

Elvish Medicine
by Bavand

(Fic 6-Takes place several months after the battle.)

*"I've heard tell of the wonders of Elvish medicine... That was a privilege to witness." (Oin to Fili)^{*1}*

Part 1 of 3
"The Physician"

Thranduil headed for the lower level floor, meeting the attendant sent to fetch him half way. He brushed past him without slowing down. He had heard the ruckus long before the attendant would have reached him.

Annoyance at the interruption in solitude—or a possible breach of security—clouded the Elvenking's face. It did not sound like an attack, more like something had happened and they knew he would not like it: "We can not bring them in here", "I said ease him down gently", "He is not going to like it", "He won't allow it", "I say you take them back outside before he sees them..."

He strode down the ramp and the frenzy before him froze in a hush. Two elves waited by their horses, still holding the reins. Several wranglers stood nearby, unsure of what to do. A small group stood staring down at the floor by the third horse with no rider.

They all came to attention when they saw him, but he could not take his eyes off the two bodies strapped to the backs of the first two horses. They had been covered over with cloaks so he could not see who or what they were.

The cloud turned to an ashen mask as he stared at the lumps under the coverings. "Tauriel!" he snapped as a fear started straining his heart. He fully expected one of the elves to bow his head and step aside, indicating which lump was hers.

"Here, my Lord." Tauriel stood up from kneeling within the group. The whole front of her uniform was covered in blood where she had cradled the injured for the ride. She stared at her king, daring him to do the right thing. "He is hurt badly, Sire—we must help him!"

The still annoyed, Elvenking silently breathed a sigh of relief.

"You mean, the dwarf is injured," Elros, one of the Gatekeepers, corrected contemptuously. Tauriel silenced him with a glare.

The gathering parted to let Thranduil through. Remily, the Chief Healer, was crouched on floor examining the battered and broken dwarf laid out on a stretcher from Healer Hall. He obviously had been the victim of some huge, ferocious animal.

Bile rose up in Thranduil's throat, not because of the grisly injuries, but because it was, in fact, a dwarf in his Realm. It was one thing to fight side by side with "Durin's Folk" against a common enemy, but to have one under his roof was an entirely different matter. He could sympathize with Elros's reaction but fought down the revulsion to act rationally and regally.

"Can you save him?"

"I believe so, but we need to act quickly. Tauriel did her best, but the ride caused more injury." Remily replied critically.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Tauriel whispered as she paled from her failure.

"No, no, Tauriel, you did fine, but he is barely hanging on."

"So he is not fit to travel at all?"

"Absolutely not!" Remily stood up to face the Elvenking squarely, wiping her bloody hands on her apron.

"But you believe you can save him?"

"Yes, but we need to act quickly! My Lord King, he is not the enemy."

"No, of course not," Thranduil replied smoothly. He stepped back, and so did the others, to give them space. "Go then and report to me when you can."

Remily did not pause for formalities but directed her assistant to lift the other end of the stretcher. "One, two, three, lift!" And they were gone.

"And what of these others?" Thranduil asked Tauriel, who did not hide her relief that they were going to help the dwarf.

"His brothers, mostly likely from the resemblance. They were already dead when we found them just beyond the north-east border. It appears they were trying to cut a path through the woods on the north side of the palace, which I would guess, is to join ours without having to go past our main gate."

"I see..."

"My Lord, I do not like the idea of wargs—Remily said that is what it looks like, a warg attack. I do not like them coming so close to our border, but the—"

"Nor do I, but we will speak of it later. We must attend to them now." Thranduil responded with a slight tilt of his head in the direction of the bodies.

Without raising his voice, he never had any need for it to exercise his power, Thranduil gave orders to everyone on the gate floor. "We will return their dead, but it is imperative you must bring back one of their physicians as soon as possible. I want no recriminations regarding his care while he is in our hands. Unbind those bodies. Ready a wagon and lay them out as respectfully as possible and then put a nice clean white sheet over them. And then lay their sword on top of them for identification as we would for burial. Pull the wagon up to the main gate and wait until you are hailed. And above all, do not draw any weapons. Understood?"

