "Thorin, you are not your Grandfather and your father did not fall into madness, he was grieving for the lost of his own son. So do not listen to what Ada said about your father, he is wrong in that regard."

Thorin smiled at her. "I thought you would never say that your father was wrong in something, Amrâlimê."

Rowena smiled at him. "Because he doesn't know my heart nor does he know your heart." She frowned and asked. "What does Amrâlimê mean?"

"It means My Love in Khuzdûl." Thorin answered her.

"Oh? And who's the silver-tongued one now?" Rowena asked, with a impish smile on her lips. "Certainly not I. I simply commented that I hoard your smiles from gracing the present with its brilliance."

"Shouldn't that be your smile, Amrâlimê?" Thorin asked, looking at her. "Your smile can rival the brilliance and beauty of both the Sun and Arkenstone."

Rowena blushed before she leaned over and gently bumped her forehead against hers. "Now you're really becoming a silver-tongued devil." She smiled at him as her eyes were closed. "Really, what am I going to do with you?"

Thorin said with all seriousness. "Love me?"

Rowena opened her eyes and stared at him before she mumbled. "Forever and with all my heart."

Thorin kissed her palm again, this time long and lingering, and again higher, on the bend of her wrist, his beard a rough silk rasp, breath warm against her skin. Rowena arched her hand without a thought, as if to offer him the tender skin at her pulse, and shivered, a tiny sound escaping her lips. He stood immediately, hovering protectively over her.

"You are cold."

Rowena, dazed, thought about it and shook her head slowly. "No."
Something in his face dimmed. "I have frightened you." He shifted to step back and Rowena reached for him, her hand tangling briefly in the fall of hair at his shoulder as she reached up once again to cup his cheek.

"No." she whispered, watching his eyes slip closed at her touch. "Well, yes, this is all completely terrifying, but no, Thorin."

The moment she said his name, he inhaled sharply, leaned his cheek into her hand and made a heart-melting sound. Rowena shivered again, a flash of heat warming her from head to toe. Thorin opened his eyes slowly and looked down at her. "You still shiver."

"Mm." she agreed absently.

He stood there, eyes intent on hers, and drew one hand up her arm, lightly, pushing the sleeve up as far as it would go, then let his hand drift to her shoulder. His thumb caressed one wing of her collarbone, gentle and utterly maddening. "And yet again." he murmured, his voice husking lower. Rowena, still shaking, nodded somewhat ruefully.

"You stand here." he whispered, voice deeper still. "dressed in your chemise." One hand caressed her head, "hair still damp." The other a warm curve at her waist, "only wearing a scrawl." He shifted closer. "in the ever-lowering sunlight." He lifted the hair tangling at her neck and bared one ear, his finger tracing over the point. "Shivering, and insist you are neither cold nor afraid."

Rowena swallowed, smiling at him. "I thought we covered that already."

"Does this mean, then, Amrálimè." He whispered, bending low, his mouth brushing her ear. "That you tremble. For me."

"Well, yes." she breathed. "Since you're the only one here and touching me."

He pressed his forehead to hers, and suddenly, she realized, the hands holding her were also trembling. "You consent to my courtship?" he rasped, nearly breathless.

Something incredibly fierce and tender seemed break in Rowena's chest, and her eyes blurred with incredulous, joyful tears. "Yes, you majestic idiot. I thought we also had this covered as well."

A dry bark of laughter and he pulled her into the circle of his arms. "Majestic idiot?"

"It's your idea to court me despite knowing how sassy I can be."

"And beautiful and rare and braver than I ever expected."

"Not to mention that bit about seeing me naked." Rowena commented before adding with a blush. "Though I did see you naked first and I couldn't sleep for a while due to the massive discomfort I was in thanks to that."

Hissing through his teeth, he pressed her closer into the curve of his body, one hand cradling the back of her head tenderly, the other low and tight at the base of her spine. She swayed against him, trembling anew as his lips grazed the side of her neck.

"If I kiss you now," he groaned, "I may not be able to stop."

She laughed and shook and beat her fist against his shoulder. "I will march into that forest for a damnable branch," she promised, her voice wavering, "and I will hit you with it if you don't."

