

Aftermath
by Bavand

(Fic 4- Picks up where Thranduil's last scene left off and continues on from there.¹ Thranduil & the gang.)

"With every victory, this Evil will grow. If your father has his way, we will do nothing. We will hide within our walls, live our lives away from the Light and let darkness descend. Are we not part of this world? Tell me, mellon, when did we let evil become stronger than us?" (Tauriel to Legolas)²

Part 1 of 3
"Between Allies"

"Why does it hurt so much?" Tauriel asked in anguish.

"Because it was real."

She looked up at him and for the first time saw compassionate sympathy in his icy gray eyes instead of cold superiority. It gave weight to the truth of his words.

Thranduil watched as Tauriel kissed the lifeless lips of the dwarf and held his hand to her heart.³

He marveled at how easily she spoke her heart to him, he who had banished her and threatened to kill her at the point of his sword. It revealed an innocence of Light worth preserving, almost like a child seeking answers and comfort from any adult who passed by.

He also realized she had been true to her feelings for the dwarf all along even though it broke his son's heart. He wished he had the power to take away the pain from her, his son as well as his own, but all he could do was protect them by keeping the gates shut against the world's evil. And in that, he now saw, he had been wrong.

"Come."

Thranduil was not one to repeat himself or speak of his intentions. His commands were never questioned—they were simply and promptly obeyed—and he tolerated nothing less. Only the re-awakened empathy he felt for her loss stilled his impatience. Then he remembered he had banished her from his kingdom for defying his orders not to leave the realm.⁴

"There is nothing more for us here."

She nodded. Gently, she laid the dwarf's hand across his chest, making sure the fingers stayed closed around the rune stone. She got up, squared her shoulders, and bowed her head in obedience, ready to follow him as she always had.

They left Ravenhill without looking back.

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Feren was waiting for him with the army in formation, ready to go home. The surviving, battle-ready warriors formed a front and rear guard, protecting the wounded as well as the wagons laden with the dead in between.

His royal saddled had been retrieved from his fallen elk and placed on a stallion, but Feren was not holding the reins, it was Bard.

Beside the bowman was an older bedraggled, battle-weary man who had come into his own with bravery and a measure of some leadership. He was holding a crate with two dusty bottles of wine stacked in it.

Thranduil knew exactly what the crate held and wondered what they were doing with it before shifted his attention to Feren coming forward to meet him. "Have you gathered up all our fallen from this foul land?"

"Yes, my Lord King," Feren nodded.

"And that dwarvish weapon—the "twirley-whirlies"—that disseminated our arrows?"⁵

"Several of them, Sire."

"Good." Thranduil looked over the legion of his army with pride for they had followed him into battle without question regardless of the outcome. "Do not delay them any longer."

Feren bowed his head then stepped aside so that the Elvenking could pass by. He blew his horn with the signal to move out.

The Woodland Realm Army began their march home.

Tauriel was going to join the formation with her guardsmen, but a subtle quick flick of Thranduil's fingers stopped her.

"My Lord Thranduil," Bard greeted with a smile of friendship as Thranduil approached them, but the shadow of sadness and loss was not easily hidden. "We were hoping to see you again before you departed."

"Do you require further aid?" Thranduil asked returning the smile before showing concern.

Bard shook his head. "No, we can take care of our own now. The new King Under the Mountain is fair and is honoring the word of Thorin. There is more than enough gold for all of us to rebuild Dale and Lake-town."

"Good, but do not hesitate to send for help should the need ever arise again." In one fleeting moment, Thranduil wondered if the original purchase of the white gems and necklace would be honored as well... no, there was no point in possessing them now.⁶ It was time to let go of the past and look to the future of Middle-earth.

He glanced at the crate curiously as a prompt to present it. He was very familiar with the seals on the bottles and was impressed.

Bard spoke up. "Percy, here, found these old bottles in a cellar. Please take them as a token of our gratitude in coming to our aid. It is not much, but we do hope it graces your table and you will enjoy them."

"That is not necessary, Bowman." Thranduil said waving it off politely. "We have formed an alliance and that is enough."

"Then please accept them as a parting gift of goodwill between allies."

Thranduil smiled and inclined his head with a nod, waiting.

"Percy?" Bard nudged the Lake-man who stepped forward and proudly presented the crate to the Elvenking.

Thranduil took out one of the dusty, dirty bottles and held it up admiringly. It was indeed from the great vineyards of Dorvinion⁷. He glanced at the Lake-men, wondering if they knew how a rare vintage it was and how it happened to be one of his favorites.

"I accept this goodwill with pleasure," he said with a truly sincere smile. "But such a gift is best enjoyed when it is shared in the company of friends and allies. I will take it only with the understanding that you will come visit the Woodland Realm for a great feast."

"Thank you, my Lord." Bard did not show how surprised he was at the invitation. Everyone knew the Elvenking's reputation for keeping to himself and his intolerance for anyone that dared to venture into Mirkwood. Perhaps the rumors were true, the battle had changed the him for the better?

Thranduil bowed his head first to Bard, then to Percy in a gesture of thanks. He handed the bottle to an attendant who whisked the crate away for travel.

Obviously unsure of the customs, Percy bobbed his head like-wise before heading back to the massive amount of clean-up work and loss that still waited him.

Thranduil mounted the horse. A mere glance and a subtle lifting of his chin to his left where he knew Tauriel was standing told Feren she was to ride home as well.

