**A Hobbit's Bond**

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/49281136.

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|---|---|
| Rating: | Explicit |
| Archive Warning: | No Archive Warnings Apply |
| Category: | M/M |
| Fandom: | The Hobbit - All Media Types |
| Relationships: | Bilbo Baggins & Thorin Oakenshield, Bilbo Baggins/Thorin Oakenshield, Bungo Baggins/Belladonna Took |
| Characters: | Bilbo Baggins, Thorin Oakenshield, Bungo Baggins, Belladonna Took, Lobelia Sackville-Baggins, Ferumbras Took III, Gandalf \| Mithrandir |
| Additional Tags: | Alternate Universe - Crack, Kid Fic, Kind Of, Young Bilbo Baggins, Thorin is a Softie, Protective Thorin, Blacksmith Thorin, Alternate Universe - Soulmates, Dwarven Ones \| Soulmates, Hobbiton, Dwarves in the Shire, Fluff and Crack, Crack and Angst, Crack Treated Seriously, Attempt at Humor, Soul Bond, heartsongs, Author Is Sleep Deprived, and going through medical menopause, Accidental Marriage, Oblivious Thorin, Sassy Bilbo Baggins, Pre-Slash, Rating May Change, Age Difference, Cultural Differences, Hurt/Comfort, Angst with a Happy Ending, Virgin Bilbo Baggins, experienced Thorin Oakenshield, Alternate Universe - No One Ring, Sexual Inexperience, Dwarf & Hobbit Cultural Differences, Getting Together, Freeform, Frottage, First Time Blow Jobs, Rimming, Oral Sex, Non-Traditional Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, of sorts |
| Language: | English |
| Collections: | Must Read: Again and Again |
| Stats: | Published: 2023-08-11 Completed: 2023-09-26 Words: 58,192 Chapters: 17/17 |

# A Hobbit's Bond

by mordelle

Summary

Young Bilbo Baggins, a fauntling with a heart full of gold, proposes to the new blacksmith in town–to the amusement of all. Unbeknownst to the blacksmith, who accepts amidst the watchful gazes of the hobbits, this seemingly innocent proposition carries far more weight for the earnest faunt than initially perceived.

Notes

Idk, the idea wouldn't leave me alone. Just forget I've promised anything. I am UNRELIABLE, apparently!
Basically, I had another soulmate au that was born from my other fic, A King's Bond. Hence why this fic is called A Hobbit's Bond. Bad title, but I've got nothing else right now and I am so sleep deprived and HUNGRYYY.

See the end of the work for more notes

# Chapter 1

The onset of autumn brought forth a refreshing breeze that swept through the  forge. As the relatively new blacksmith in the quaint village of Hobbiton, he found solace in the gentle touch of the wind against his perspiring skin, providing a welcome relief from the intense heat radiating from his forge. Pausing briefly, his hammer suspended mid-swing, Thorin took a moment to close his eyes and inhale the delicate fragrance of autumn blossoms. The fact that the Shire consistently exuded such a floral aroma, day and night, never ceased to astound him. During daylight hours, the air carried the essence of blooms, while the nighttime atmosphere mixed with the delicious scent of sugary confections and pastries being baked in Hobbit holes. Or Smials as Thorin had learned to call them. It was a sweet and endearing characteristic of this land, The Shire.

Thorin, a dwarf of substantial stature and proud lineage, harbored no inclination to pass judgment on the quaintness of the Shire, nor its inhabitants. In truth, he appreciated the distinctiveness of this sweet and unconventional place. Despite the hobbits' diminutive physical stature, their hearts were as steadfast as any dwarf's, imbued with an undeniable spirit and determination. As a dwarf who had witnessed the rise and fall of kingdoms, the forging of alliances, and the clashing of mighty armies, Thorin now understood that strength could be manifested in many forms. The hobbits might lack the brawn of warriors or the grandeur of fortresses, but they were fine and gentle folk, with pristine manners, a bit fussy and noses metaphorically as big as their feet–for how much they gossiped.

Doubts had once clouded Thorin's mind as he contemplated the prospect of establishing his life amidst the green hills of the Shire. He held reservations, fearing that his blacksmithing trade might prove insufficient to sustain his family and companions within this tranquil landscape. After all, hobbits were renowned for their gentle nature, void of any King or organized military force. What possible role could a blacksmith fulfill in such an unassuming place?

However, a mere two months had transpired since their settlement on the outskirts of the village, and a remarkable turn of events had unfurled. Hobbits, drawn to them like a tide, had besieged their camp with fervent appeals for aid. Their pleas spanned an array of requests – repairs to plumbing, abodes, garden enclosures, greenhouses, farming implements, and even mundane items like pots and pans. The demand for Thorin's blacksmithing prowess had been unprecedented, eclipsing any business he had conducted in the bustling towns of both men and dwarves. It was a revelation that upended his previous assumptions.

Thorin and his nephews toiled tirelessly within the heart of the forge, laboring over metal and flame. Meanwhile, his companions seized upon opportunities to diversify their contributions, engaging in woodworking crafts, brewing ale, and crafting pottery, each trade contributing to the collective welfare. Furthermore, some members of his company had found employment as hired hands upon the fertile fields of the hobbits, just as the harvest season approached its zenith. They weren’t rolling in gold, far from it, but they always had full bellies and were able to send coin back to the Blue Mountains. The Shire's embrace of their skills had proved invaluable, sustaining their newfound way of life.

It was such a departure from his previous encounters that left Thorin grappling with a sense of cultural bewilderment for some time. The unwavering kindness and generosity exhibited by the hobbits stood in stark contrast to his prior experiences. Each passing day ushered in fresh insights, as Thorin witnessed firsthand the depth of their character and the extent of their unexpected kindness. The hobbits, in their unassuming stature, continually defied expectations, proving Thorin's previous assumptions wrong time and time again.

A smile gently tugged at Thorin's lips as he contemplated the enigmatic nature of hobbits. Raising his hammer with practiced precision, he allowed his thoughts to linger momentarily on their peculiar ways. Just as his arm began its downward arc, he swiftly opened his eyes. A wave of panic washed over him, for that timely instinct had spared an unimaginable tragedy. His hammer, had he remained oblivious, would have struck down upon a fragile Hobbit-child with wide hazel eyes locked in a state of paralyzed shock. The gravity of the near-miss seemed to reverberate between them.

"Mahal!" Thorin let out a string of curses in Khuzdul, his hammer relinquished to the ground with a thud. Before him stood the tiniest being he had ever laid eyes upon. Sunlight danced upon hair as bright as copper, casting a radiant gleam. The child remained frozen in place, their mouth agape and a trace of moisture glistening upon their nose, an endearing hallmark of youth. Thorin's heart softened as he took in the sight before him.

He quickly assumed the child’s lack of skirts and ribbons meant he was male by Hobbit standards. The child's unblinking gaze, unwavering and penetrating, seemed to pierce through Thorin's very soul. A sudden flutter within his chest prompted Thorin to take a step back, a hand instinctively pressed against his heart.

"Little Pebble," Thorin breathed, his voice a gentle rumble, "it is perilous for you to be in this place. Where is your mother?"

The Hobbit child remained in an eerie silence, seemingly carved like a statue. The child's height barely reached Thorin's knee, emphasizing his delicate size in contrast to the imposing figure of Thorin himself. With an amused shake of his head, Thorin attempted to dispel the child's stunned stillness by waving a hand before them, a gesture intended to break the spell of immobility. Thorin's lips curved into a gentle smile, sincere warmth shining through despite his imposing presence. The sight of the child, struck into silence before him, evoked a mixture of amusement and tenderness.

Suddenly, the turning of a few heads drew Thorin's attention, his nephews promptly rushing to his side with their characteristic energy. Fili and Kili, their curiosity piqued, flocked to the scene, their youthful enthusiasm immediately ignited.

"Oh, he's so cute!" Fili's declaration rang out, his voice filled with unabashed delight as he gazed upon the Hobbit-child.

Kili's reaction was no less intense, his emotions vividly expressed with flailing hands. "I'm going to die!" he exclaimed dramatically, his words punctuated by a heartfelt sob that carried with both amusement and endearment. "Can we keep him?!"

Indeed, Fili and Kili's sentiments were accurate. The Hobbit-child that stood before Thorin appeared to be the epitome of adorableness, surpassing even the endearing memory of cradling his nephews when they were infants in his strong arms. Thorin had held his infant nephews close, an overflow of affection and devotion coursing through his veins. But this Hobbit child seemed to possess an otherworldly charm, akin to a creature from a magical tale–with his big bare feet, pointed ears, and spun-gold curls.

The child's countenance spoke of unease, and Thorin was determined not to overwhelm the little one further. "Don't smother him," Thorin advised, his tone firm yet laced with concern. "He seems frightened enough as it is."

"Nah, I don't think so," Fili countered, his voice holding a note of contemplation. "I'd say he looks like he's... admiring you?"