He pulled back and looked at her, gravely joyful, more beautiful than the evening stars beginning to shine above them. "Rowena. Amrálimè."
"Yes," she replied, reaching up, and pulled his mouth to hers.

Thorin's mouth was warm, and he kissed her so carefully; softly kissing her upper lip, sucking at her lower, turning his head as if to find just the right angle before slowly pressing a kiss at the corner of her mouth that just, it was just...a hinting bit of tongue, an inquiry that was just so.... That tender, fierce feeling within Rowena surged again, and she tangled her hands in his hair and tugged, needing him closer. He inhaled sharply against her mouth and this time kissed her deeply, possessively, until she was whimpering and clutching at him for balance. They were pressed so close she could feel Thorin harden against her belly and she moaned, yearning to be closer and vaguely shocked by her boldness. She could not tell which of them trembled more.

When they pulled away from each other Rowena mumbled, dazed. "Wow. It must be your age but that was a very good kiss. I've never been kiss like that before."

"How many men have kissed you?" Thorin asked, with a hint of jealous and possessive angry in his voice.

"Not many and it also wasn't welcomed or willing." Rowena spoke, touching her fingertips to his lips. "I never wanted their kiss, I've always wanted yours and I meant to save my first kiss for you but it was taken by force."

He brushed her cheek with his thumb, lingering beside the corner of her mouth where he'd placed that lovely kiss. "So no one ever kissed you like that? Like me?"

She shook her head. "No, never. I punched them before they deepen the kiss."

Thorin smiled before he pulled her down slightly to kiss her forehead, lovingly. "That's my girl."

Rowena looked around, saying. "We need to get back before someone noticed I'm gone and your two nannies come looking for you."

"I don't think Dwalin would like being called a nanny." Thorin said with a laugh.

"Too bad. With the way he acts, he reminds me of a nanny." Rowena commented as she took Thorin's hand in hers and led him away from her mother's statue.

Meanwhile back to Gandalf and the White Council,

Saruman said as he and Gandalf seated across each other while Galadriel and Elrond were standing. "Tell me, Gandalf, did you think these plans and schemes of yours would go unnoticed?"

Gandalf said as he looked at him. "Unnoticed? No, I…I'm simply doing what I feel to be right."

Galadriel commented. "The dragon has long been on your mind."

Gandalf looked at her. "It is true, my Lady. Smaug owes allegiance to no one. But if he should side with the enemy, the dragon could be used to terrible effect."

Saruman asked, before he added. "What enemy? Gandalf, the enemy is defeated. Sauron is vanquished. He can never regain his full strength."

"Does it not worry you that the last of the dwarf rings should simply vanish, along with its bearer? Of the 7 dwarf rings, 4 were consumed by dragons, 2 were taken by Sauron before he fell in
Mordor. The fate of the last dwarf ring remains unknown. The ring that was borne by Thrain," Gandalf replies. "And Rowena has been plagued by nightmares more than she had been before."

Galadriel looked at him, concern now for Rowena. "Nightmares? What nightmares have been keeping my little dreamer from her dreams and sleep?"

Gandalf sighed. "She has not told me about them. They keep her tongue to herself."

Elrond said, looking at Galadriel. "She's afraid of them. She's never afraid."

"Without the Ring of Power, the 7 are of no value to the enemy! To control the other rings, he needs the One Ring, and that ring was lost long, long ago. It was swept out to see by the waters of the Anduin," Saruman stated, frowning at him. "And Rowena doesn't have to tell you every little nightmare that she has. She is not a Seer, she probably remembers her mother's death. Nothing more."

But Gandalf knew that it was not her mother's death that jolts her to sudden awakens, screaming. It had something to Sauron but he did not have proof of that as Rowena never speaks of her nightmares to him.

Elrond commented. "Anyway, Gandalf, for four hundred years we have lived in peace. A hard won watchful peace."

"Are we? Are we at peace?" Gandalf asked before he continued on. "Trolls have come down from the mountains, they are raiding villages, destroying farms. Orcs have attacked us on the road."

Elrond sighed. "Hardly a prelude to war."

"Always you must meddle." Saruman said. "Looking for trouble where none exists!"