Tauriel did not suppress her surprise for the Elvenking to show her such favor. But she could not help standing on her toes to look over the legion of warriors passing by. She had to make sure all of the wounded had some form of transport before mounting the extra horse.

Gazing down at the Bowman, Thranduil made a suggestion. "You showed much wisdom and fortitude in leadership, Bard the Dragon-slayer. You should consider governing your people."

"I..." He started and stopped, shaking his head ruefully before looking up at the Elvenking in earnest. "Even so, I will ensure that barrels and barges of trade will once again fill the river between our people."

This delighted Thranduil who had been wondering how to broach the subject. He nodded in agreement. "What of the Halfling?"

"Gandalf is escorting him back to the Shire."

"Ah, yes, of course. The Halfling showed much courage and resourcefulness beyond measure. I had hoped they would do us the honor of giving them rest and readying them for the journey." Thranduil said. He had also wanted to discover how the Hobbit had been able to sneak about the palace unseen and free the dwarves.⁸

"I hope he knows he will always be welcome in the Woodland Realm, as are you and all your people."

Bard smiled and nodded his head. "Thank you, my Lord, I will let them know." He handed the reins up to the Sindar Elf and stepped back so that he could move out. "Farewell, King Thranduil."

But Thranduil did not move and a cloud darkened his face. "Bowman," he said gravely, "do not think all is well and be lulled into complacency. We may have defeated the Orcs—this time—but Gandalf was right. This is but the beginning of the Evil that is growing and gathering strength. You must prepare yourselves for the coming Darkness we have yet to see."

Bard nodded gravely, but the fact that Thranduil had just admitted he had been wrong by acknowledging the wizard's counsel was not lost on him.

Thranduil tightened his grip on the reins of his horse, smiled and bowed his head in farewell.

The Elvenking joined the march in the middle so he could assess the wounded and the fallen before making his way up to the front of the line. He was appalled at the number of casualties and how many warriors he had lost...

"You would go to war over a handful of gems?" (Bard)⁹

He rarely regretted his actions, but too much had been said and done he could not ignore. More importantly, she could not be ignored—her words and actions needed to be addressed...

"You think your life is worth more than theirs when there is no love in it? There. Is. No. Love. In. You."
(Tauriel)^{*10}

"If this is love, I do not want it. Take it from me. Please...!" (Tauriel)^{*11}

And Legolas...

"I... can not go back." (Legolas to Thranduil)
"Where will you go?"^{*12}

He longed for the peace of this private quarters where he could meditate and rest, but he was patient, they would be home in due time. However, he found his thoughts would not wait...

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Appendix D

*1. & *3.= B5A-43, "The Sorrow of Elves".

*2 & *4.= DOS-24, "It is Our Fight".

*5.= B5A-23, "Dain Ironfoot"—where he dared to call Thrandy a "pointy-eared princess"!

*6.= AUJ-1, "Prologue: The Fall of Erebor".

*7.= The Hobbit chp 9, "Barrels out of Bond"—a fun reference from the book.

*8.= DOS-13, "King and Captain"

*9.= B5A-14, "The Elvenking's Aid"

*10.= B5A-37, "Blood of the Eldar".

*11. & *12.= B5A-43, "The Sorrow of Elves".

[No Dorvinion wine bottles, the royal saddle or Percy were harmed during the production of Part 1.]

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Part 2 of 3
"Reflections"

The Elvenking was not given to reflection and rarely regretted his actions, yet he could not silence the impressions intruding on his mind as they headed home. They came with the clarity of eyes opening again to the world that had long been closed behind gates of wood and stone.

The march was slow for the sake of the wounded and there was little else to do but think in the hush of the battle-worn army. And so the pictures of the past few days came and grew like the shadows on the road...

*"I... can not go back." (Legolas to Thranduil)*¹*

*"I can bring her back." (Legolas to Thranduil)
"You have two days."*²*

*"Legolas said you fought well today." He returned her smile. "He has grown very fond of you."
Tauriel was shocked at the revelation. "...I assure you, my Lord, Legolas thinks of me as no more than a captain of the guard..."*³*

Then he remembered her first detail as captain of the guard a mere 600 years ago. *"How far did they travel?"*

"We tracked them as far as the Great Oak Clearing," Tauriel answered proudly.

"And you killed them?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"You killed them all? You did not think to keep one of them alive?"

"It was dark and we were outnumbered."

The pride was gone and his fingers curled as he cringed from the weak attempt to defend her actions. She gulped and blanched, wondering what she had done wrong.

*"I don't care if you are fighting alone and blind! I do not accept incompetence from the captain of my guard." He paused, seeing abilities in her that she was not yet aware of and did not want crush her spirits or potential. He dropped his voice to a wintery whisper. "You have skill and cunning. You could go far."*⁴*

She stared at him in wide-eyed wonder, then lifted her chin proudly, meeting his eyes with the unwaveringly clear confidence of the young determined to succeed.

He relaxed his fingers as he smiled at her retreating back, pleased he had put her on the right path.

"...Legolas thinks of me as no more than a captain of the guard."

"Perhaps he did once. Now, I am not so sure."

"I do not think you would allow your son to pledge himself to a lowly Silvan Elf." Tauriel replied respectfully with true deference to his authority and her status.