Thorin snorted with a dismissive wave and redirected their attention. "Go, see if you can locate any hobbits who might be missing a child," he instructed, his voice more practical now. "They must be worried sick." The child's safety was of paramount concern, and Thorin was determined to ensure that the little one found his way back to his family.

The boys complied with matching pouts, swiftly carrying out Thorin's instructions. As they went on their way, Dwalin emerged by Thorin's side, his towering presence casting a shadow upon the scene. A deep frown etched across Dwalin's features, his gruff voice breaking the silence.

"Why is the bairn looking at ye like that?" Dwalin's question held an air of perplexity, his arm sweeping between Thorin and the Hobbit child in an attempt to gauge the nature of their interaction. The child's gaze, unwavering and unbroken, remained locked upon Thorin.

Thorin observed the child closely, his own intrigue mirrored by the steadfast interest the Hobbit held for him. Despite the absence of verbal discourse, the child's rhythmic breaths and flushed cheeks provided evidence of his living presence. It was a testament to the child's wonder that Thorin found himself equally captivated by this enigmatic encounter.

In a sudden twist, the child's small finger darted forth, pointing directly at Thorin's face. A brilliant smile unfurled across the little Hobbit's features, so intense that Thorin could have sworn it could blind him.

"Pwitty!" The exclamation burst forth from the Hobbit child's lips, his high-pitched voice resonating like a musical note that echoed through the forge. The child's excitement immediately drew the attention of those in their vicinity.

An expectant hush blanketed the scene.

Then, shattering the silence, a hearty slap to Dwalin’s knee cracked through the air. In its wake, a *scream* of laughter erupted from the bald warrior’s gaping mouth. Dwalin's mirthful guffaws reverberated, the sheer volume of his laughter nearly making Thorin go deaf.

The effect was immediate and startling. The Hobbit-child, caught off guard by the sudden burst of sound, leapt almost a foot into the air with a yelp. Seeking refuge and comfort, the

child quickly sought sanctuary by enfolding his arms around Thorin's sturdy boot. Stunned into silence, Thorin’s gaze remained fixated upon the cascade of little copper curls that framed the Hobbit-child's head. A tender smile tugged at the corners of his lips, his heartstrings resonating with a chord of gentle affection.

As the Hobbit-child buried his face against his leg, his distress evident in the quiver of his shoulders and the first notes of a plaintive wail, Thorin's paternal or perhaps uncle-like instincts surged forth. Despite the passage of years, the echo of bygone days when he had cradled his nephews echoed within him.

With swift determination, Thorin extricated the child from the embrace of his leg, a task that proved surprisingly challenging given the child's tenacious grip. The little Hobbit’s weight, or rather the lack thereof, was almost shocking. The child's initial shock at being lifted by the formidable figure before him melted into an almost immediate tranquility–his gaze meeting Thorin's with a newfound calm. Even amidst the peaceful moment, Dwalin's hearty laughter continued to punctuate the air, his cackles and coughs breaking through the atmosphere.

It bothered them not.

"There, there now, little Pebble," Thorin murmured as he distanced himself from the chorus of snickers and giggles that emanated from his boisterous company. He sought to create a cocoon of calm around the child, a sanctuary away from the distractions. "Peace. Where is your mother, hm? What is your name?"

The child's response was swift, a testament to his readiness to engage in conversation. "Biwbo," came the immediate reply, spoken with an endearing lilt.

"Bilbo?" Thorin repeated, a hint of uncertainty coloring his query.

A vigorous nod followed, accompanied by a radiant smile that was so infectious that Thorin couldn't help but return the gesture. His heart warmed to the child's open and unfiltered enthusiasm. "You are a wee thing but quite smart, aren't you?" Thorin commended, his voice infused with a blend of admiration and gentle humor.

The babe's grin widened, his curiosity piqued as he reached out with both tiny hands. Delicate fingers wrapped around Thorin's braids, one plait secured in each fist, the child's delight ringing out in an unrestrained squeal.

"Is that what you found pretty? My braids?" Thorin queried, intrigued by the child's preference as he attempted to decipher the inscrutable utterances.

A torrent of incoherent babble followed, the child's tone laden with seriousness as he bestowed his earnest opinion upon the matter. The fleeting hold on Thorin's braids relinquished its grasp, only to be supplanted by an exploration of the blacksmith's beard. Another peal of delighted laughter bubbled forth from Bilbo, its sheer exuberance almost enough to send Thorin to an early grave.

"Pwitty..." The word resurfaced once more. Then he smacked Thorin in the eye. “Bwue pwitty!” came the child's gleeful declaration again.

Thorin's reaction was instantaneous, a reflexive wince accompanying the minor impact. "Ouch," he voiced, a mix of discomfort and amusement lacing his tone. His features contorted into a squinted scowl, a mockingly stern gaze directed at the young Hobbit.

In response, a cascade of unintelligible babble flowed forth from Bilbo's tiny lips. The child's countenance shifted into a frown, revealing a palpable sense of remorse. With a delicate touch, the child's hand extended to pet Thorin's face, a clear gesture of apology and conciliation. Simultaneously, a series of soft coos emanated from the child, their irresistible charm instantly melting Thorin's resolve. The blacksmith's initial sense of admonishment was swiftly overshadowed by a surge of affection.

"Alright, I suppose I forgive you," Thorin declared with a smile.

The babe's cherubic face beamed with an infectious joy, a radiant smile that seemed to light up the very air around them. In a surge of unbridled affection, he lurched forward, his tiny arms wrapping around Thorin's neck in an embrace that held the weight of stone giants yet felt as light as a wisp of air. One-hundred and forty-five years of existence seemed to condense into this singular moment, a sublime instance that eclipsed the entirety of Thorin's lifetime.

In the midst of the embrace, a profound tranquility settled upon Thorin's soul, a sensation akin to the stillness beneath the surface of a flat pond. The clamor of the world dimmed to a gentle murmur, muffled as if he were submerged underwater. He basked in an encompassing warmth, akin to the embrace of high-noon sun rays on a cool day. A subtle prickling sensation grazed his eyes, the residue of emotions that danced on the precipice of his consciousness, yet remained untethered.

His heart, normally an unwavering fortress, now felt stripped of its defenses.

Strangely detached, Thorin wondered if these feelings were truly his own or if they belonged to the innocent being nestled in his arms. *Love* , untainted and boundless, unfurled like the petals of a blossoming flower. And that was an odd analogy to have for a dwarf. A thought sparked in his mind only for it to fade just as quickly as it had come. He tried his best to recall it, for it felt like vital knowledge slipping like sand through a clenched fist. Thorin wondered if… the thought disappeared again before it could form.

*How odd–*

"Bilbo!" A feminine voice pierced the air, carrying a mixture of urgency and relief. Running in tandem with Thorin's nephews was a disheveled Hobbit-lass, her breath coming in short gasps as she closed the distance. "There you are, sweetling," she panted, her voice a tender melody that contrasted with her obvious exertion. A genuine smile graced her features, eyes alight with the unmistakable relief of a mother reuniting with her child. Eagerly, she extended her arms in an unspoken invitation.

The reluctant transfer required him to lean forward, ceding the child to his rightful caretaker. Yet, Bilbo clung steadfastly, his tiny fingers gripping Thorin's braids with unexpected determination. "Mine!" The word erupted from the child's lips, a proclamation with such

possessiveness that it was strikingly at odds with his diminutive form. Bilbo's resolve was unwavering as he nearly crawled onto Thorin's shoulders

The residual echoes of Dwalin's suppressed laughter and the subtle strain of his nephews' attempts to suppress their smiles painted a backdrop of mirth. Thorin, however, remained a bastion of solemnity–secretly smug that Bilbo preferred him over his mother at the moment.

The Hobbit-lass, her eyes widening in incredulous astonishment, let out a disbelieving chuckle that held a tinge of surprise. "Bless my tomatoes!" Her laughter was incredulous, a reaction to an unexpected display before her. "Come here, love," she cajoled, reaching for Bilbo's waist with gentle intent.

Yet, Bilbo's response was immediate, his body stiffening in protest as a high-pitched screech of "MINE!" filled the air. The sound was as jarring as it was resolute, a declaration that reverberated.

Thorin became quite certain he'd lost his hearing in his left ear permanently.

Amidst the tussle, Thorin could feel the child's tension radiating through his own frame, his ear continuing to bear the brunt of Bilbo's lungful protests.

In the midst of this interplay, the Hobbit-lass's exasperation mingled with a blend of bemusement and apology. "Bilbo Baggins!" Her chiding tone held a note of both reprimand and bewilderment, as though the child's current conduct had never been witnessed before. She regarded Thorin with an apologetic smile, her gesture extending an olive branch of understanding. "He's not usually like this, I swear."

Thorin's wry thoughts echoed within, a bemused recollection of his own nephews' tempestuous episodes. With a subtle lean backward, Thorin prompted Bilbo to break their physical embrace and meet his gaze. "Now, little one," he began, his tone gentle yet firmly resolved, "that is no way to treat your mother. It's clear she loves you deeply and was greatly concerned about your well-being. Can you find it in your heart to be kinder to her?"