Galadriel finally spoke up again. "Let him speak."

Gandalf nodded his respect towards Galadriel. "There is something at work beyond the evil of Smaug, something far more powerful. We can remain blind to it, but it will not be ignoring us, that I can promise you. A sickness hides over the Greenwood. The woodsmen who live there now call it Mirkwook, and…uh, they s…they say…" He trailed off uncomfortably.

Saruman said, looking at him. "Well, don't stop now, tell us what the woodsmen say?"

Gandalf continued. "They speak of a Necromancer, living in Dol Guldur, a sorcerer who can summon the dead."

Saruman commented, barely fighting back a snort. "That's absurd. No such power exists in this world. This Necromancer is nothing more than a mortal man. A conjurer dabbling in black magic."

Gandalf mentioned. "And so I thought too. But Radagast has seen…"

Saruman interrupted, his displeasure at the mere mention of the brown wizard was noticed. "Radagast? Do not speak to me of Radagast the Brown. He's a foolish fellow."

Gandalf agreeing with Saruman. "Well, he's odd, I grant you. He lives a solitary life."

Saruman shook his head in disagreement. "It's not that. It's his excessive consumption of mushrooms. They've addled his brain, and yellowed his teeth. I warned him. It is unbefitting one
of the Istari wandering the wood…"

Galadriel telepathic to Gandalf as Saruman is talking away to Gandalf. 'You carry something. It came to you from Radagast, he found it in Dol Guldur.'

Gandalf sent back. 'Yes.'

Galadriel stood behind him. 'Show me.'

After a brief hesitance, Gandalf brings out the sword that Radagast gave him. It was still wrapped in cloth, for Rowena's protection.

Elrond asked, coming to stand next to him. "What is that?"

Galadriel told him as he went to unwrap the item. "A relic of Mordor"

Elrond only stopped briefly before he unveils the sword.

Elrond muttered, staring at the sword in shock. "A Morgul blade."

Galadriel said, look at the sword. "Made for the witch-king of Angmar, and buried with him. When Angmar fell, the men of the North took his body, and all that he possessed and sealed it within the high fells of Rhudaur." She looked at Gandalf. "Deep within the rock they buried him, in a tomb so dark it would never come to light."

Elrond looked at her. "This is not possible. A powerful spell lies upon those tombs, they cannot be opened."

Saruman asked. "What proof do we have this weapon came from Angmar’s grave?"

Gandalf sighed before admitting. "I have none."

Saruman commented, looking at him. "Because there is none. Let us examine what we know. A single orc pack has dared to cross the Bruinen. A dagger from a by-gone age has been found. And a human sorcerer who calls himself the Necromancer, has taken up residence in a ruined fortress. It’s not so very much, after all. The question of this dwarvish company however, troubles me deeply. I’m not convinced, Gandalf. I do not feel I can condone such a quest. If they’d come to me, I might have spare them this disappointment. I will not pretend to understand your reasons for raising their hopes…"

As Saruman continues to talk, Galadriel speaks to Gandalf again through his mind.

Galadriel said. 'They are leaving.'

Gandalf looked at her. 'Yes.'

Galadriel looked at him, smiling. 'You knew.'

Gandalf gives her a knowing look. 'Rowena isn't the only one who can be sneaky. I've taught her that, she learned it from me.'

Saruman continued on, not knowing about the telepathic conservation between Gandalf and Galadriel. "I’m afraid there’s nothing else for it."

Just then they heard footsteps coming and looked over to see Lindir walking towards them, interrupting their meeting.
Lindir said as he looked at his Lord. "My Lord Elrond. The dwarves, they’ve gone.

The dwarves were leaving Rivendell just as the sun rises to continue on their journey. Rowena was holding onto Frodo, who was hiding on Imogen's back. Ophelia was perched in front of him. "Be on your guard, we’re about to step over the Edge of the Wild." Thorin said as he looked at Balin and motioned him before him. "Balin, you know these paths, lead on."

Balin nodded as he moved to stand before his King. "Aye."

When the dwarves continue on, Bilbo stopped and looks back at Rivendell.

Thorin called to him when he noticed that Bilbo had stopped. "Master Baggins, I suggest you keep up."

