

Other Lands  
by Bavand

(Fic 5 Appendix G1- A short story happening the day after Aftermath to let the dust settle and make some changes.)

*If we could kill them at their source—” (Tauriel to Thranduil)  
“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.”*

It was evening. Thranduil was enjoying a warm cup of mulled wine with Bresalden, his chief steward and confidant, at the glass table in the garden. Ever since he had shown it to Tauriel last night<sup>2</sup>, he felt free to enjoy its beauty and peace—with one change. He kept his back to the dark, empty quarters of his Queen and Legolas, where no one would be joining him anymore, and sat with the best view of his little sanctuary.

"The battle revealed much I was not aware of... the Bear-man, do you know him?"

"I have heard of him, my Lord, but yet to have see him." Bresalden answered. "Beorn, is his name and he sounds extraordinary."

"Yes... and the last of his kind..." He turned to Bresalden in a sudden desire to show goodwill. "Do we still have some of that nectar and the syrup from the maple grove?"

"I do believe so, yes."

"Good, I want it sent to him along with a note I shall draft. And Radagast, the Brown Wizard... an odd fellow but showed much courage bringing the Eagles and the Bear-man in. They truly changed the tide of the battle. Do we still have—?"

"—the mushrooms?" the Chief Steward finished with a knowing smile. "Oh yes, from the northern clearing of our borders that he has no access to. I will prepare several bushels straight away."

"And for Gandalf, two bottles of the Dorvinion wine"<sup>3</sup>. I did him a disservice when he came to the tent that night..."

"Oh?" Bresalden prompted with some surprise—not at the disservice itself—but in the Elvenking admitting it, for he never apologized or regretted his actions before. It was a welcome change.

"Yes, he came to warn us of the coming threat of the Orcs and I likened him to a winter storm to Bard"<sup>4</sup>. And I purposely did not serve him any wine, only the Bowman. Perhaps it is a small matter, but he was right, the threat was very real and very deadly."

"Yes, my Lord, but the Wizard has no permanent residence that I know of."

"Send it to Rivendell. I do believe he is a frequent visitor there since Elrond is a very generous and genial host." Thranduil suggested with a hint of admiration for the Elf-lord.

"And what of our rare red-headed Captain of the Guard? You do realize, judging by the lack of reaction, she did not hear your proposal. Are you still considering it, my Lord? Is she to be your consort?"<sup>5</sup>

"Yes... She very nearly became a daughter of the royal court had she been aware of my son's affections and returned them. I greatly admire her unfailing devotion to do what is right, even to disregarding what her king wants or commands. Legolas was like that, although he never leaped without looking. And I,

however wise—"

Bresalden raised an eyebrow at such an admission of vanity and Thranduil smirked knowingly as he continued. "—can be somewhat short-sighted when it comes to thinking of what is good and right for other lands and peoples beyond our borders. I want to change that and having her close by to remind me... would be wise."

"I see..." Bresalden agreed with a nod. When Thranduil started gazing at the waterfall and offered no more to the conversation, he got up with a long-day sigh. "Anything else, my Lord?" He picked up the empty cups and handed them to the attendant.

"No, dismiss everyone for the night. I wish to meditate and not be disturbed."

"Yes, my Lord." Bresalden gave final instructions to the attendants, but as he was leaving, he turned back to the Elvenking with a twinkle in his eyes. "And good-night, my Lord."

Thranduil shot him a penetrating glare until he realized his Chief Steward was being sincere and not mocking him for his impatience with polite niceties. He responded with a playful wave of dismissal.

He waited at the table until the attendants blew out all the candles and the garden was bathed in the softer golden glow of the everlasting amber-resin lamps high above<sup>6</sup>.

Elrond...

He got up, took off his outer robe and went to his meditation bench closest to the waterfall. He let the cascading currents quiet his mind, settling himself within so that he could reach out with clarity.

He had ignored the invitation to join the White Council and had made it quite clear long ago that other lands were not his concern. Hence, they never sought to involve him in anything regarding themselves and Middle-earth at large. But the battle had changed everything, showing him that all the lands of Light needed to rally together and support each other against the Dark.

In the past, he used to engage in regular telepathic communications with Elrond, Celeborn and the Lady Galadriel, just as his father had done, and especially when it was important. He was not a Ring-bearer and his ability was weak, but wanted to try and reconnect with them again.

Breathing deeply, his mind moved out across the distance, concentrating on Rivendell and the Light of Elrond.