*"No. You are right, I would not. Still, he cares about you. Do not give him hope where there is none."
She gulped and swallowed hard at the pronouncement.*⁵*

"Where will you go?"

*"I will go with you." (Legolas to Tauriel)*⁶*

*"If you harm her, you will have to kill me." (Legolas to Thranduil)*⁷*

"We cleared the forest as ordered, my Lord, but more spiders keep coming up from the South." Tauriel said determinedly as she started pacing back and forth, formulating a means of attack. "They are spawning in the ruins of Dol Guldur. If we could kill them at their source—"

"That fortress lies beyond our borders. Keep our lands clear of those foul creatures, that is your task."

"And when we drive them off, what then? Will they not spread to other lands?"

*"Other lands are not my concern. The fortunes of the world will rise and fall, but here in this kingdom, we will endure."*⁸*

“...Is this how you treat travelers to your lands?” (Dwalin) The surly, strongest looking dwarf disdainfully asked as he came up to the dais to stand at Thorin Oakenshield’s left side—his customary position as lieutenant.

Legolas and Tauriel had brought the bound line of disheveled dwarves before him. He studied the rag-tag “company” from the superiority of his throne with serious suspicion.

He took his time in answering to be sure all eyes and attention were upon him. “Only the ones that annoy me.”

“Is it a crime now to be lost in the forest?” (Balin) “To be hungry and thirsty?” The thoughtful older dwarf was not as quick to gain the dais, but was no less wise and brave. He took up his position as advisor and confident on the Dwarf-king’s right—though he had a feeling that that most of that wisdom went unheeded.

“It is a crime to wander in my realm without leave. You forget you are using the road my people made.”⁹

Thorin Oakenshield... “...one king to another.”¹⁰

“We came to you once starving, homeless... but you turned your back!” The Dwarf-king’s rich voice resonated through out the realm. “You turned way from the suffering of my people and the inferno that destroyed us!” (Thorin)¹¹

“Wait! Please wait. You would go to war over a handful of gems?” (Bard)

“The heirlooms of my people are not lightly forsaken.”¹²

Bard the Bow-man...

My people also have a claim upon the riches in that mountain. Let me speak with Thorin.” (Bard)

“You would try to reason with the Dwarf?”

“To avoid war? Yes!”¹³

“If I’m not mistaken, this is the Halfling who stole the keys to my dungeons from under the nose of my guards.”

“Yyyesssh...” Bilbo admitted sheepishly. “Sorry about that, but I came to give you this.” The hobbit went up to the table as he pulled something out wrapped in cloth from his inside coat pocket. He put it down, unwrapped it and then stepped back so that they could all see it.

“The Heart of the Mountain. The King’s Jewel.”

“And worth a king’s ransom. How is this yours to give?” Bard asked with mixed suspicion and awe.

“I took it as my share of the treasure.”

“Why would you do this? You owe us no loyalty.”

“I’m not doing it for you...I would save them if I can. There will be no need for war.”¹⁴

“Since when did my counsel counted for so little? What do you think I’m trying to do??” (Gandalf)

“I think you are trying to save your Dwarvish friends, and I admire your loyalty to them, but it does not dissuade me from my course. You started this, Mithrandir, you will forgive me if I finish it.”¹⁵

Gandalf... “...I can see you know nothing of wizards...”¹⁶

“My Lord, dispatch this force to Ravenhill!” The Wizard hurried into the market square to block his path.

“The Dwarves are about to be overrun. They must be warned!”

“By all means, warn them. I have spent enough Elvish blood in defense of this accursed land. No more!”

Still seething, he pushed past the wizard back to Feren’s company. They fell in step behind him only to find Tauriel standing there alone with the courage of her convictions defiantly determined to block his path. “You will not turn away, not this time.”

“Get out of my way,” he snarled savagely.

“The Dwarves will be slaughtered!”

“Yes, they will die,” he responded with casual contempt. “Today, tomorrow, one year hence, a

hundred years from now. What does it matter? They are mortal.

In the blink of an eye, Tauriel drew her bow and arrow and aimed for his heart. "You think your life is worth more than theirs when there is no love in it? There. Is. No. Love. In. You."

He averted his eyes, astounded at her blatant insubordination and insult. How dare she threaten him and speak to the value of his life and compare it to a mere dwarf's?!

He felt the guardsmen behind him tense, ready to defend him, but he would deal with this affront himself. Who was she speak to him about love? He tightened his grip on his sword. Like lightening, he lashed out, shockingly smashing her bow out of her hands before the point of his blade came to rest over her heart, ready to pierce it.

"What do you know of love? Nothing!" He spat the words out at her. "What you feel for that Dwarf is not real!" His voice dropped to a dangerous decibel. "You think it is love? Are you ready to die for it?"

He was so consumed with anger that he did not sense his son's approach. He only saw the sudden appearance of another sword stopping his own.

"If you harm her, you will have to kill me." Legolas declared angrily. His son's blue-gray eyes, full of fire and fortitude, bore into his own. He looked away, too stunned to speak.

Legolas turned to Tauriel as he sheathed his sword. "I will go with you."¹⁷

"Those gems were not all your wife left you, my friend." Gandalf said kindly. The wizard stood on a nearby staircase, leaning on his staff. Presumably, he had witnessed the whole affair and yet there was no judgment in his voice or eyes, only the wisdom of sympathy.