"Yes, my Lord." Tauriel bowed her head in acknowledgment before turning around and barking out orders. "You there, you heard the King, fetch the wagon quickly!.."

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When the dwarf came into view across the cavern of flyways and walkways, Thranduil and Tauriel exchanged glances of surprise. He was leading the way with the elven attendant, Nis, courteously carrying his things trailing behind (he had not been searched at the gate in an effort to show good faith since he came alone). He had been here before as part of the Company of Thorin Oakenshield and they were amazed he remembered the way. He had been marched in as a prisoner, briefly presented to the Elvenking and then taken directly to the dungeons.²

They watched as Nis stopped at the shortcut and, smiling politely, indicated the way to go with an tilt of her head. Delighted, the dwarf continued on his way to the throne.

Thranduil stood by the base of his throne to greet the guest with respect by being on the same level

rather than sitting high above him. He was flanked by Tauriel and Bresalden, his Chief Steward and confidant, while several attendants and officers were arranged behind them.

Nis stayed at the base of the stairs while the dwarf came up on to the dais.

"My Lord King Thranduil, Oin, at your service." He bowed low in the customary greeting of Durin's Folk. Thranduil stepped forward with a kind smile and inclined his head in acknowledgement.

Oin bowed again. "And on behalf of Lord Dain, King Under the Mountain, and all our Folk, we thank you for returning Kizan and Kuzan for burial. Aye, that was a surprise that, to show such respect for our dead. I presume you have their brother Kazan in your care? When they were long in returning, we began to wonder... attacked by a warg by the look of it."

While the Dwarf was presenting himself, Thranduil and Tauriel glanced at Nis out of the corners of their eyes. She deftly showed them his two bags and the contents: a satchel containing several sets of clothing, two grooming kits, tins of meat and one small pick axe; and a harmless medicine bag.

Then Oin turned to Tauriel and bowed to her as well, catching them off guard. "And to you, Healer-Lady."

"I'm not a healer," she responded, smiling at the honor. She paused while he took out his ear horn to hear. "I am the commander of the guard."

Thranduil discreetly approved the contents of the dwarf's belongs, which were quickly repacked.

"Oh? Then elvish medicine is a wonder you all possess? I hope to see more. Aye, that's why I came. I had seen it before and welcomed the opportunity to see it again."

"You are a physician then?" Thranduil asked.

"When? Why as soon as the lad is fit to travel, we'll be on our way. We'll not impose upon your hospitality any longer than necessary, you have my word." Oin's smile was congenial but his eyes remained guarded as he looked around at them all.

Several elves chuckled at the misunderstanding, but Thranduil frowned as he studied that inferior thing sticking out of the dwarf's ear. He leaned forward slightly, locked eyes with Oin and pitched his voice directly to the ear horn. "You misunderstand."

"Aye?!" Oin gasped as his eyes popped open wide at hearing quite clearly the quietly commanding voice of the Elvenking.

"You are welcome to stay as long as you like and the lad—Kazan—is fully recovered. We have addressed his injuries to the best of our ability, but the Chief Healer is looking forward to learning about dwarvish medicine and an exchange of sciences."

"Aye! That is very generous, my Lord King. I was hopin' for such opportunity between healers." Oin replied enthusiastically. He took out the ear horn and studied it, wondering how he had been able to hear so clearly like never before. "By my beard," he muttered to himself, "must be he acoustics in here..."

Suddenly aware of all the eyes on him, he looked up sheepishly from his distraction. He shoved the horn in his pocket and rubbed his hands together, ready to get down to business. "Well now, I best be getting on to the lad and see how he's fairing."

"Tauriel will escort you to your rooms and Healer Hall." Thranduil stepped back in dismissal as Tauriel came forward.

"This way, Oin," she gestured for him to proceed, but he came up beside her as though talking to an old

comrade.