A pause hung in the air, laden with uncertainty. Thorin's comprehension of Bilbo's capacity for understanding was, at best, limited. Yet, a subtle shift in the child's countenance showed he'd understood, as moistness pooled in Bilbo's eyes. Those expressive orbs shifted between Thorin and his mother, a momentary conflict etched within their depths. Bilbo's response, though gibberish and incomprehensible to Thorin's ears, seemed to resonate with the Hobbit-lass.

"Thank you, my sweet," she murmured, her voice a tender reassurance. "Time to let Mister...?" she prompted, her gaze shifting to Thorin in an inquisitive gesture.

"Thorin Oakenshield," he offered, a nod accompanying the introduction. "At your service."

Her cheeks flushed, a blush that crept upwards as her laughter bubbled forth. "Belladonna Baggins, at your service and your family!" She executed a playful curtsy.

"Forin" A tug on Thorin's braid and a cascade of incomprehensible babble followed, leaving Thorin bemused and uncertain.

Belladonna's laughter rang out like tinkling bells. "Oh dear, he's inviting you to join us. But Mister Oakenshield," she continued, her voice conveying gentle amusement, "is occupied with his work. He can't accompany us on our errand, darling."

Bilbo, not one to surrender easily, crossed his arms and huffed, the trembling of his lower lip indicative of his frustration. Suddenly, the child's squirming and restlessness compelled Thorin to lower Bilbo to the ground. As his bare toes touched the earth, Bilbo spun around and pointed a finger at Thorin. “Stay!” Then he dashed away, his departure as swift as the breeze that followed him.

Thorin nearly gave chase, a notion that fizzled as Bilbo abruptly came to a halt not far away. The Hobbit-child's small form crouched, intent upon a cluster of flowers that had captured his interest. A pang of petulant disappointment coursed through Thorin as he realized the ease with which he had been supplanted, his presence traded for the allure of nature's blooms. It was nice while it had lasted, he supposed. His gaze shifted to Missus Baggins, seeking a semblance of shared understanding, only to find her shaking her head in a state of bewilderment.

"May the Garden Mother preserve me," she breathed, her astonishment mingling with a touch of amusement. "I think he's picking flowers for you!"

The words held an enigmatic significance that eluded Thorin's grasp. A sense of curiosity compelled him to seek clarification. "Isn't that a normal Hobbit tradition?" he inquired.

A melodic laugh escaped Missus Baggins, her delicate hand rising to veil her smile. "Indeed, it is!" Her mirth danced in the air. "However, Bilbo is quite the individualist. He takes after me, you see, and doesn't always adhere to tradition. Picking flowers for others isn't a common practice for *him* . He reserves such gestures for only his father and me." A twinkle of fondness emanated from her eyes, her voice imbued with a maternal warmth. "He's rather taken with you."

The disclosure struck Thorin with an unexpected intensity, and a wave of warmth surged from his chest to his cheeks, a vibrant blush settling upon his skin. His attention flitted momentarily to Dwalin, who had transformed into a vivid shade of purple as he valiantly struggled to contain yet another bout of unbridled cackles. The warrior's countenance contorted, pursed lips releasing intermittent bursts of spittle in his ardent attempt to suppress an imminent burst of laughter.

Thorin's glare, equal parts exasperation and warning, was sent briefly at his friend, a nonverbal reprimand for the lack of discretion. Thorin was still a prince, damn it all–Crown Prince to a lost kingdom, but still a prince! As Dwalin's efforts appeared increasingly futile, Fili and Kili dragged him away by the elbows before he could implode.

A growing spectacle had been unwittingly orchestrated, drawing the curious gazes of onlookers. Thorin's bemusement surged as he pondered what was so odd about Bilbo partaking in the simple act of flower-picking. Every passerby seemed to pause at least

momentarily, their attention captured by the sight of the child engrossed in weaving together a messy crown of blossoms. Bilbo's miniature figure was hunched in concentration, a quiet determination guiding his efforts.

Thorin grappled with a sense of uncertainty, momentarily suspended between his blacksmith's duty and the peculiar scenario that had enveloped the forge. It struck him as impolite to steadfastly continue his labor while an intrigued audience had assembled. He glanced around, his scrutiny capturing the varied expressions of those who had momentarily forsaken their tasks to witness the unfolding spectacle of tiny Bilbo engaged in an unexpected pursuit. Then his Company gained more interest as they too looked on with confusion.

Among the gathering crowd, other children emerged, their inquisitiveness evident as they maintained a respectful distance from Bilbo. Undeterred by the growing attention, Bilbo hummed a soft, contented melody while clumsy fingers wove together a messy tapestry of petals and stems.

Finally, after meticulous effort, Bilbo deemed his floral creation complete. Rising from his crouched stance, he pivoted with grace, cradling the flower crown in open palms that seemed to revere the delicate masterpiece. An air of reverence infused the atmosphere, as if Bilbo had conjured an artifact from a bygone era, a relic transcending time itself. In the glow of his achievement, Bilbo radiated an aura of innocent pride as he walked right up to Thorin, tilting his head back comically far to keep eye contact and presented the blacksmith with the crown.

Bilbo trilled, a buoyant bounce accompanying his words. "Bwue, eyes bwue," he pointed at Thorin's face then pointed at a blue flower. Thorin caught only a few more words but couldn't comprehend most of what was explained as Bilbo patiently pointed at each blossom. "Mean luf. An dis... Biwbo an Forin fo-evah."

A collective gasp rippled through the crowd, an audible expression of awe and delight as they found themselves swept up in the young Hobbit's infectious enthusiasm. Murmurs of excitement swirled like a gentle breeze, mingling with coos and chuckles at the heartwarming spectacle. Amidst the throng, Thorin scanned the faces, a mixture of curiosity and bewilderment still lingering in his gaze. His understanding of the unfolding scene remained elusive, his connection to whatever ritual or tradition Bilbo was enacting slipping through the gaps of his comprehension.

The crowd's response painted a picture of significance, as if Bilbo's actions held a weighty importance beyond their immediate context. Seeking clarity, Thorin's gaze naturally found its way to the child's mother, who was radiant with pride, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. A glance exchanged between them spoke volumes, communicating an unspoken narrative that Thorin had yet to fully decipher.

Internally sighing at the potential implications of the situation, Thorin braced himself for the role fate had thrust upon him. Adhering to the adage that discretion was the better part of valor, he resigned himself to the prospect of embracing this unexpected turn of events and potentially embarrassing himself. He saw Balin shake his head in preemptive dismay, a silent plea that bore witness to his apprehension, as if he could already foresee the potential for Thorin to inadvertently jeopardize their hard-earned reputation, mere months after their

settlement. The expectant gazes of the onlookers, fixated upon him with an intense scrutiny, reinforced the gravity of the moment.

A swift decision took root within Thorin's mind, guided by a mixture of gallant resolve and reluctant compliance. He realized that, for better or worse, this was a crossroads where his next deeds would solidify their welcome in The Shire. With kingly flair he descended to one knee, a display that bore a shade more theatrics than strictly necessary. Fingers pressed thoughtfully against his chin, his gaze assumed an exaggeratedly discerning squint as he contemplated the floral offering.

A playful glimmer danced within his eyes as they shifted toward Bilbo, a wink conveying a silent understanding of the young Hobbit's playful intent. “I accept your gift, little Bilbo,” he said with a deep and regal seriousness. Thorin's subsequent action was accompanied by a dramatic bow with a ridiculous flourish that accentuated his submission to the unfolding whimsy. He lowered himself, his posture an eloquent homage to the mock seriousness of the moment.

Laughter rippled through the gathering. And wasn’t that a drastic departure from the norm for the somber King in Exile? To find himself assuming the role of a clown, not only in the presence of his loyal company but also before the watchful eyes of an entire assembly of Hobbits, was a striking shift in demeanor. A twinkle of amusement danced in Thorin's eyes as he navigated the unfamiliar territory of humor and lightheartedness, casting aside the gravitas that typically enveloped him. For a moment, Thorin wondered whether the Hobbit-child possessed a magical influence that had coaxed him into this unexpected transformation. He chuckled aloud at the notion.

Bilbo's uncontainable excitement manifested in swift motions, as the child placed the carefully crafted flower crown upon Thorin's head. The tiny hands displayed a determined eagerness, accompanied by a couple of endearing but quite hard pats to Thorin’s head to ensure the crown's secure placement. The impact of those energetic smacks drew another chuckle from Thorin. “Thank you, Bilbo,” he said with a fond grin as he stood.

“Y’welcome, Forin.”

“Aw,” cooed the crowd.

Bilbo yelped suddenly and sought refuge behind the protective barrier of his mother's skirts, retreating from the spotlight he inadvertently attracted.

"Mister Oakenshield," the child's mother chimed, her laughter infused with breathless amusement as she wiped at a tearful eye. Her words, tinged with an air of playfulness but profound happiness, reverberated through the atmosphere. "Bilbo has just declared his intention to marry you someday!”