"She gave you a son." Gandalf's words pierced his heart as though Tauriel had released the arrow. "Tell me, which would she have you value more?"

He looked up at the wise wizard, still groping for inner balance. All he could do was shake his head and look away.¹⁸

All the emotions from the past thousand years whipped around his heart in a whirlwind of loss, regret and mistakes against the truth of the wizard's words. He let the dark storm in his soul run its course until it finally found its place in his life and he was centered again in a new light.

"Where will you go? ... Go north..."

"...Azog was sent to kill them. His master wants the mountain, not just for treasure but its strategic position. This is the gateway to reclaiming Angmar in the North." (Gandalf)¹⁹

Angmar... where she died...²⁰

"...what is his name?" Legolas asked with half-hearted interest.

"He is known in the wilds as "Strider. His true name..." He dropped his voice significantly to gain his son's attention, "you must discover for yourself."

Legolas gave his father a small smile of appreciation before turning away with no parting of goodwill. His son was maintaining the calm demeanor of the Eldar as though there was no love in it..

Suddenly he realized he would never see his son again and hundreds of years worth of regret pressed down upon him in an instant.

"Legolas."

His son stopped but did not turn back to him.

He continued in almost a rush. "Your mother loved you. More than anyone, more than life..."

Legolas half turned back to him, but could not meet his eyes, instead he hastily gave him the formal parting of goodwill—right hand over heart then extended to the other person.

He returned the gesture, but his son was gone before he could complete it. He sadly shook his head before looking down in a moment of mourning as tears formed in his eyes. So much to say, so much his son should know—should have known. He had hoped mentioning his mother's love was enough to give his son some peace. It had to be, his son was gone... but Tauriel was still here.²¹

"...If this is love, I do not want it. Take it from me, please!" (Tauriel)²²

You think it is love? Are you ready to die for it?"

"The Dwarves will be slaughtered..."(Tauriel)

Yes, they will die ... What does it matter? They are mortal."

The Halfling and his Shire, Bard the Dragon-slayer and his race of men. Even the dwarves... Each one of them were mortal and yet had proven themselves beyond measure amongst all the bloodshed of the battlefield and he realized it did matter.

It mattered a great deal...

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Appendix E

- *1., *21. & *22.=B5A-43, "The Sorrow of Elves".
- *2.=DOS-Appendix 9 (extended release dvd), "The Halls of the Elvenking"
- *3., *5. & *8.=DOS-13, "King and Captain".
- *4.= B5A-The Appendices Part 12 (extended release dvd), "The People of Middle-Earth, Thranduil"—This was taken from Lee Pace's audition and since it was an early draft of the script, it's still technically movieverse and I thought it would be fun to include here.
- *6., *7. & *17.= B5A-37, "Blood of the Eldar".
- *9.= DOS-Appendix 9 (extended release dvd), "The Halls of the Elvenking"—It's scenes like this that kind of inspired me to write "Reflections" in the first place because 1) it's one of the few more direct quotes from the book and 2) it just add so much more depth and definition to the character. Personally, I would have included it in the movie...
- *10. & *11.= DOS-11, "The Woodland Realm".
- *12. & *13.= B5A-14, "The Elvenking's Aid".
- *14. & *15.= B5A-21, "Thief in the Night".
- *16. & *19.= B5A-18. "Last Move in a Master Plan".
- *18.= B5A-The Appendices Part 12 (extended release dvd), "The People of Middle-Earth, Thranduil"—And this, this is at the center of why I wanted to write this whole thing in the first place! This tiny little scene thrown in as an extra in the very last disk of the dvds that totally explains his change of heart and gives way more weight to scene 43 and they didn't include it in the movie?!
- *20.= B5A-17 "The Shadow of Gundabad"—referencing where Lego tells Taury about his mother dying there—and my own fic of what happened in "My Queen of Starlight".

[No dvd extras, including Mr Pace's audition, scene titles or the slow marching elven army were harmed during the production of Part 2.]

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Part 3 of 3
"I Am Your King"

Feren blew his horn to announce the Elvenking's arrival and the huge doors of the hidden "service" entrance to the lower levels of the Woodland Realm swung open. Horse wranglers from the nearby corral stood ready as did aids and nurses from Healer Hall.

The wranglers rushed forward as Thranduil rode in, but he waved them off with a twist of his wrist. They fell back confused as he guided his steed to the side. A quick flick of his fingers told Tauriel to do likewise rather than dismount.

"You would go to war over a handful of gems?" (Bard)^{†1}

He sat erect and regal in his saddle as he did when he would review or honor his army marching by. But this was no parade of proud warriors. Spoils of this war had brought much more pain and loss than the small victory over the growing threat of Evil.

The advance guard marched in but quickly turned around to help the wounded following them. It was only when the very last warrior of the rear guard entered that he gave the signal for the great doors to be shut and dismounted.

Thranduil knew without looking that Bresalden was waiting off to the side and would not come forward as he always did before. His chief steward and trusted confidant had seen immediately how circumstances had changed, was watching everything and would not interfere.

The wise, older Sindar elf, who had also served Thranduil's father as well, had already learned much in the past few moments. The Elvenking was riding a spare horse and therefore had lost his beloved elk, "Moose", so named by Legolas when he was little boy.