"Commander of the Guard, eh?" Oin marveled. "You may not remember, but I was there in Lake-town when you performed that cure on our lad, Kili."³

At the bottom of the steps, Nis turned aside for them to pass—his bags looking as though nothing had been disturbed—then dutifully followed behind.

"I remember," Tauriel whispered, but Oin seemed not to notice the hint of sadness in her reply or see it in her eyes.

"It was a privilege then and it's a privilege to be here now, I say. And I brought some herbs and some instruments..."

Thranduil waited till they were out of ear shot before turning to Bresalden. "That grotesque cowbell in his ear—we can do better than that, can we not?"

"Yes, Sire, my thoughts exactly. The design is obvious but the smiths will need some measurements of his ear. I can obtain those by observation."

"Yes... and when you look in on them in Healer Hall, do extend an invitation of dining with us this evening to our guest. Assign Nis to be their attendant. She seems at ease in his presence but can be formidable if necessary—not that I am anticipating any trouble. For this diplomacy to work, those involved must be comfortable with each other... but I believe he has a mind for diplomacy as well.

"Yes, my Lord." The Chief Steward bowed his head with a smile of approval before leaving.

Thranduil remained on the dais, watching the retreating figures of Oin and Tauriel. "A dwarf... in my realm... as guest..." he mused with mixed emotions. "Yet he was willing to come here—alone—without his own escort... to learn from us..."

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Appendix H

*1. & *3.= DOS-44, "Elvish Medicine".

*2.= DOS-11, "The Woodland Realm".

[No satchels, grotesque cowbells or Durin's Folk were harmed during the production of this part.]

Part 2 of 3
“Clear as a Bell”

The Elvenking had extended an invitation to Oin to dine with him every night as an honored guest, but the dwarf only came that first time. He was obviously uncomfortable with such portentous prestige and Thranduil did not press him further.

Dwarves preferred meat over the vegetarian diet of the Eldar and so Thranduil had fish brought in as a palatable substitute for the duration of their visit. He had ordered a barrel of a popular ale, but Oin surprised him with a keen taste for red wine—especially the Elvenking's best. And so a crate was sent up to Healer Hall for all their meals there.¹

It did not take long for a mutual affinity to develop between the two healers and they learned much from each other. Although he was free to explore the rest of the Woodland Realm, he never left the Healer Hall, except on the day he got his present...

Thranduil handed another bottle to his Chief Wine Steward, Bavand, before moving to the next open crate.

They were in the wine cellar, inspecting the latest shipment. Her skills as a sommelier were impeccable and never came under scrutiny, but occasionally, Thranduil joined her simply as one of his favorite pastimes. And she did not begrudge him the company, being one of the few in the realm who was not intimidated by his presence. In fact, she appreciated his interest as a wine connoisseur and enjoyed their discussions.

Bavand took the bottle and set it on the table in line with the others—one from each crate—and popped the stoppers off so the wine could breath before being sampled.

The Elvenking glanced in the last crate. “The stoppers have a slight perforation in several of these bottles.”

“Shall we return the crate, my Lord?” Bavand asked, taking note of vineyard label.

He pulled out the offending bottle and handed it to her. “The seal has not been breached, perhaps others might still be able to enjoy it.”

Thranduil seated himself at the head of the small table while the Wine Steward placed two wine goblets by each bottle from the tray. Next, she put the plate of breads and cheeses between them before sitting down herself.

Because the bottles had round bottoms, they were served in decoratively carved wine stands.² She had arranged the first bottle to be within his reach, knowing he also savored opening the first one himself. He poured several swallows into the goblets and handed her one.

They both swirled the wine, sniffed its bouquet before taking a sip. Various expressions of impressions were given before Bavand nodded her head in approval.

But Thranduil was not so sure. He was about to take another swallow when he was interrupted by the flurry of footsteps hurrying down the stairway to them. Absolutely beside himself with pure joy, Oin burst in on them uninvited—but not unexpected. The Elvenking had been looking forward to this moment regardless of how ill-timed it was.