Smile still fixed on his face, Thorin's expression froze before it registered a fleeting combination of astonishment and embarrassment. He blinked twice before he opened his mouth and pointed to his head with a defeated sigh. “And I just accepted, didn’t I?”

Dwalin’s threadbare restraint shattered like glass on stone. His piercing scream erupted, reminiscent of a startled hog being skewered as he fell to the ground in such a fit that even Balin was astounded to see. His nephews were nowhere to be seen but he could hear them laughing. The contagious wave of amusement spread through the gathering like wildfire, drawing in more and more curious Hobbits who couldn't resist the allure of the spectacle.

Thorin's laughter broke free, an unexpected departure from his usual stern demeanor. He let out a soft chuckle and felt a warm flush creep onto his cheeks. It dawned on him that he had unwittingly become the center of this cheerful spectacle, a realization that both amused and touched him. The jest was all in good fun, a playful jest at his own expense, and surprisingly, it didn't dent his pride; instead, it fostered a sense of camaraderie and belonging.

In the midst of it all, Thorin felt a rare embrace of acceptance, a stark contrast to the skepticism and scrutiny that had followed him for much of his difficult life.

"I can't believe you allowed that to happen, Thorin," Balin hissed at him later, his tone a mix of disbelief and disapproval. "Your hair, adorned in public like that!" The older dwarf's expression was a picture of incredulity.

Thorin offered a wry smile and waved off Balin's concern. "Calm yourself, my friend. Hobbits have a different perspective on such matters."

Balin's disapproval remained firm. "It seems they understand more than you think, Thorin, considering you're now supposedly engaged!"

A chuckle escaped Thorin, a genuine reaction he couldn't suppress. He found himself oddly flattered by the whole affair, even if it revolved around a child's innocent gesture. After all, it wasn't a common occurrence for someone to find him visually appealing, given he was quite plain by dwarrow standards. He conceded that gaining favor in the eyes of a child might not be the most grandiose victory, but he welcomed it nonetheless.

"It was all in good fun," Thorin reiterated, his voice tinged with amusement. "The lad is nothing more than a child, by Durin's beard. No one is truly taking it seriously."

Little did Thorin realize just how mistaken he’d been.

# Chapter 2

The little performance Thorin had unwittingly staged for the hobbits seemed to have yielded the desired results for his business, as their numbers swelled at his forge. Not that they had been unwelcome prior, and trade had been prosperous since their arrival, but now they seemed even more successful and way ahead of schedule to pay off their lingering debts. The smiles from the hobbits came more readily and were tinged with a sense of ease when directed at Thorin and his companions. Furthermore, customers arrived bearing bounties of food—vast quantities, ranging from hearty soups to delectable pastries.

Initially, Thorin had reservations about accepting these tokens, apprehensive of finding himself inadvertently engaged once more-even in jest. His reluctance also stemmed from his general distaste for charity. Dwarves, with their stout frames and resilient spirits, were a living embodiment of industriousness and perseverance. Forged deep within the heart of mountains and shaped by the unyielding forces of the earth, they had inherited a strong work ethic that had been passed down through generations. It was a part of their very essence, an unwavering commitment to labor and craftsmanship that defined their existence. Yet, he soon learned that such offerings were a customary practice among the hobbits themselves, a way of fostering camaraderie within their community.

The Bagginses, in particular, seemed to have taken a liking to his forge, becoming frequent visitors who would grace his doorway almost daily whether they had work for him or not. Their visits were not only marked by their warm smiles but also by their thoughtful offerings —refreshing drinks and an array of delectable foodstuffs that were presented as tokens of friendship for him and his nephews.

*"It's just plain good manners,"* Bungo Baggins, Belladonna's husband and father to little Bilbo had explained when Thorin admitted his confusion at the unending gestures of goodwill.

Well, if that was the case, then wasn't Thorin expected to reciprocate? And Bungo had laughed good naturedly with a dismissive wave of his hand. *"No, no. Think of the Shire as a home, and you and your folk are our esteemed guests! It's just plain good manners for a host to treat their guests with the utmost courtesy. And we hobbits appreciate food above all comforts. We are honoring you, Master Dwarf, so please let us continue to do so."*

And what could Thorin possibly say to that? The steadfastness of dwarves extended beyond the realms of industry and craftsmanship. In matters of friendship and loyalty, dwarves were renowned for their unwavering commitment. Once a bond was forged, it was unbreakable—demonstrating the enduring nature of their relationships. They stood by their kin, their friends, and their allies with unyielding support.

Belladonna and her husband, Bungo, exhibited a similar kind of loyalty and steadfastness that resonated with the dwarven principles Thorin held dear. Their frequent visits were not limited to business but extended to social gestures of genuine care and consideration, reflecting the same spirit of camaraderie that Thorin's own people embodied.

There were no words he could utter without shedding grateful tears to show how meaningful those words and friendly gestures actually were to Thorin. So, he's nodded and murmured a simple but genuine, *"Thank you."*

*"No thanks needed. Besides,"* Bungo had clapped a friendly hand to Thorin's shoulder, *"I have to make sure my future son-in-law is happy here in Hobbiton!"* Mister Baggins chortled, bringing up the joke that never seemed to get old in the Shire no matter how many years passed.

Thorin had laughed and shaken his head. Bungo was a fussy, respectable type, but he occasionally showed his sense of humor every so often.

Not all Hobbits, however, shared the same enthusiasm for the thriving dwarrows. A select few, who were closely related and apparently united in their disapproval, steadfastly refused to patronize any of their crafts. The Sackville-Bagginses, as they were known, would parade by the doors with noses held high, accompanied by muttered remarks that carried a deceptive veneer of politeness to Thorin's ears.

*"Tookish blood always causing trouble,"* they'd mutter, casting pointed glances towards him and his company.

Their words were cryptic to Thorin, the exact meaning lost in the gaps of his knowledge of Hobbit culture. He recalled that the Thain was a Took, a familial connection that seemed to elicit a deeper level of animosity from the Sackville-Bagginses. Perhaps they believed that the Tooks were somehow responsible for encouraging the presence of the dwarrows in the Shire. Despite the murkiness of their resentment, Thorin couldn't help but notice the way the Baggins family responded to such hostility. Belladonna and Bungo remained undeterred, continuing to extend their friendship and support.

Bilbo, the shining heart of the Baggins clan, played a pivotal role in bridging the gap after bestowing his flower crown. His innocence, his vibrancy, and his genuine curiosity served as a beacon of joy for everyone, but especially for Thorin.

The blacksmith often found himself wishing he could contribute more to the happiness of the Baggins family. After all, it was Bilbo who had been the catalyst for their success, leading them from a time of scarcity and desperation to a newfound prosperity that even sparked contemplation of expanding their business to include another forge, this time in the bustling town of Bree.

But there wasn't much Thorin could give the family he owed so much. The Bagginses were happy and quite prosperous, possibly ranking among the wealthiest in all of the Shire. The Baggins name carried a reputation of respect and honor throughout Hobbiton, making them one of the most esteemed families. Despite being perceived as a bit peculiar, they were held in high regard by the majority of the community, with the exception, of course, being the Sackville-Bagginses. Thorin could only guess this lingering animosity was due to a long-standing family feud, a dispute that had likely spanned generations and paid those nasty Hobbits no mind.

Aware that he couldn't yet match the Bagginses' generosity with his own gifts, Thorin decided to reciprocate their kindness by offering discounted services, crafting small useful tools and trinkets that he could spare from his forge.

On most occasions, it was Missus Baggins who visited, accompanied by young Bilbo, his eyes shining with excitement. Every time Bilbo spotted Thorin, his joy was palpable as he would shout Thorin's name in his charming childlike tone, then run toward him with open arms. Thorin would sweep him up, twirl him around, and lavish him with the attention that the child so eagerly sought. It was remarkable to Thorin how the young hobbit, or as he had come to learn, a "faunt," had formed such a deep affection for him right from the beginning.

For a dwarf of Thorin's stature and melancholic demeanor, few people dared strike up conversations with him. As a king in all but name, he often came across as imposing, distant, and serious. Yet, the connection he felt with Bilbo was a curious exception. He found himself intrigued by the child's company, which was a surprise. He didn't dwell on it much, reasoning that Bilbo's presence was good for his Company and his nephews. The young hobbit's cheerful presence managed to lift their spirits with his games and endless chatter about anything and everything that caught his interest.

Bilbo rapidly grew comfortable in the presence of the entire company, but it was evident that Thorin held a distinct place in the hobbit's affections. Despite this, Bilbo's interactions with Fili and Kili also flourished. The mischievous side of the young hobbit was brought to light, and he gleefully ran circles around both Thorin’s nephews, much to their combination of amusement and exasperation.