And where was the Prince of the Realm? He was gone—not on some errand or mission—but never to return. Legolas's destiny had been opened by the hand of this young captain of the guard. Tauriel did not return his love and mostly likely had broken his heart. Bresalden knew she had done this unknowingly, given her current state of uncertainty and lack of customary confidence, which, in turn, nettled Thranduil.

The Chief Steward also knew she would not have been allowed back into the kingdom had she deliberately encouraged Legolas's favor without returning his affection. It was a good sign that the Elvenking wanted to address the awkward tension between them as shown by giving her the favor of riding in with him. However, her growing unease showed she was totally unaware of Thranduil's intentions and mostly likely was fearing some sort of reprisal for her actions.

When Thranduil locked eyes with Bresalden, he was relieved to see his chief steward had deduced much in observation and required no explanation when he came forward. Thranduil was grateful for this and gave him a small smile. The Steward deftly removed the Elvenking's cape and smoothed it over his arm as they fell into step together in comfortable silence.

When it was evident they were not being followed by Tauriel, Thranduil stopped and motioned her forward without turning.

She came up to his side deferringly. "Sire, some of my guardsmen have been wounded. By your leave, I would like to see how they are fairing."

"No." Thranduil stated simply as he glanced down at her. His eyes were still as kind as they had been on Ravenhill, but the sternness in his voice had not lost its edge when his patience was wearing thin. "They are being attended to. You need refreshment and you made a request I will not ignore."

Tauriel shrugged it off with a small laugh. "My Lord King, you are kind, but I am fine. I would really like to check on my guardsmen and see how—" she stopped when the glance turned into a glower. She bowed

her head obediently and stepped back so they could continue on. She fell in step behind them and followed them to the king's quarters.

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Thranduil and Bresalden had been conversing in low tones as Tauriel trailed behind. When they entered the Elvenking's quarters, Bresalden purposefully went on with a twinkle in his eyes and disappeared into the darkened archway opposite the doorway.

Without breaking stride, Thranduil called over his shoulder to the waiting attendants to serve Tauriel whatever she desired. He turned the corner to the left and disappeared without so much as a glance back.

"My Lord King, what am I—?" Tauriel called out after him, staring at the empty archway where no answer came.

Unsure of what to do, she turned her attention to the attendants. They took this as signal to come forward with a platter of nibbles and decanters of wine or the popular foxberry juice. They gestured for her to make herself comfortable in the open sitting room by the fireplace to her right. This is when she noticed the whole area had been built on a curve, the rooms circled around what ever lay beyond the archway Bresalden had gone through.

She started to sit down on a near by divan, but then waved them away so she could pace nervously by the doorway. Yes, he had been sympathetic up on Ravenhill and she had been offered refreshments, but she could not remember making any sort of request. She could not shake the feeling that some sort of reprisal for all her actions was forthcoming and would not relax until it was over.

The private quarters of the royal family had been built in the shape of a horseshoe with the rooms lining the outer wall facing in and the walkway forming a ring around the inner wall. The line of rooms were all open without doors, just archways.

Ignoring her questioning plea, Thranduil started stripping off his armor as he passed by his study and library and entered his armory, grateful to be back in the sanctuary of his private chambers.

He could have dismissed Tauriel to her quarters and allowed her some time of rest but that is not what would have actually happened. She would have checked on her men and then gone to her quarters to pace and fret until he summoned her or until she could not stand to wait any longer and present herself to him.

He, on the other hand, allowed the luxury of his chambers to relax him somewhat from the weariness of long engagement at Erebor. Yes, accusations had been made and needed to be addressed, but he would not rush in taking care of himself now and needed to settle some of his own skirmishes he brought back from the battle.

Whilst they removed the rest of his armor and outer clothes, he scanned the wall where his bows and quivers hung. He finally decided on one of his older kits. It was perfect for her—less ornate and well worn—it would serve her well. "That one. Fill the quiver, but keep it out of sight until I ask for it."

"Yes, my Lord."

The next archway opened into his changing room and wardrobe. An attendant came forward and held open a small velvet-lined box. He went in, carefully took off the circlet crown he wore when he was out in the field and placed it inside. The box was closed and locked away in the jewelry cabinet.

He changed out of his battle-soiled clothes and put on a pair of royal blue leggings. An attendant filled the basin of the wash stand with warm water where he freshened his face as well as his upper body. Feeling some what clean, he finished by donning a matching blue tunic and a light silky silver robe. He was

handed a glass of wine and watched in the full length mirror as they brushed out his long platinum hair down his back.

He stared at his reflection, but saw other faces:

"You would go to war over a handful of gems?" (Bard)

"His master wants the mountain, not just for treasure but its strategic position. This is the gateway to reclaiming Angmar in the North." (Gandalf)²

Had it not been for the gems that brought them there, Erebor would have been easily conquered and in the hands of the growing Evil. He could now put to rest in his heart how his obsession had served a greater purpose in the destiny of Middle-earth. He blew out a slow breath of release, ready to move on.

When he was all set, he backed a way from the mirror. Shoes were not offered as part of his attire. They all knew the royal family always liked to go barefoot in privacy. It was one of the unspoken signs of being "off duty".

Having divested himself of the trappings of war, he looked as relaxed and regal as he liked to, but several skirmishes staring back at him still needed to be resolved.

"Leave me," he said.

They all bowed their heads in obedience and left, except for the attendant carrying the bottle of wine. He paused long enough to put it back in its stand for him. He poured himself another glass and then stood staring at the rich red wine through the sparkling crystal decanter.