Tauriel, Remily, Bresalden and Nis finally caught up with the dwarf, voicing apologies to the Elvenking for the intrusion. Nonplussed, he waved them aside and allowed himself to get caught up in the excitement they all felt.

"By Durin's Beard!" Oin kept muttering and clapping his hands as he came right up to Thranduil, too excited to heed royal personal space. "This!" he exclaimed with tears streaming down his eyes as he pointed to the small device in his ear, "this, by Durin's Beard is probably one of the most precious gifts I'll ever live to get!"

Finally, he caught his breath and stepped back as he carefully removed the ear piece. He held it out for Thranduil to see as though it would be new to him as well, not realizing how the Elvenking had approved its construction every step of the way.

A translucent silver-white funnel in the shape of a bell had been seamlessly molded in one piece to the stem. Thanks to the Chief Steward's keen eyes for measurements, it was artfully crafted for maximum acoustics and comfort in his ear. But the best part came in the form of a hook that had been designed to curl around the outside of his ear to hold it in place.

"It's as light as air and indestructible I'll wager. And as clever as anyone could have imagined! Wonder why we never thought of it ourselves... hah! No matter, it's another example of elvish ingenuity and I am eternally grateful."

He stepped back as he fitted it back on his ear and bowed low. "See? Doesn't fall off," he said to ground before straightening back up. He clapped his hands again. "And my hands are free to work and I can hear!"

He took another step back, suddenly mindful of his disruption. "Oh, begging your pardon, my Lord, for interrupting your snack."

"No need to apologize and I am glad we were able to help you."

Oin took a moment to look around and noticed a lock had been fitted onto the lever that opened the empty barrel hatchway. He absentmindedly nodded at the security measure as he recalled how they had escaped the Realm of the Woodland King by way of the Forest River, each dwarf ensconced in a barrel.^{*3}

"It seems to work better than we could have imagined." Thranduil commented, bringing the Dwarf back to the present.

"Aye, it does! It does!"

Thranduil schooled his features back into regal neutrality and looked over the plate of cheeses as a form of dismissal.

"Right. Well, again, I thank you from the depth of my heart. Well, I best be getting back to the lad." He gave another small bow and turned back to the group on the stairs. "Found my way here, but I'm not sure how to get back, so lead on." He gestured for some of the others to proceed him and started up the steps. He stopped short when he heard a wintry whisper in his new ear horn.

"Oin, you are welcome."

Wide-eyed, the dwarf turned around. The Elvenking had not taken his eyes off the plate or pitched his voice in any special way, yet Oin heard the whisper as clear as a bell. He could only shake his head in wonder as a few more tears watered his eyes before continuing on.

Thranduil listened to the retreating footsteps except for one. He knew Tauriel was bringing up the rear and had now paused on the steps. Most likely she wanted to give him some sort of pleased approval of the gift. He did not bother to look up, but gave her a playful "go away" gesture of his hand before setting a slice of cheese on a piece of bread.

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Appendix I

Yes, yes, this probably the one and only time I will make a cameo in one of my stories because Bavand could be an elven sort of name and this was the perfect place to do it since I am a bit of a wine connoisseur. Plus I'm not intimidated by Thrandy and really do enjoy his company—oh my yes!.

*1. =Per John Callen in *An Unexpected Journey Official Movie Guide*, p111—After all, actors are the most informed about what their characters like and dislike.

*2. =DOS-Appendix 10 (extended release dvd), "Realms of the 3rd Age."—The bit about the wine bottles was very interesting and were designed by John Howe. Also loved how the producers very generously had bottles made for the cast and crew since they kept disappearing off the set.

*3. =DOS-15, "Barrels Out of Bond".

[No wine bottles, cheeses or the barrel lever were harmed during the production of this part. The old ear horn, aka "the inferior grotesque cowbell" was properly disposed of in the recycle bin and eventually became a tin cup.]