With each passing day, Bilbo's presence became a familiar comfort. As time flew by, his rapid and animated speech gradually transformed from a jumble of incomprehensible sounds into something that Thorin could almost decipher. While he still couldn't catch every word that tumbled from Bilbo's lips, he had come to understand the essence of the young hobbit's babble. It was as if they had developed a unique language of their own, a blend of expressions, gestures, and the occasional decipherable word.

Something nagged at Thorin that it was probably not very normal to be so in tune with the moods and intentions of a child that did not belong to him–without the need for complete verbal communication. Because it was downright eerie how he could discern what Bilbo wanted without even having to look at him sometimes. He could sense when Bilbo was feeling mischievous, plotting pranks that often involved his unsuspecting nephews. It was the reason why Thorin had yet to fall for those pranks, himself.

As soon as Thorin mused on the oddity, the thought would vanish by way of some distraction or other. And since he couldn’t remember why the thought was important, he couldn’t really care about it could he?

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Three peaceful and fruitful years passed and the Bagginses had become an integral part of his world. The thought of leaving behind the Bagginses and moving to Bree to establish a new forge there filled Thorin with an unexpected pang of heartache.

The notion of parting from the hobbit family, particularly Bilbo, tugged at his heartstrings. The idea of missing out on the shared meals, the cheerful laughter, smoking his pipe with Bungo on the bench outside of Bag End, listening to Belladonna's stories by the fire, and Bilbo treating Thorin's shoulders as his own personal, hobbit perch. It all settled on his chest like a boulder. Thorin had never imagined himself forming such strong bonds with the inhabitants of the Shire, and yet, here he was, confronted with the reality that leaving them behind would be a painful prospect.

He cursed himself thrice for letting his guard down and forming such ties. But, really, who could withstand the will of such a fauntling! No one. Not one person, including Dwalin, could ever say no and mean it for long. Bilbo, with his infectious enthusiasm and unwavering curiosity, had managed to carve a place for himself in all their hearts. The faunt's near-constant presence, his playful antics, and the genuine affection he showered upon Thorin would all end once they left and that thought hurt more than it should–though, again, Thorin could not recall why.

The fact was that Thorin could not delay the conversation any longer.

"Thorin!" Bilbo's enthusiastic cry echoed down the lane as he eagerly awaited the blacksmith's attention. Thorin turned, a warm smile curving his lips despite his trepidation. And as Thorin watched the young hobbit's face light up with excitement, he couldn't help but feel a swell of fondness for the boy who had nestled his way into his heart.

Thorin's heart sank again once Belladonna came into full view. She must have noticed something in his demeanor because her easy smile faltered and her brow furrowed with concern. It wouldn't be an easy conversation and now he wondered how little Bilbo would take it. Perhaps Bilbo was still too young to fully grasp the implications of his impending departure. But what did it matter in the grand scheme of things? The child wasn't even related to him.

"Thorin, Thorin!" Bilbo's voice filled the air, quick and brimming with childish enthusiasm, as he ran towards the blacksmith. "Thorin, look! Look, Thorin! Look at what I can do! I've been practicing all day!"

A chuckle escaped Thorin's lips as he turned in a graceful circle to keep Bilbo in his sights.

"Look, Thorin!"

"I am looking, *little gem*, I'm looking," he replied with a fond smile, crossing his arms and allowing his curiosity to be piqued by whatever feat the young hobbit was eagerly preparing to showcase.

"Okay-okay-okay," Bilbo muttered, shaking out his hands in a display of determination. He wore an adorable frown of concentration, took a deep breath, and then... hopped. That's it. Just hopped once. His efforts were rewarded with an exuberant grin as he quickly scampered to Thorin's side, tugging at the hem of his tunic. "Did you see-did you see?!"

Thorin maintained a carefully neutral expression, making sure not to even feign an eye roll as he nodded approvingly at Bilbo's accomplishment. "I saw! I believe you just set a new

record!"

Bilbo's eyes widened with hope. "Do you really think so?!"

Thorin's pride for the young hobbit was evident in his warm gaze. "I truly think so."

A radiant smile adorned Bilbo's face, brightening his features with pure delight. “Yes! I’m going to show Fili and Kili!”

With a quick dash, the young hobbit scampered off, leaving Thorin with a warmth in his chest. The sun filtered through the trees, casting playful dapples of light on the ground. The breeze carried with it the gentle rustle of leaves and the distant hum of life in the bustling village. He would actually miss it here. Quite badly.

The soft shuffle of footsteps approached, and Belladonna appeared, her warm smile matching the kindness in her eyes. She carried her daily basket of treats, a fragrant scent of freshly baked goods wafting in the air.

“Good afternoon, Thorin, dear,” Belladonna's friendly voice chimed as she approached, carrying her basket of goodies. “My famous seed cake this time!”

“Then I better eat some quickly before my nephews find out.”

“Oh, there’s plenty to share,” she reassured him, a hint of amusement in her tone.

“Obviously, you haven’t learned a thing about my nephews in these years,” he replied with a chuckle.

Sharing a laugh, they settled into an easy camaraderie. Thorin placed the basket on the counter and gestured for Belladonna to take a seat. The scent of the fresh treats mingled with the earthy aroma of the forge, creating a comforting atmosphere.

“Is something wrong, Thorin?” Belladonna inquired, concern lacing her words. Her eyes, a warm shade of green, held genuine worry as she regarded him.

Taking a deep breath, he knew he needed to address the matter at hand. “I want you to know that the friendship your family has extended to me and my company will not go unnoticed. Your kindness will be repaid one day.” He raised a hand to prevent her from interrupting, his eyes conveying his earnestness, before continuing as she nodded understandingly.

“Thanks to the success of our business, we will be opening another forge in Bree.”

“That’s incredible! Congratulations!” Her excitement was palpable, the joy in her voice echoing through the air.

“That’s incredible! Congratulations!” She exclaimed and clapped her hands together excitedly. “Well, why do you look so dour about such good news?” She pushed at his shoulder in gentle teasing to lift his spirits.

Thorin managed a small smile, though it didn't quite reach his eyes. “Unfortunately, I will need to take up the role of master blacksmith there, given my expertise in weaponry. Fili and Kili, my nephews, will accompany me as apprentices.” The weight of responsibility was evident in his words, a mix of pride and duty that shaped his every decision.

“And we will need to reside in Bree,” he confirmed, his tone a blend of resignation and determination. The uncertainty of the future loomed before them, a reminder that change often brought both excitement and apprehension.

A shadow passed over Belladonna's face as his words sank in. “Oh,” she murmured softly, her demeanor shifting as she processed the implications of his announcement. Her gaze met his, her expression uncertain yet thoughtful. “Well, that’s not so bad, is it?” Her voice held a touch of hope, the glimmer of optimism peeking through the clouds of uncertainty.

He shook his head, his eyes holding a depth of gratitude for her encouragement. “It’s only a few days' ride by pony and I’ll still need to conduct some business here every so often, but this has always been the plan. It’s just come along a lot sooner than expected.

“I am the… leader of my clan, and we have been scattered between here and the Blue Mountains. My sister and the rest of my kin reside there. I also consider it my home, though this past year has made me question that,” he admitted, his words hanging in the air, a vulnerable confession that surprised even him.

The tension in the air became palpable, a reflection of the internal struggle he grappled with. The bond he felt with this quaint hobbit family tugged at his heart, and the possibility of leaving them behind held a weight he couldn't ignore. “Yet my duty remains my compass, and eventually that duty will lead me and my people back to Ered Luin. But that day is far off yet, I think.”

Belladonna's breath caught, her eyes widening with empathy and understanding. “Oh dear,” she breathed, her voice soft with sympathy. “Oh, my poor Bilbo.” The gravity of the situation hung heavy in the air, a shared realization of the upcoming challenges.

Thorin couldn't help but appreciate her concern. “I was wondering what would be the best way to break it to him? Should I… or should you,” he posed the question, his voice carrying a hint of uncertainty.

A tremor ran through her lip as she covered her mouth with her hands, her emotions barely contained. However, in a sudden burst of determination, she rose from her seat with a sniff. “Your duty to your people is admirable, Thorin, and you must do what you think is best. Bilbo will understand in time. He’s quite young yet, and it’s easier on the heart when you’re young.” Her words held both a comforting reassurance and a wistful sigh for the innocence of youth.

Her resolute nod conveyed her decision. “We will not hinder you, Thorin, and we will support you. We shall keep up a correspondence and visit when we can. I’ll tell Bilbo tonight. Don’t worry about a thing,” she put her hands on her hips and huffed out a laugh, “Bilbo won’t rescind his proposal, I can promise you that. You’re quite stuck with him for life!”

They both laughed, the tension instantly evaporating in the room at the well-worn joke.

Thorin's gratitude welled within him, a mixture of emotions that swirled beneath his stoic exterior. The weight of his impending departure was lightened by the understanding and compassion he found in Belladonna's words. Even as duty pulled him in one direction, he knew that the connections he had formed here would continue to shape his path, no matter where it led.