"You will not turn away, not this time." ... "You think your life is worth more than theirs when there is no love in it? There. Is. No. Love. In. You." (Tauriel)

"What do you know of love? Nothing! What you feel for that Dwarf is not real! You think it is love? Are you ready to die for it?"

"If you harm her, you will have to kill me." (Legolas)³

"I... can not go back..." (Legolas) "I... can not go back... Can not go back, can not go back. Can. Not. Go. Back."

"Where will you go?...Go north... Your mother loved you... Your. Mother. Loved. You."⁴ And I hope you know, my son, the love of your mother and I will rest on you all the days of your life. He sighed and blew out another breath of release.

He refilled his wine glass to leave but paused in the archway to watch Bresalden in the inner courtyard through the open window. The Chief Steward and several attendants were busy removing the hoods off the ever present, everlasting amber-resin lamps with long hooks.⁵ And now, for the last skirmish...

"If this is love, I do not want it. Take it from me. Please...!" (Tauriel) "Why does it hurt so much?... If this is love, I do not want it. I. Do. Not. Want. It. Take it from me, take it from me, take it from me. Take. It. From. Me!"⁶

Tauriel stopped her pacing and came to attention as Thranduil glided back into the sitting room, instantly annoyed with her and frowned. He had been hoping to find her somewhat relaxed, eating and drinking by the fireplace and she was not. He was not completely surprised, but it still rankled him. He drank the remains of his wine as he glanced out into the darkened archway. They were almost done out there.

He handed the empty glass to an attendant as he took in a deep breath for an unpleasant task. Abruptly, he turned and closed the distance between them before Tauriel could back away. He loomed over her, forcing her smaller stature to bend back enough to meet his gaze like a child to a parent, but this was no parental face of love.

Without the cold mask of arrogance he use to wear, she could plainly see the old hardness in his eyes was now a deep disappointed hurt, though his voice was still strong in its silky sternness. This was indeed a reprimand of sorts following the tremendous events of the past few days. She knew better than to try to step back from him for more breathing room, so she stood her ground—however awkward—and gulped, ready for whatever he would decree.

"I am your king, but you defied my orders and I had you banished." He paused and drew in another deep breath before continuing the next accusation in a sharper tone. "I am your king, but you dared to stand in my way! You accused me of having no love in front of the Royal Company and—"

"My Lord King, I am so—" he silenced her with a glacial glare. She bowed her head in shame.

"You," his voice dropped to a dangerous decibel, "accused me of having no love and I smashed your bow..." he took in a breath and his sultry whisper blew across her face in a chilling breeze only she could hear. "I was ready to end your life then and there. You do realize that, do you not? You have defied me at every turn and yet..."

Suddenly, his voice and manner softened as he took a decent step back, allowing her to straighten up. "I will have you restored to my kingdom because you follow your heart and do what is right."

Her head shot up in shock at the unexpected turn of manner. He snapped his fingers once and held out his hand. An attendant came forward and handed him his old bow and put the quiver on a nearby table.

Thranduil, in turn, held it out to her with a respectful bow of his head. "I will replace what I destroyed."

"My Lord King, this is one of your prized bows. I, I am, I can not accept this," Tauriel stammered. He tilted his head to lock eyes with her in a penetrating glare. She also knew better then to keep saying no to the Elvenking, and yet she just did it again and it was always such an annoying affront to him.

"You would prefer another? I thought this one suited you best. Its accuracy is always deadly in the right hands."

Bewildered at the turn of tone, she took it and hefted it in her hands. It was beautifully made, but he could see she felt unworthy of it. She bowed her head and came to attention.

"Thank you my Lord King for such a generous gift. I hope I will be worthy of it. Thank you." She grabbed up the quiver and bowed her head again. "By your leave, Sire, I will go—"

"You will not go. There is more that needs to be addressed."

She gulped and glanced around, what else could there be...? She then finally noticed a significant absence. "Legolas... My Lord Legolas, where is he? We were fighting orcs... I never saw him again after we went up Ravenhill separate ways."

"And you did not look for him among the fallen... as he had searched for you and found you."

"Found me? When? Why? I was with—by the time I got to Kili—I mean the Dwarf—he was gone." She paused to stifle a sob, "I watched him die and could do nothing even though I had saved his life before..."

"And Legolas saw that."

"But then why...?" her eyes widen at the implications of his words.

"Oh my Lord King, he came with me to stop the slaughter of the dwarves—nothing more. There is nothing else between us..." She gulped again. "We share a mutual love for the Woodlands and would do anything to protect the kingdom. I never expected anything more than to do what was right. I thought he believed the same thing, to do what was right..."

"He did. But "doing what was right" meant following his heart where ever you led him, just as surely as he followed you to go chase the orcs when he was sent to bring you back. He would have followed you to the ends of the world had you but asked him and to him, it would have been, "the right thing to do."

She stared at him incredulously, unable to believe what she was hearing. "My Lord, no. That can not be. I assure you, I am nothing more than a captain of the guard to him."

"Yes, yes, you have said that before, remember? But you were not then—and you never were from the moment he first laid eyes upon you." Thranduil's wintery whisper stung her heart. "You were much more to him and yet you remained blind to his affections for you." Suddenly his voice and eyes softened. "But it was no fault of your doing."