Part 3 of 3
"The Box"

Recovery of the lad, Kazan, took several weeks past a full month.

There would be a farewell feast, but it was only proper that the patient be presented to the Elvenking for formal leave when recuperation was complete. Granted, he could have easily traveled while the limbs were still in their casts, but Remily, the Chief Healer, and Oin both wanted to see how well the dwarvish bones had mended using elven methods.

Though his hands were folded across his chest judgmentally, Thranduil was smiling as he waited for them at the base of throne. Tauriel, Bresalden and several of the other healers were there as well. Trays of goblets and wine decanters had been set out and attendants were standing by ready to serve them.

Oin had brought several changes of clothing, including more formal finery—which they both proudly wore now—as Remily escorted them into the presence of the Elvenking.

She came up the steps ahead of them and bowed her head respectfully.

"My Lord King Thranduil, may I present Kazan for your consideration in our joint effort of healing and science." She bowed her head again and stepped aside.

Kazan came forward and presented himself with a bow and the formal greeting of Durin's Folk. "Kazan, at your service."

Thranduil inclined his head with an elated smile before stepping forward to look him over. "You are well then and feel fit to travel?"

"Aye, my Lord King, and ready to get back to work!" Kazan answered enthusiastically. He gave Remily a quick wink before she slipped back to stand beside Oin behind him.

Thranduil had been studying the results of the newly restored dwarf as they had approached. He remembered the badly mangled, barely breathing body that had been brought in and was impressed with the perfectly straight and strong limbs. He also knew how all the internal injuries had been treated along with other health issues Remily discovered, including some kidney stones, the mildly inflamed appendix and various troublesome bone spurs. And the facial scars were barely noticeable. It gave the boy a roguish charm that females would, no doubt, find attractive.

The process had not been pain free but apparently the dwarves had a "concoction" that relaxed the patient and a salve that numbed the injured area. Unaware that the Eldar would have no need for such remedies, Oin graciously shared the formulas and Remily gratefully accepted them for future use to help other people.

All and all, Remily had done an excellent job as chief healer—he expected no less—and as a diplomat of science. The sharing of knowledge had been a success.

Thranduil unfolded his arms and put his hands behind his back as he started a slow circle around the dwarf for inspection while he spoke his mind.

"The life of the Eldar is endless..." The Elvenking's articulation had an ethereal eloquence and everyone within earshot of the throne stopped to listen. "We are immortal, Durin's Folk are not. And yet bone is bone, flesh is flesh and blood is blood. It can be broken, it can be torn and it can be spilt regardless of the life to which it belongs.

"The difference lies in the nature and speed of recovery and I have often marveled how the science and the magic of our Light changes the process of healing both for us and in other peoples. But what of the

science and magic others may hold and can that knowledge be shared?"

Thranduil paused with a smile in front of Oin and the dwarf nodded in agreement as he touched the elven ear horn he wore.

"Our peoples stood against each other in battle," the Elvenking continued on around. "We broke bone, tore flesh and spilled blood until an evil far greater than any differences shadowing our hearts crawled out of the very pit of Darkness. And the bond of a common enemy formed an alliance of war that would not have been found otherwise, if at all.

"The alliance is tenuous at best. Those for Good had no choice but to turn to each other and join forces against Evil. But to us standing here today," he stopped in front of Kazan, completing his circle, "we now know that the blending of sciences can form another bond of healing and strengthen an alliance for life that benefits us all."

Oin nudged Remily and whispered, "fine speech-maker, your king. Wish our king—"

"Shhhh," Tauriel hissed with a smirk.

Towering over Kazan, Thranduil made eye contact with Remily and Oin. "Well done. Consider yourselves highly commended in this Realm. I applaud you both." He stepped back, gave them a formal bow of his head and closed his eyes. There was a moment of silence after which Thranduil held his left hand out to his side where he knew Bresalden would step up and give him a glass of wine.