Elrond was in his study reading when he unexpectedly felt what seemed to be the Light of Thranduil trying to reach him. He closed his eyes and focused. Yes, it was him, but the link was weak. Intrigued, the Elvenking of Rivendell got up and went to his open window. Effortlessly, he met the King of Woodland Realm half way and welcomed him like an old colleague.

Thranduil was elated Elrond could bridge the distance and did so without any tone of chastisement or judgment for all the years of silence. He felt Galadriel join in and strengthen the connection. She smiled warmly, but did not speak.

He showed them images and impressions from the battle, especially the might of both orc armies, the use of the were-worms and the huge, mindless brutes that had been bred to topple walls and crush everything in their path.

Elrond, in turn, showed him all the information they had learned recently, the most important being that Sauron was indeed growing in strength in spite of the victory at Erebor.

Suddenly, Galadriel spoke and cautioned Thranduil in sending troops to Dol Guldur. It is abandoned now, she assured him, but a powerful dark magic still has a hold on the fortress. The spiders have moved their

nests into the southern parts of Mirkwood—Thranduil cringed, he detested that name and missed "Greenwood the Great" of his father's rule. She respectively changed her thoughts to "Woodland".<sup>7</sup> She also recommended enlisting the help of Radagast, who is greatly distressed by their presence.

When the connection ended, Thranduil was surprised at how exhausted he was, but very pleased to be back in touch with the High Eldar and they seemed to have received him as well.

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"Ah, Tauriel, come." Thranduil greeted, genuinely glad to see her when she appeared in his archway to the private garden. He was seated at the ornate glass table, which she found amazing, having been under the impression he would never enter the garden again.

"You wanted to see me, my Lord?" Tauriel hesitated feeling some what awkward. She had not seen the Elvenking since their first night home where she had fallen asleep on his divan, only to roll over and fall to the floor in an embarrassing heap.\*8

They were to meet Bresalden, Remily the Chief Healer, Feren and the other commanders in his private alcove to discuss the battle, but he wanted to see her beforehand.

"Yes, do sit down and be served." Thranduil indicated the chair next to him on his left.

She smiled tentatively and asked for the popular foxberry juice as she sat on the edge of her chair.

"There is something I want you to consider very carefully. I had mentioned it the other night, but I do not believe you heard me."

"My Lord?" she asked, thinking all things has been resolved between them.

"You have always believed other lands should be our concern—even when it got you into "trouble"—but the "trouble" lay not in your doing wrong, but in my not agreeing with you. I do now and I see we need to do our best to kill any and all evil at its source before it can spread."

Tauriel nodded, speechless that he was commending her again for doing what is right even though it had been contrary to his wishes.

Thranduil was not getting the reaction he desired. He wanted her interest, not her looking like she was ready to run. A subtle signal of his fingers told the attendants to serve her wine and she did not refuse the pour.

"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."

She smiled proudly and took a breath to speak, but he forestalled her by a slight raising of his hand.

"This kingdom needs a queen for the coming days of Darkness and I want you to very carefully consider becoming my consort."

The smile paled and she gulped at what she thought was innuendo. Her eyes first darted in the direction of the Queen's bed chamber and then over to his own. "My Lord, I have not," Tauriel cleared her throat. It took but a second to regain the courage of her convictions he admired and met his eyes squarely, chin held high. "I am not—I will not, not without—"

"Of course not," Thranduil said cutting her off smoothly. "I would not want to be with anyone who is unwilling." His voiced dropped to a sultry whisper that sent chills down her spine, "there would be no joy in it."

Her eyes narrowed as her heart cringed with distress. "And no love..." she whispered back.

She put the goblet down and stared without seeing the crystal sparkle. Finally, she looked up and locked eyes with his. "Is this how my King wants me to serve in the kingdom?"

Thranduil sighed. She was too young to understand the power and privilege of the life he was offering—she only saw how she would be tied to him without love. He could not begrudge her that sentiment, so he calmly changed to a different—but still significant—opportunity.

"Or perhaps you would best serve my Realm as Chief Commander of all the Guardsmen, including my personal one?"

"Yes, my Lord!" She breathed out without hesitation and relief. "It would be an honor, my Lord King."

"Good! And I see that Bresalden is signaling us that all are present for the meeting. Shall we go?"  
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Thranduil was use to giving orders from his throne or in his audience chamber in short, quick demands. Now Bresalden, Remily, Feren and the other company commanders were all seated in the alcove of his private quarters. Whilst they were being served a day wine or foxberry juice, they studied the broken remains of the "twirley-whirley" Feren had placed in the center of the table.