“What do you mean?” A vulnerable young voice called out softly from the entryway. Bilbo was half hidden by the door frame, eyes narrowed with confusion. “Are you going somewhere, Thorin?”

The small hobbit's innocent interruption pulled all attention to him, his presence casting a somber mood over the room. Thorin's heart ached at the sight of Bilbo's furrowed brows, the lines of worry etched on his young face. He exchanged a brief glance with Belladonna before mustering a warm smile for the young hobbit.

“Come here, Bilbo,” Thorin beckoned gently, his voice soft yet reassuring.

Bilbo stood still, warily watching Thorin as he asked, “But you’ll come back eventually?”

Thorin looked to Belladonna and then back to Bilbo. “Of course, I’ll visit as much as I can.”

“Visit? You… won’t live here anymore?”

Before Thorin could reply, Bilbo shot forward and latched onto Thorin’s arm, tugging with insistence. “I’ll come with you!”

Belladonna gasped, covering her mouth once more to hide her trembling lip, as if Bilbo could vanish before her very eyes.

“No, no,” Thorin shook his head but smiled gently. “Your mother and father still need you at home.”

“But one day, can I come live with you?”

Thorin laughed nervously. “I, eh, suppose one day, when you are old enough for adventures, I can take you and your parents to see the Blue Mountains. What do you think?”

The faunt shook his head, curls bouncing. “But I want to go now.” He stomped his bare foot. “I want to live with you now.”

“Now, Bilbo,” Thorin tried again, only for the faunt to yell.

“No!” He released Thorin and ran back to the door. “You can’t leave without me! I’m going to pack now.”

Belladonna raced to her child and knelt before him, tears flowing down her cheeks, worrying Thorin. “My baby, please listen to your Heartsong. He needs to leave because–”

“No!” Bilbo screamed again like only a six-year-old could. “I don’t care!”

“Bilbo Baggins!” Thorin bellowed in his most commanding tone. “This is not how you were taught to conduct yourself,” he added a bit softer now that the faunt had suddenly stilled at Thorin’s reprimand.

Bilbo’s lip wobbled and his nose grew as wet as his eyes before he grew visibly angry with clenched fists and huffing breaths. “Fine! Leave! Leave and never come back! I don’t care!”

In the wake of his outburst, Bilbo's small frame trembled with a mixture of anger, frustration, and unspoken sadness. Tears brimmed in his eyes, glimmering like dewdrops in the early morning sunlight. Without another word, he turned abruptly and fled, his footsteps echoing down the corridor, fading with each hurried step.

Belladonna rose from her kneeling position and looked at Thorin with a mixture of sympathy and understanding. Her eyes, red-rimmed from her own tears, held an unspoken bond of shared concern. She wiped at her cheeks, her voice gentle yet resolute as she addressed the dwarf before her.

“He’ll come around. Thank you… for telling him to stay.”

Thorin nodded, his gaze still lingering on the path Bilbo had taken. Strange thing to be thankful for, as if Thorin would have demanded otherwise? Bilbo was not his child. And as much as he cared for the lad, Thorin never wanted to be the reason the faunt would be at odds with his loving parents. Yet, even as he accepted her words, his heart felt heavy with the ache of the impending farewell. The bond he had formed with Bilbo, the genuine affection they shared, was something he had never anticipated. It made the prospect of leaving that much more bittersweet.

Bilbo's reluctance to engage with his mother's entreaties marked a noticeable shift after that incident. Even during the farewell festivities organized in Thorin's honor – an event the Bagginses insisted on despite Thorin's attempts to dissuade them – Bilbo remained secluded in his room, unmoved even by the prospect of his favorite dessert. A heaviness settled within Thorin, the ache of Bilbo's absence more pronounced than he would care to admit.

The day of departure finally dawned, a clear spring morning that held a bittersweet tang in the air. Standing beside their pony, Mr. and Mrs. Baggins watched Thorin prepare to mount. Belladonna's assurance that Bilbo was nearby brought little comfort.

*“You could always stay,”* Balin said in Khuzdul. *“You were never this content anywhere else, you know it’s true.”*

The old dwarf's observation struck Thorin like a blow, the truth of it echoing in his mind. A wry thought flitted through his consciousness – how uncannily the timing aligned with Balin's knack for poignant observations. Refusing to vocalize his agreement, Thorin barked the command to move out, the march beginning.

Then, an anguished cry pierced the air, a sound that reverberated with desperation. Thorin's gaze snapped to its source, his heart twisting with concern as he watched Bilbo sprinting toward them, his face streaked with tears and his hands waving in a frenzied plea. The rush of emotions overtook Thorin's stern facade, his own heart aching in response to Bilbo's grief-stricken appeal.

"Wait! Pl-Please!" Bilbo's voice broke, his sobbing plea slicing through the tense air.

Thorin's exhale carried a mix of relief and tenderness as he swiftly dismounted from his pony, his arms outstretched in an open invitation. Crouching down, he created a safe haven for Bilbo to leap into. The hobbit wasted no time, flinging himself into Thorin's embrace with the fervor of a long-held longing. Amidst the apologies that tumbled from Bilbo's lips like a waterfall, Thorin's heart softened even further.

"I'm s-so-sorry!" Bilbo's words hiccupped through his tears, his sleeves hastily employed as makeshift handkerchiefs. "I didn't mean it. I'm sorry!"

Thorin's voice was a low, soothing murmur, wrapping Bilbo in a cocoon of reassurance. "Oh, it's alright, little treasure. It's alright. I know you didn't mean it." His strong arms held the hobbit securely, a gentle rocking motion serving to pacify the storm of emotions that had overtaken the young hobbit.

Promises, delicate as whispers, flowed from Thorin's lips like a healing balm. Promises of correspondence, of visits, of an enduring connection that would weather the distance. The flow of words ebbed as Bilbo's sobs gradually quieted, replaced by the steadiness of their combined breaths.

Thorin's fingers deftly slipped into his pocket, retrieving a small wooden sword that seemed more like a dagger in his large hands. Holding it before Bilbo, he presented it as both a gift and a symbol. "This is for you, Bilbo. A token of our bond and a reminder of the lessons you've learned. You must give it a name and keep practicing under Master Balin's guidance while I'm away."

The hobbit's watery gaze met Thorin's, the weight of his vow conveyed in that earnest look. "I will," he replied with a gravity that belied his youth, a determination that tugged at Thorin's heartstrings.

Thorin's words carried a firm conviction as he made a pledge that felt surprisingly easy to make. "We shall see each other again, Bilbo. I promise." The bond that had blossomed between them held an unexpected power, pulling Thorin toward an unspoken commitment to stay connected, against his initial reservations.

With a mixture of reluctance and resolve, Thorin gently shifted Bilbo into Bungo's waiting arms. As he reclaimed his place on his pony, he could feel the weight of Bilbo's eyes linger.

The command to depart echoed through the air, and the group gradually began to set in motion. Thorin guided his pony with steady reins, the rhythmic clip-clop of hooves creating a cadence that matched the rhythm of his thoughts.

In passing, Balin's gaze held a certain inscrutability that piqued Thorin's curiosity, yet he had little time for pondering the meaning behind it. A few words exchanged in their native Khuzdul carried a message of trust and vigilance. "Keep an eye on them for me," Thorin urged, his tone laced with an unspoken plea.

"Two eyes," Balin retorted with a teasing grin, a simple assurance that carried layers of camaraderie. "Go on now. See you soon. It’s not like you’re going to Erebor to face a dragon!"

Thorin's muscles tightened involuntarily at the reminder of that harrowing past, the memory of Smaug's fiery wrath still etched vividly in his mind. He shuddered at the thought, his eyes briefly closing as if to ward off the specter of that traumatic chapter. No, he agreed inwardly, it was nothing like that. The quest for prosperity now was rooted in necessity, in a longing to provide for his people and offer them solace after the trials they had endured.

As the landscape unfurled before him, Thorin rode with a newfound determination, his heart heavy with the weight of both duty and the connection he had formed with a certain hobbit family. The journey ahead would be a path woven with challenges and uncertainties, but hope of a better future spurred him on.

# Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> Yeah, this one is coming along a lot easier for some reason.
> Angst with a hopeful-ish ending to the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bree was not a place that Thorin could embrace with any sense of fondness. To him, it felt like the rain had taken up a permanent residence there, transforming every corner into a muddy mess. The air was devoid of the soft fragrance of flowers. The forge he had established in Bree was spacious, designed to accommodate larger orders and provide ample room for his nephews to hone their skills. With each passing day, Fíli and Kíli displayed their growing expertise, but with more renown came more work. It was a good thing, Thorin knew. This had been the plan all along. For once, his luck had turned and granted him the opportunity to raise himself and his people above poverty.

Yet despite the promising prospects of the forge, Thorin found himself increasingly disenchanted with his situation in Bree. The town held enough hobbits and dwarrows to keep him from feeling like a complete outsider, but it was not the same, his heart longing for something elusive that had been nurtured back in the Shire. But amidst the undercurrents of discontent, there were moments that thawed his reservations, moments when the dreariness seemed to retreat in the presence of familiar hobbits.