Bilbo turned and joined the dwarves as they head off. Rowena looks at her father before looking back at Rivendell as well. She heard Imogen bark and hurried to walk alongside her direwolf.

Rowena touched Frodo's hair as she caught up to him and the direwolf. "You could have stayed, Frodo."

Frodo looked at her. "But I want to help you, Rowny! Please! Let me stay and help!"

Rowena chuckled as she ruffled his hair. "Alright, but I expect you to listen to every word I say without questioning them, got it?"

"Yeah! I promise!" Frodo shouted, happy to come along.

Rowena called out to Fíli and Kíli. "That means my hands will be full with making sure my cousin is safe and not getting into mischief so I won't be able to keep you two in line."

Elladan's voice came from behind her, startling a yelp out of Rowena. "Good thing you have us coming with you. We could help keeping the flaunting safe."

Rowena spun around to see both he and Elrohir walking behind her. "What the heck are you two doing here?"

Elrohir answered her, smiling. "Arwen saw you sneaking out and told us to go with you and keep you safe."

Elladan commented, smiling at her. "Arwen saw you sneaking out and told us to go with you and keep you safe."

"I'm twenty-one years old!" Rowena called out, running her fingers through her hair in frustrating. "When is she going to stop treating me like a little child!?"

Elladan commented, smiling at her. "When you stop acting like one and start acting your age."

Rowena pinned at glare at him. "That's rich coming from you." She sighed, staring at them. "No matter what I say, you two aren't going back are you?"

The twin shook their heads, smiling at her and Rowena sighed again as she rubbed her forehead. "Great, Thorin is going to throw a royal hissy fit when he learns of this." She called out to Thorin. "*Melamin!* We have two trouble-makers coming us and I want it to go on record that it wasn't my idea this time!"

Thorin shouted over his shoulder without looking back at her. "Who is it?"
"Elladan and Elrohir!" Rowena shouted back.

"Oh, great!" Thorin muttered. "This quest got even more irritating with two more trouble-makers with us."

Rowena said to Fíli and Kíli. "You hear that, you two? Your uncle find you two irritating."

"I think he was referring to you as well, Rowena." Fíli told her.

"He doesn't find me irritating, he finds me charming." Rowena said, smiling.

Kíli snorted in disbelief but Thorin spoke up. "She's right. She's simply too charming for me to find irritating."

Elrohir said as Rowena stick her tongue out at Kíli. "I think that saying that Love is blind is true than."

Rowena slammed her foot into his butt, knocking him down on the ground. It ungraceful sprawling on the ground caused all the dwarves and Elladan to laugh at him.

Back in Rivendell, Gandalf meets with Galadriel privately.

Galadriel said, looking at him as they faced each other. "You will follow them."

Gandalf confirmed her statement. "Yes."

Galadriel commented. "You are right to help Thorin Oakenshield. But I fear this quest has set in motion forces we do not yet understand. The riddle of the Morgul blade must be answered. Something moves in the shadows, unseen, hidden from our side, it will not show itself…not yet. But every day it grows in strength. You must be careful." She looked away before looking back at him. "And please watch over Rowena, I fear for her during this mission. She may be involved with the Shadows."

Gandalf promising her. "Yes."

Gandalf turned and starts to walk away.

Galadriel called out to him as he walked down the stairs. "Mithrandir."

Gandalf turns to look at Galadriel, stopping in his walk.

Galadriel asked. "Why the Halfling?"

Gandalf looked away before looking up at her. "I do not know. Saruman believes that it is only a great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found." He turned away from her as he continued. "I've found it is the small things, everyday deeds of ordinary folk, that keep the darkness at bay. Simple acts of kindness and love. Why Bilbo Baggins? Perhaps it is because I'm afraid and he gives me courage." He smiled than. "He reminds me of Rowena in that regard. I believe that is where she gets it from.

Galadriel said as she takes hold of Gandalf’s hands. "Do not be afraid, Mithrandir. You are not alone."

Galadriel speaks again, but this time in Elvish. "If you should ever need my help, I will come."
Gandalf looks down and sees Galadriel gently taking her hands away. But when he looks up once again, he sees that Galadriel is gone and he is alone.

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