That was the signal for the attendants to serve everyone else. The others came around to stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle with Thranduil, whose head remained bowed.

Kazan glanced around nervously, suddenly stuck in the middle and wondering what was going on. Remily grabbed his shirt collar and pulled him back between her and Tauriel.

Thranduil waited until he sensed everyone had been served. The attendants had also each taken a glass and formed an outer ring around the group.

When everyone was ready, the Elvenking opened his eyes and with a satisfied smile, put his glass straight out in front of him. Everyone else followed suit so that the glasses formed a center ring of crystal that sparkled in the sunlight streaming down from a slit in the rock above.

"Though the circumstances were cruel, the opportunity to share science between differing folk was great. To more alliances born out of Good and not of war!" Thranduil toasted in a clear strong voice. In unison, they raised their glasses in a salute till the rims touched with a melodic clink. The elves gave a merry cheer and they all took a drink.

"And now to the feast!" As the host, Thranduil gestured for the guests and others to proceed him.

"I did not think Elves ever celebrated anything." Kazan said to Remily, Tauriel and Oin as they walked along the flyway to the Great Hall.

"What do you mean?" Tauriel asked

"Aye, what the lad means," Oin piped in answering for him before they were out of earshot, "and I have to admit I agree with him, is that you all seem so serious..."

"Well, that was not so bad," Bresalden teased when he saw how Thranduil was staying put to watch the group move across the cavern. "The Woodland Realm survived having dwarves under its roof."

"Of course it did!" Thranduil agreed jovially as he finished the last swallow of wine. He held out his glass

for a refill.

"And you. You survived as well, I might add."

Thranduil took a deep breath and another swallow of wine. He studied the group as they disappeared through the doors to the Great Hall. His eyes narrowed. He had come to associate dwarves with loss: They were part of the reason he lost his beloved wife, they cheated him out of the gems he commissioned and then there was Legolas. Yes, his son's broken heart—because Tauriel only had eyes for that dwarf, Kili—put him on the path to a greater destiny, but would the prince ever come back to his own inheritance?^{*1}

Destiny... it had presented an opportunity to build peace and Thranduil had to admit he was glad they took advantage of it. In some ways, it also represented closure for him. Dwarves were allies who could be kept at arms length—and that was that.

"Of course I did! Let us go to the feast and celebrate!
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Several more months passed and life in the Woodland Realm had settled down without incident until Tauriel came to him in his audience chamber with Nis.

"My Lord," Tauriel took a deep breath after bowing her head and decided the direct approach was best. Even though the "science alliance" had been a success, there was still an undercurrent of dislike towards dwarves. "Kazan is here with two other dwarves. They want to give you something."

"How nice. Let them present it to Remily, she did all the work and I have no need for any gifts."

"Sire, it is a box, about this big," Tauriel measured out the dimensions with her hands. "They came heavily armed to guard it—arms which they willingly surrendered at the gate—and they insisted it can only be presented to you."

Thranduil's eyes went wide with surprise, then narrowed into suspicion. It could not be...

"My Lord?" Tauriel asked some what taken aback by his reaction.

"Keep them at the gate. I will receive it at my throne and will send Nis back to you when I am ready. Summon Remily and those that had been involved with his care. Oh, and make absolutely sure they have been relieved of all arms—I do not care about discretion now." Dwarves were allies he had wanted to keep at arms length and now this?

"Yes, my Lord," Tauriel bowed her head in obedience, but concerned curiosity got the better of her. "But what is wrong? Surely you do not think them a threat? What is it?"

"Something from long ago," Thranduil whispered, then finished with a hiss, "that should have been left there!" He turned away to gaze into the fish pond as a form of dismissal and to regain his composure.

...There are gems in the mountain that I, too, desire. White gems of pure starlight.^{*2}
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He wanted to be on his throne and regretted staying on the dais with Bresalden, Remily and Tauriel—anything to be as high and as far away from The Box as possible. He recognized it instantly as he watched them approach and could not believe the dwarves would insult him with it after all they had done for them.