"Feren, I want you to go south and destroy all the nests of those foul spiders," Thranduil ordered as he entered and seated himself at the head of the table in one fluid motion of purpose. "They are no longer spawning at DoI Guldur but have moved into the Woodlands. And you will need to enlist the aid of Radagast, the Wizard. They are protected by a powerful dark magic."

"My Lord, we will do our best, but my company is too small for such a task." Feren protested, reinforcing his point with a shake of his head.

"Which is why I am making you Chief Commander of the entire army, answering only to me. Choose whatever detachments you see fit for the task."

"My Lord King, I am honored," Feren said putting his hand over his heart and bowing his head.

"And I have made Tauriel Chief Commander of all the Guardsmen, including my own and answering only to me."

Tauriel put her hand over her heart as she saw Feren do and bowed her head.

Before words of congratulations were given to slow things down, Thranduil continued on without pause, remembering how he disliked these meetings. Legolas use to handle all the administration for the kingdom. He realized ruefully how much he was going to miss his son—and not just for his love—but as Prince of the Realm.

"Your responsibility is guard the Realm and the Woodlands within and without our borders. If we can not vanquish the Evil at its source, then we can fight to keep it contained here before it spreads to other lands."

Tauriel gave him a small, satisfied smile that he was using her words and finally thinking beyond their own walls.

"I want our elven-path cleaned up and repaired, and make plans to enlarge it where ever possible. Do not hesitate to cut down the blighted trees. And that bridge must be repaired and build new ones where other people have attempted to cross by boat. And by all means, I want a regular patrol on that path day and

night—not to police it—but to keep it safe."

Eyes widen and mouths gaped at him as though he had spoken gibberish.

"Sire?" Feren asked finally finding his voice. Word had spread that the battle had changed the Elvenking, although no one knew to what extent and wondered how long it would last.

Thranduil sighed impatiently, annoyed that no one was keeping up with him and then he reminded himself to be patient. The battle had changed things for everyone on many levels but at differing paces of recovery.

He took several sips of wine and then smirked. "Perhaps if we make the road easier and safer for travelers, they will move through more quickly and be less annoying—like the Company of Thorin Oakenshield had been."

The table occupants relaxed somewhat and chuckled at hearing the old Thranduil.

"Or can we not just close it to travelers?" One of the commanders asked.

"No, that would not be wise. It is the quicker route to reach Dale and Erebor, and in the days to come, people will want to use it whether we like it or not. I want complete control of its use then to keep as much order and peace in our Woodlands as possible."

"Yes, my Lord King."

"The task of building up the Path will fall on the Army—no one group will remain idle. And when they are not working, I want them in training. I want strategies, maneuvers and countermeasures in place based on the nature and extent of the injuries sustained in battle—Remily will have that information," He indicated the Chief Healer with a nod, who in turn, nodded back.

"And the weaponry of the en—dwarves." He was about to say "enemy", but could not rightly address the dwarves as such anymore. They were all now allies against The One. His eyes fell on the broken twirley-whirley. "What do we know of this thing?"

Feren spoke up as an attendant refilled his goblet. "They are clever—it is a clever mechanism" he corrected himself in how he referenced the dwarves. He could not bring himself to give them credit for brilliance, regardless of the alliance. "This was not broken in battle. We found several devices that had not discharged on the field. This is what happened when we tried to take it a part to study it."

"That is clever..." Thranduil agreed as he inspected it. "Can we not duplicate it or create something similar?"

"We are working on it, Sire. And welcome any ideas anyone might have." Feren concluded.

"Good." Thranduil stood and raised his glass. "I am pleased with the promotions and confident in you all. Middle-earth will endure and we will prevail."

"Here, here." Everyone got up to leave.

"Oh, and when you build that thing," Thranduil added with a smirk, "it will be given a proper elvish name, not "twirley-whirlies."

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## Appendix G2

\*1. =DOS-13, "King and Captain".

\*2., \*5. & \*8. =Referencing the last part of my fic, Aftermath.

\*3. =The Hobbit chp 9, "Barrels out of Bond"—yes, a reference from the book!

\*4. =B5A-18, "Last Move in a Master Plan".

\*6. =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. =<http://tolkiengateway.net/wiki/Mirkwood>

[No twirley-whirlies, cups or Bresalden were harmed during the production of this story. Woodland Spray's fabulous Foxberry Juice 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 to be a part of the meeting and not for profit. jk2017 tyl]