"I saw on Ravenhill where your heart belonged and knew you had been true to it all along." Thranduil gazed off into the distance over her head. "My son's misplaced love for you has sent him away on the journey to his true destiny. That is where his path lies..."

"However, you," when he locked eyes with her again, they were filled with compassion, just as she had seen at Ravenhill. "You came face to face with the pain of loosing a love that was real and asked me to take it away from you. I am your king, and yet I can not. I can only show you where my heart lies and offer you my hospitality."

He glanced meaningfully at the nearby attendant who came forward again. This time, Tauriel took a glass of wine and sipped it.

"You accused me of having no love in me."

"I believe you said, 'There. Is. No. Love. In. You,'" Thranduil mimicked her measured judgmental voice from that day. "And you are right. There is no love in me."

He had been effectively blocking her view of what lay beyond the archway and now he stepped aside with flourish. "There is no love in me because it is all here. It all rests here."

She gasped and then her jaw dropped open in utter astonishment as the wine glass slipped from her fingers. It shattered on the floor and immediately an attendant was on his knees with a small broom and dust pan. Tauriel mindlessly stepped out of the way of the glass without realizing it. All she could do was stare in wonder, trying to take it all in.

The archway opened into the most breathtaking garden she could ever imagine. Birds twittered in the miniature trees and blended with the soothing sound of a gentle waterfall and fountain. Gems seem to sparkle around the flower beds that filled the air with their fragrance. Peace would come easily to anyone sitting on one of the three beautifully carved meditation benches.

From where she stood—for she could not bring herself to enter it even though Thranduil had stepped aside for her to do so—she could see the garden was surrounded on three sides by the living quarters of the royal family. This is what created the curve shape she noticed earlier. The other two chambers opposite Thranduil's would have been the queen's and the adjacent to her, the child's—Legolas. Both archways were dark and silent.

Picturesque polished stones created pathways from the archways to a central square where an ornate glass dining table for four could be set for their private dining. It was surrounded by the miniature trees, some she noted where not native to their own woodlands and she wondered from where the original seedlings came. Small pieces of broken glass encircled the flower beds and trees, creating the sparkle that looked like gems.

The platform of the royal quarters had been carved out of the highest point inside the hill so that nothing came between it and the strategically placed sky lights cut into the rock above. This brought in plenty of

sunlight for the garden to grow and flowers to flourish inside a cave—and the stars to be seen at night.

The fourth side was open to a wondrous waterfall, where the sounds of the calming cascading currents would fill the bed chambers on each side at the ends of the "horse shoe". She could see that part of the water had been diverted into a channel which fed an artfully carved fountain, at the base of which was a fair-sized bathing pool. The runoff from the pool and fountain led to a myriad of smaller channels under the platform to irrigate the garden.

Bright crystal lamps lit by candles hung from the tree branches and poles. They added a special glow to the garden, along with the familiar amber-resin lamps above the square.

This was the heart of the palace. It was enchanting, festive, and serene, but most importantly, Tauriel could sense the love that had been poured into the place. She smiled at the wonder of it all until her eyes were drawn back to quarters on the other side. The queen's... his wife, had no signs of life and it brought tears to her eyes.

Thranduil had been watching her, gauging her reaction. When he saw the tears, he knew she finally understood the depth of his love for his queen and then the profound loss.

He had hoped she would go in to the garden so that he could follow her because he had not set foot in garden since she died. It had been meticulously maintained by Bresalden, but no one ate or drank or danced in the square or sat on the meditation benches.

He still used the bathing pool as he could come and go directly from the archway of his bedchamber without having to go through the rest of the garden. And Thranduil was content to take most of his meals and meditate in his audience chamber with the pond of exotic fish.

When it was obvious Tauriel was too overwhelmed and rooted in place, Thranduil went to the archway as he had been doing for hundreds of years, watching for a flicker of light in the queen's chambers that would never come.

"She designed it," he said in a hushed whisper, "my Queen of Starlight". I was her "Prince of the Woodlands" and later became her "King of the Realm."⁷ But she was always my Queen, even when we were but children."

He sighed and continued on in more matter-of-fact tones. "We built it together. Our own "little realm". And she gave birth to Legolas there, surrounded by the trees we loved... Her quarters span that whole side as mine does here, but when she was with child, she changed her mind and decided to convert part of her chambers into the nursery. She did not want to take space away from the garden as we had originally planned..."

Thranduil seemed to be lost in reminiscing and perhaps had forgotten Tauriel, but that was his intention. He knew she dared not interrupt him and could not just leave, so she would look around in curiosity. He heard the two attendants approach her again and was pleased that she did take a glass of wine and a vegetable roll. She also allowed them to remove her quiver and blades, however, when they started removing her outerwear, she quietly protested.

Tauriel took a sip of wine and then drained the rest of it, suddenly aware of how hungry and thirsty she was as she looked around with new amazement. She had never been in the Elvenking's private quarters and it was not at all what she envisioned.

"...Sometimes we would move the table and pile our blankets and pillows in the square to sleep "under the stars" as lovers. Later, Legolas joined us as a toddler and we would lull him to sleep with stories of the Starlight of the Eldar." Thranduil smiled at the happy memory as he listened intently to the activity behind him. He hoped the attendants were offering her foxberry juice and not just wine.