He kept his fingers clenched behind his back and a pleasant smile frozen on his face. Ridiculous, he thought and resolved not let those gems—if that is what is... but of course it was, what else would it be—get the best of him.

Kazan was in the lead, genuinely glad to have had the opportunity to deliver it, completely unaware of the history behind what he was presenting. He was flanked by two other dwarves, one of which was carrying The Box.

"My Lord King Thranduil, Kazan, at your service." He bowed with the customary greeting and winked at the elf-ladies. "I bring greetings and a delivery from Lord Dain, King Under the Mountain."

Thranduil inclined his head in acknowledgement but could not bring himself to come any closer when Kazan pulled out an envelop from his coat pocket. He could see the dwarves were becoming nervous at his reaction and fought for inner balance.

A slight tilt of Thranduil's head told Bresalden to take it and read it. The other two dwarves exchanged glances of ill-ease as did Tauriel and Remily—the Elvenking's behavior was odd to say the least.

Bresalden broke the seal of the king and opened the envelope. He glanced at the sheet and cleared his throat before reading:

"To Lord Thranduil, esteemed King of the Woodland Realm, from your servant, Dain. On behalf of all of Durin's Folk and myself, please accept our profound gratitude in the saving of Kazan's life and the extraordinary gift given to Oin.

"And now I ask that you also accept our deepest apologies in the extreme delay of delivering these gems to you. We have no defense other than, perhaps an inexcusable error in bookkeeping, and pray you accept them now without further delay.

With sincere regards and admiration,

Lord Dain, King Under the Mountain."

Anxious now, Kazan took The Box from the other dwarf, gave a little bow and opened the lid.

There they were, the White Gems of Lasgalen...³ The necklace was splendidly arrayed on top of a bed of shining, sparkling gems of pure starlight just as they were hundreds of years ago when they slammed the lid down on his fingers.⁴

Everyone gasped except Thranduil who felt like he had been kicked in the stomach. "No..." he hissed in a wintry whisper.

The maelstrom he thought he had put to rest reared up and threatened to engulf him. He took an involuntary step back trying to regain his equilibrium.

So long ago... and they dared to give them to him now?!

"You would go to war over a handful of gems?" (Bard) // "The heirlooms of my people are not lightly forsaken."⁵

The Eldar exchanged glances of alarm, Durin's Folk paled in alarmed bewilderment.

Tauriel saw out of the corner of her eye Kazan reach for his sword, but he did not have it—it had been wise to divest them of their weapons. She tried to reassure him with a smile, but it was a thin one.

The guards at the base of the dais stairs that were more for show and mostly ignored, suddenly came to

life and moved into position, ready to spring to the Elvenking's defense. Tauriel tried to wave them back with a quick motion of her hand, but they ignored her since they reported directly to Thranduil—or would have to Legolas..

"Sire?" Bresalden whispered gravely, glancing over his shoulder at his stricken king. Thranduil gave him a slight shake of his head and took a deep breath. The Chief Steward cleared his throat then and tried to give the dwarves a reassuring smile that fell flat.

So long ago... "Those gems were not all your wife left you, my friend." (Gandalf) "She gave you a son. Tell me, which would she have you value more?"⁶

So long ago...! They have no value now! She is gone and Legolas is gone! By the hand of these dwarves—this is a mockery!

So... long... ago... No, not these dwarves. He looked up and locked eyes with Kazan. He took another deep breath. They saved Kazan's life and he realized, had the situation been reversed, Durin's Folk would have done the same for his people.

A kind and compassionate smile suffused his face as he came forward. "Forgive me, I was over come. They are even more beautiful then I remembered."

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief, not realizing they had been holding their collective breaths. The dais guards faded back to their respective sides to become statues again.

Kazan smiled gamely. "Are they to your liking, then, my Lord? I've never seen gems like these before. They look... well, they look like..."