The Baggins family, who had come to occupy a special place in his heart. Their unwavering friendship offered a glimmer of warmth in an otherwise lackluster existence. Every planned visit by the Bagginses was preceded by their letters, and the anticipation of their arrival managed to punctuate his monotonous days with a spark of excitement.

In turn, Thorin found himself making irregular journeys back to the Shire, a necessity given the responsibilities he had left behind in the Blue Mountains. The forge in Bree had demanded his attention to a point that his own travels were always sparse and short. As he stepped back onto the familiar soil of the Shire during his visits, a sense of relief washed over him. The air seemed lighter, and the burden of Bree's disquiet momentarily lifted from his shoulders. Working in Bree reminded him too much of their hardships after the fall of Erebor. It left a bitter taste in his mouth to deal with men and elves, but needs must and these were different men… different elves… different times.

After two long years of establishing the new forge they had done well enough to hire more capable hands and Fíli and Kíli ran the place well despite Thorin’s initial misgivings. Much of the day-to-day operations and improvements of their Halls in Ered Luin were delegated to his capable sister, Dis while Thorin was away. This allowed Thorin to focus on generating revenue, and the coins he earned flowed back to his homeland, improving their living

conditions that had been marred by the aftermath of their exile. Thorin’s Halls were steadily transformed as the wealth was spread. No one would go hungry again.

Days turned into nights, and Thorin immersed himself in the grind of his work, finding refuge in the tasks that demanded his complete attention. His efforts, though productive, were a means of escape. The sweat on his brow and the ringing of metal on metal consumed his hours, his efforts bordering on obsessive as if he were trying to distract himself from the disquiet that had taken root within him.

And as he threw himself into his work with a determined fervor, it became evident that his focus wasn't solely on the prosperity of the forge. His heart yearned for a home that echoed with the laughter of companionship and the comfort of kinship, a sentiment he had found in the Shire and, to an extent, in the Blue Mountains. The passage of time seemed to elongate, his eyes fixed on a distant horizon where reunions and purpose awaited, a reminder that his journey was far from over.

With a three-day ride and endless amounts of work now separating him from the Baggins family, Thorin couldn't help but be struck by the absurdly accelerated pace of Bilbo's growth. Each time he encountered the young hobbit, the taller and more mature he’d get. The once diminutive figure was now marked by a height that crept upwards with every passing encounter. And even more noticeable was the fading of the adorable, childish lilt that had endeared Bilbo to him from the very start.

It was just the young hobbit either, his parents grew older, their hair grayer, their steps slower.

There was a bittersweetness to witnessing the growth of Bilbo in particular. The lightheartedness that had characterized their interactions seemed to be slipping through his fingers, leaving behind a trace of nostalgia and wistfulness. Bilbo's newfound maturity was a reflection of the distance that separated them now. He had missed so much.

A noticeable change had taken hold of Bilbo. The once exuberant and carefree faunt had given way to a more reserved version of himself. A newfound shyness seemed to wrap around him, manifesting itself whenever he was in Thorin's presence. There was a glimmer of uncertainty in Bilbo's eyes, a subtle hesitation that hadn't been there before. Even his interactions with Thorin were punctuated by a cautiousness, as if he believed he needed permission to speak or engage with the dwarf.

This transformation didn't sit well with Thorin. It pained him to witness the shift in Bilbo's behavior, as if a veil had been drawn over their once easy connection. The jovial ease that had once marked their interactions now seemed to have evaporated, replaced by a distant politeness that created an uncomfortable distance between them. Thorin found himself grappling with a sense of loss, as if he had inadvertently forfeited the trust and favor he had once enjoyed from the young hobbit.

Yet, upon closer reflection, it dawned on him that Bilbo was, in his own way, mirroring the demeanor of his father. Bungo Baggins, a figure of quiet respectability, had likely influenced his son's behavior, prompting Bilbo to adopt a more measured and dignified approach. In a world where societal norms held sway, Bilbo was attempting to navigate the path of propriety as he perceived it through his father's example. The realization filled Thorin's heart with a

mixture of emotions. Fondness for Bilbo's willingness to grow and learn, sadness for gradual loss of youthful freedom.

As time passed, the forges thrived, and Fili's skills as a master blacksmith blossomed, eventually taking over Thorin's role in Bree. This development left Thorin with a single path ahead – returning to Ered Luin for good. The very idea tugged at his heart, an ache of resistance against the responsibilities he knew awaited him there. The prospect of assuming leadership, desk work, and endless meetings felt like chains constraining his desires. He yearned to retire and find solace in his forge in the Shire. Yet, he knew these wishes had to be set aside. With a heavy heart, he donned his metaphorical crown of duty and walked the path that was his to tread.

During the initial years, Thorin made it a point to visit the Shire every autumn, marking Bilbo's birthday with a grand celebration coinciding with the harvest festival. Bilbo's rapid growth was a marvel that never failed to astonish Thorin. Each year, he received invitations to spend the winter at Bag End, an offer he always declined due to his ongoing responsibilities. Returning to the Blue Mountains to winter with his kin was his duty.

Yet, as his workload grew, he found himself missing birthdays, caught up in the relentless flow of work. Time slipped through his fingers like sand, and sometimes he struggled to remember the date. Despite this, he ensured that his people were always provided for, with enough resources to tide them over the long winter months without worry.

Then came a particularly harsh winter, one that would be etched in history as the Fell Winter.

Crops failed, livestock perished, and the once-fertile lands of the Shire turned barren and desolate. Thorin's days were consumed by his responsibilities as a leader in Ered Luin. His attention was focused on the well-being of his people and the challenges they faced within the mountain's walls. The news of the Fell Winter's impact on the Shire and the Bagginses hadn't reached him, and he remained unaware of the struggles his dear friends were enduring.

Despite his dedication to his duties, Thorin's heart was heavy with an unexplainable ache. There were moments when he felt a gnawing sense of emptiness, as if something precious was missing from his life. The weight of despair seemed to settle upon him, casting a shadow over his once unyielding resolve.

As he walked through the echoing halls of the mountain, his footsteps seemed to reverberate with loneliness. The laughter of the past felt distant, and even the memories of his time in the Shire and the warmth of the forge couldn't completely dispel the darkness that clung to his thoughts.

Thorin often found himself gazing into flames, yearning for something he couldn't quite define. It was as if his soul was reaching out for a connection beyond the mountain, a tie that had been severed but continued to tug at his heart. He questioned why he felt this way, as if a part of him had been left behind.

Though he was surrounded by his kin, the sense of isolation weighed on him heavily, and the idea of being alone in the world haunted him. He longed for a sense of belonging, a reminder

of the bonds he had forged in the past. But he pushed these emotions aside, attributing them to the stress of leadership and the toll of the years.

Little did he know that his own heartache was a reflection of the distant struggles of one he cared for deeply.

A sudden and intense realization washed over Thorin like a tidal wave, leaving him gasping for breath. The ache in his chest had transformed into an unbearable pain, a gnawing sensation that seemed to grip his very soul. His instincts surged, urging him to act, to move, to do something to alleviate this torment. Something felt like it was about to snap!

His hand instinctively went to his chest, his fingers clutching at his clothes as if trying to grasp at the source of his suffering. The agony was overwhelming, and his breaths came in ragged gasps, each one a struggle against the weight that pressed upon his chest.

In that moment, his thoughts raced with a clarity he had never experienced before. It was as if a veil had been lifted, revealing a truth he had been blind to for too long. Bilbo needed him. The realization struck him with a force that brought him to his knees, the stone floor of his chamber hard on his bones.

The world around him seemed to fade as the urgency of his intuition consumed him. His mind raced with images of Bilbo, of the times they had spent together, of the unique bond they had shared. The distance that had separated them felt insurmountable, a cruel twist of fate that left him feeling helpless and desperate. That bond was breaking.

Desperation fueled his actions as he staggered to his feet, his movements fueled by a determination he couldn't explain. With every ounce of his strength, he forced himself to take step after painful step, driven by an overwhelming need to reach Bilbo, to ensure his safety and well-being.

Despite the warnings and pleas from his sister and nephews, Thorin's determination remained unshaken. The urgency he felt, the unrelenting need to reach Bilbo, overrode any logical reasoning or caution. He knew that time was of the essence, that every moment he delayed could be crucial for Bilbo's safety.

He issued instructions with a firmness that brooked no argument. His voice held a commanding edge, a fierce determination that burned within him. He gathered supplies, prepared his pony, and readied himself for the treacherous journey ahead.

The impending blizzard and the dangers it brought with it seemed inconsequential compared to the gnawing worry that had taken root in Thorin's heart. He couldn't ignore the pull he felt, the unexplainable connection that urged him onward, regardless of the obstacles he might face.

As the winds howled and the cold bit at his skin, Thorin mounted his horse and set off, his jaw set in determination. The world around him was a blur of snow and ice, the landscape unforgiving and harsh. But he pressed on, his focus unwavering, guided by an inner force that refused to be silenced.