His abode was smaller than most of the realm would have imagined. Nor was it extravagant in opulence,

but was exquisitely elegant in its simplicity and masculinity. To her left between the door and the archway to his study-bed chamber was a beautiful side board carved out of the rock wall. Fresh fruit and vegetables had been arranged on it along with small snacks and several decanters of wine, water or juice. It was lit by a small delicate lamp suspended from shelves above it, which held superb art pieces and mementos.

"...Bresalden and I had preserved some seedlings from my father's kingdom and we were glad to see the trees flourish here..."

Tauriel gestured for another glass of wine and continued the rest of her visual inspection. On the other side of the sitting room, an alcove had been created by putting up a bookshelf wall up to enclose it from the walk way and surround it on three sides. Several large intricate maps of Middle-earth dominated the walls and it contained an ornate stone table that could seat eight people for a meeting or a meal.

"...The borders of broken glass around the flower beds was her idea. She detested throwing anything away, even broken glass..."

Beyond the bookcase, the walkway led to the doors that was the center base of the "horseshoe". It contained a small kitchen and attendant's station, which enabled them to serve him immediately or continued on the left around to the queen's quarters, which mirrored his own.

The double doors to the Gallery were located here as well. It was smaller and more decorative than the Grand Hall. This is where the king and queen could make a grand entrance from their quarters for any occasion such as a social gathering, dinner or dance.

All in all, the open sitting room—as well as the rest of his quarters, she surmised—reflected an elegance of power. He could sit comfortably by himself or bring in a small gathering for a private party from the public gallery.

Thranduil's tone changed, and what he said caught her attention, but the incredibly long day was catching up to her. It was becoming more and more of a challenge to stay alert. The nearby divan looked inviting, but she was also aware of how grimy she still was from the battle. Thus she only allowed herself to sit down on the very edge so as not to soil the gorgeous upholstery and motioned for another glass of wine.

"I have seen lowly fishermen become warriors of great valor. Dwarves who proved to be more strategically equipped than the Eldar. And a very wise little Hobbit showing more courage and cunning than all of us. And you were right..." Thranduil paused and spoke over his shoulder, pleased to see she had finally sat down and was still eating and drinking.

"You were right in saying that we need to kill the evil at its source and not let it spread to other lands. I want you to lead a large detachment of warriors to Dol Guldur and destroy those foul creatures and whatever else Darkness left behind there."

"Yes, my Lord!" Tauriel responded enthusiastically but found it difficult to come to her feet. Perhaps it was the wine and she thought it might be wise to drink more foxberry juice instead.

Thranduil could see how tired she was but still had one more thing to say before he would let her go. He wanted her to think on it when she retired. He took a breath and turned back to gaze upon the garden of his beloved, knowing that direct eye contact would be unsettling.

"I favored you long before Legolas took notice of you because you are special Tauriel. You have gifts and abilities you have yet to realize, but they will not come to light until you are in a position far above captain of the guard to exercise them."

"This kingdom needs a queen and I want you to carefully consider becoming my consort." He sensed suddenly he had lost his audience. He turned around to see Tauriel had curled up on the divan fast asleep.

He smiled as he remembered how often he found his Queen curled up as such, waiting for him to come back from a journey or to finish up business of the Realm.

He dismissed the remaining attendants for the night and went and got a light blanket to make her more comfortable. He watched as she slept and could see how Legolas would have been attracted to the cunning and courageous Silvan elf with the stunningly rare red hair. He realized he would have been truly honored to have had her as a daughter-in-pledge, but she could never replace his beloved Queen. He sighed and retired to his own chambers, wondering how much she had heard before falling asleep...

There was a thud and a yelp. Thranduil was instantly awake and alert. He knew what it was and could not help but smile. He covered himself up with a light silvery robe as he headed for his sitting room.

In the semi-darkness, he could see Tauriel sitting up on the floor—having turned over and rolled off the narrow divan rather than being in her own bed—trying to get her bearings. When she saw him standing in the archway, her eyes went wide when she saw who it was and blushed when she remembered where she was. Reeking of wine, she stammered and struggled to get up, but the blanket was caught in her legs, creating a comical spectacle unbecoming for the captain of the guard. "My Lord King! I, I am, I..."

A sound came forth from the Elvenking's rooms that had not been heard for ages. It was masculine in origin and was soon joined by a feminine one. Only the guard posted at the door and the night watch heard it, but the news would spread quickly.

It was the sound of laughter.

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Appendix F

*1. & *2. =B5A-18. "Last Move in a Master Plan".

*3. =B5A-37, "Blood of the Eldar".

*4. & 6. =B5A-43, "The Sorrow of Elves".

*5. =DOS- Appendix 10 (extended release dvd), "Realms of the 3rd Age."—One of things I love about the Woodland Realm (along with the waterfalls and the sky lights cut into the rock) are the amber lamps that give the place a warm golden glow that will basically burn forever.

*7. =Referencing my fic, "My Queen of Starlight".

[No light silvery robe, the ornate glass table or attendants were harmed during the production of Part 3. A tour of the Garden provided by Realm Landscapes, Inc., and used with permission.

Thranduil and the world of the Hobbit movies are the property of Warner Bros. Entertainment & MGM directly; Sir PJ indirectly and Mr Lee Pace embodimently because he is—oh my yes!—Thranduil. I was just visiting because I had to see his private quarters & the Garden and not for profit. jk2017 tyl]