"Pure starlight." Thranduil finished in a soft, silky breath. Then he gestured for the others to gather around. "Come, have a look."

The other two dwarves had never seen them and came around. "Aye, "starlight", that is what they look like."

Tauriel, Remily and the other healers moved in for a closer look, allowing Thranduil to easily and unobtrusively back away from them to Bresalden.

Tauriel reached for one, then stopped with an inquiring look. "May I?"

"Please do." Thranduil allowed.

She gingerly reached in and plucked one gem out. She held it up between her thumb and forefinger to the light and it seemed as if she was holding a little star. She and Remily oohed and ahhhed.

Bresalden handed the Elvenking a glass of wine and they both took another step back at the same time so as not to be heard.

"Do you remember our conversation the night of their farewell feast after the toast?" Thranduil asked while an attendant served the Chief Steward some wine.

"Yes, I believe I said something to the effect of, 'the Woodland Realm survived having dwarves under its roof'."

"Yes... and I, in my thinking, thought I had put all dwarvish issues to rest."

"Ah yes, "allies to keep at arm's length", perhaps?"

Thranduil rarely showed surprise, but this he could not hide. "Very astute."

"Not really," Bresalden replied with a chuckle. "Your father voiced a similar sentiment once and you are much like him."

They fell into a companionable silence as they watched each person hold up their own little starlight.

Finally, Bresalden asked what the Elvenking wanted done with the gems.

"Distribute them among all the warriors and the families of the Fallen. Those are the gems they so valiantly went to war over. Be sure to compensate Remily and the Healer Hall and those working on repairing the Elven Path and..." Thranduil shrugged his shoulders. "Just distribute it all as you see fit—you know how to administer such things."

"You do not want any of it for yourself, my Lord?"

"No..." Thranduil paused thinking, then finally shook his head and finished in a wintery whisper, "...they have lost their value for me. Dispense them as you see fit."

"Yes, my Lord?" She put the gem back in The Box, but Thranduil told her to keep it. They all could keep one. "That is very generous, my Lord, thank you." She went around Kazan to stand before the Elvenking.

"Our visitors must be weary from the journey and need refreshment. Please see to it and serve them in the Gallery. And make arrangements with Kazan for us to aid them in building the path to join ours. They may be working beyond our immediate border, but anything involving the woodlands should remain under our care."

"Yes, my Lord, I will—" And then the unthinkable happened...

In one flowing motion, Tauriel stepped back and started to turn, while at the same time Kazan had shifted position behind her before closing the lid of The Box. They bumped into each other and The Box was upended out of his hands.

A half a-million tiny stars skidded across the dais and down the steps. The other half a-million went flying through the air to rain down on them, while others went as far as the rivulet encircling the throne and even over the platform.

The hush was heavy with alarm and no one dared move except Thranduil. He carefully crept over the gems and picked up the necklace laying on top of a small pile. "Bresalden," he calmly called out.

"Yes- my- Lord-?" The Chief Steward could barely breath and groaned over the mess. It would take ages, and ages and ages to clean it up and they would never, ever be sure if they had ever retrieved them all.

"Perhaps I will keep the necklace," Thranduil said with a smirk.

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The author would like to extend her gratitude and dedicate this story to "Remily" and "Kazan" for all their encouragement to do this series and belief in me as a writer...

Appendix J

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

*2., *3. & *5. =B5A-14, "The Elvenking's aid".

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

*6. =B5A-The Appendices Part 12 (extended release dvd), "The People of Middle-Earth, Thranduil"—Like

I said before, this is the crux of the whole change of heart thing.

[No gems, formal finery or Kazan was harmed during the production of this last part and the finale of the series.

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 see what all the fuss was over these white gems of pure starlight—I got to keep one—and not for profit. jk2017 tyl]

Thranduil has left the gates to the Woodland Realm open to all peoples of Light (and if you happen to find a white gem on the floor, please return it to Bresalden, the Chief Steward).