The frozen rivers and the lurking threats of wolves and wargs were obstacles to be overcome, challenges that only fueled his determination. He navigated the treacherous terrain with a steady hand, his every instinct honed in on the path that would lead him to Bilbo's side. For once, he'd find his way without any help from a map.

As he approached the Shire, his exhaustion and pain were secondary to his determination. His instincts guided him to Bag End. The snow-covered landscape obscured the familiar smials, creating an almost surreal scene. Yet, the unexplainable force that had guided Thorin persisted, leading him unerringly toward the largest hill. Despite the biting cold, his determination burned hotter than ever. He reached the unmistakable mound where Bag End lay hidden beneath the blanket of snow.

His fingers, numbed by the cold, fumbled and scraped against the door. His breath formed clouds of mist in the frigid air as he rasped out Bilbo's name, each word a painful exertion against the cold that seemed to claw at his very being. The urgency he felt was like a fire, spreading through his veins and pushing him to dig, to call out, to do whatever it took to reach Bilbo and the Baggins family.

His hands, now raw and red, dug into the snow with a frantic energy. He used a piece of oak he found nearby as an improvised shovel, hacking away at the accumulated snow that blocked his way. His voice grew hoarser with each call, his heart pounding in his chest as he relentlessly cleared the path to the door beneath him.

"Bungo! Bella! It is I, Thorin!" he shouted, the words a desperate plea in the cold silence. The effort was a battle against the elements themselves, a test of his strength and willpower against the unyielding snow and freezing temperatures. Every scrape of his fingers, every thump of the oak against the snow, was fueled by his unshakable determination to reach the Baggins family.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the lock yielded to his relentless efforts. With a final, powerful shove, Thorin forced the door open, his body tumbling into the smial. He fell, a cascade of snow tumbling in after him, his breath coming in ragged gasps as he struggled to catch his bearings.

His chest heaved as he pushed himself up, his eyes scanning the interior of the smial. He was there, at last, in the heart of the place he had longed to reach. But now, surrounded by the aftermath of his entrance, reality began to set in. He looked around in the dark, his gaze searching for the faces he had risked so much to find, hoping against hope that he had arrived in time to make a difference.

The deafening silence that greeted his calls sent a shiver down Thorin's spine. His heart raced as he continued to call out, desperation creeping into his voice with each cry. "Bella!" he shouted again, his voice echoing through the empty rooms. "Bungo!"

He ventured further into Bag End, his eyes quickly adjusting to the dimness within. His keen senses picked up on the absence of the usual warmth and activity that filled the smial. The absence of firelight and flickering candles was an eerie reminder that something was amiss. Thorin hesitated for a moment, torn between his anxiety and the propriety of removing his boots in this hobbit home.

But his fears soon overpowered his manners, and he moved onward with a sense of urgency. Each step he took reverberated in the quiet, amplifying the emptiness that seemed to surround him. His call for Bilbo was laced with a mixture of worry and hope, a plea for the young hobbit to reveal himself and shatter the silence.

As he moved through the rooms, opening doors and searching in vain for any sign of life, the weight of dread continued to grow. The lack of response only fueled his unease. But then, a faint hint of smoke caught his attention, and he followed it to a bedroom. A room that held the remains of a fire now extinguished, its warmth replaced by a biting cold.

Closing the door behind him, Thorin found himself in the room, his heart hammering in his chest. "Bilbo?" he called out again, his voice softer now as he surveyed the room. And then, relief and worry mingled together as he spotted a small lump on the floor before the dead hearth. Swiftly, he closed the distance, his boots thudding against the floor.

"Bilbo?" His voice was more urgent now, a mixture of concern and relief as he knelt beside the hobbit. His hands moved instinctively, reaching out to touch Bilbo's shoulder gently. The young hobbit's form seemed small and vulnerable in the cold room, and Thorin's heart ached at the sight. "Bilbo, wake up," he urged softly, his voice carrying a note of anxiety as he tried to rouse the unconscious hobbit. The fear and uncertainty he had felt moments ago had transformed into a deep and protective concern for the young hobbit who lay before him, his well-being now Thorin's foremost priority.

The young hobbit's skin felt clammy and chilled to the touch, sending a surge of panic through Thorin's veins. His fingers sought out a pulse at Bilbo's wrist, his touch gentle yet urgent. The faint throb beneath his fingertips was a weak and feeble reminder that life still clung to the unconscious hobbit.

Without wasting another moment, Thorin sprang into action. The urgency of the situation spurred him on, and he quickly assessed the room. His gaze fell upon the remnants of the extinguished fire, and he cursed the lack of logs or proper firewood. The only materials available were bits of furniture and scraps of paper, far from sufficient to build a warming blaze.

With determination driving him, Thorin gathered what he could. He tore at the remains of the furniture, breaking them into smaller pieces that would hopefully catch fire. His hands worked swiftly, his focus solely on the task at hand. He stacked the wood and kindling, arranging the paper scraps strategically to catch the flame. His fingers trembled with a mix of anxiety and urgency as he struck a flint against steel, sparks igniting the small heap of materials before him.

Thorin's gaze shifted from the growing flames to Bilbo's still form, his heart heavy with worry and he gasped. The fire's glow cast a soft, warm light on the hobbit's pale face, highlighting how much time had passed since Thorin had seen him last.

Before him lay no longer the innocent child he had once known. Instead, there rested a hobbit-lad who had matured in his own right, standing on the precipice of adulthood. Thorin's heart ached with the weight of the realization that while he had been consumed by his

responsibilities, Bilbo had been forging his own path, facing challenges and growing in ways Thorin had not fully witnessed.

The fire's feeble glow cast shadows across Bilbo's features, emphasizing the contours of his face that had become more defined with time. He was comely, as Thorin always knew he would be since he'd been such an adorable child. But he was gaunt. No hobbit had any business being *gaunt* ! How long had his poor hobbits suffered and where was Belladonna and Bungo?

The search for the older Bagginses would have to wait. Bilbo needed to be nursed back to health, and Thorin would not abandon him again.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for the comments and kudos! They make my days and my days have been hard!

# Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Comfort time!

With a determined resolve, Thorin focused on ensuring Bilbo's comfort and well-being. He knew that the young hobbit's body needed warmth and sustenance to fight off the effects of the cold and starvation as soon as possible. One thing at a time. First, he ensured his warmth and got him hydrated. Carefully, he maneuvered Bilbo's form to be nestled against his own, seeking to share his body heat and provide a shield against the chill of the room. Gently, Thorin's calloused hands began to work. He waited until Bilbo’s chest and back felt warm enough, then moved on to his hands, massaging the blood back into his delicate fingers, and finally his feet and toes–still odd-looking in Thorin’s opinion, but adorable.

A small huff escaped the hobbit’s lips when Thorin started on the foot, which he took as a good sign. By the time he was done with the second, Bilbo had fidgeted and whimpered a few times and Thorin wondered if he was ticklish, which would be odd considering the thickness of Hobbit soles.

He finally reached for the blankets he had gathered earlier and unfolded them with careful precision as not to wake Bilbo. With a tender touch, he draped them over the hobbit, tucking the edges snugly around him. The blankets served as a barrier against the icy air that had invaded the room.

Next, Thorin turned his attention to the makeshift fire he had managed to kindle. While the flames danced weakly, he knew they would not last long without proper fuel. He scanned the room, his eyes catching the small pieces of furniture and paper strewn about. Gathering the pieces of wood and paper, he arranged them methodically in the fire's embers, coaxing the flames to grow stronger.

With a sense of urgency, Thorin swiftly searched through Bag End, his eyes scanning for any signs of usable wood. He checked the main hearth and the kitchen, seeking out proper fuel. Among the dwindling supply, he discovered a few pinecones and logs that Bilbo seemed to have rationed, perhaps trying to conserve what little warmth remained. But this was a dire situation, and Bilbo's life teetered on the edge–

A sudden halt gripped Thorin as he entered the larder. His heart sank as he surveyed the barren shelves, nothing but empty glass jars and vacant baskets. The realization struck him like a blow – there was no food left.

Thorin's mind raced as he pieced together the puzzle. Bilbo's parents must have ventured out of Bag End in search of aid or food, only to be stranded by the blizzard. It was the only

explanation he would allow. He held onto the fragile thread of optimism, praying that Bella and Bungo had found refuge in another hobbit hole, safe from the merciless storm and hunger.The image of Bilbo's sunken cheeks haunted Thorin's thoughts, causing him to grasp the door frame for support. The notion of these kind-hearted hobbits starving after all the food and friendship they had generously shared with him and his kin over the years was too painful to bear. He couldn't allow himself to dwell on such a grim possibility. With determination, he pushed aside his nausea that had surged at the thought. Insulting their kindness by losing his lunch was not an option he was willing to entertain.

The fire crackled and gained strength. Thorin reached into his pack, retrieving a small pot he had brought with him. It was well-worn and had seen its fair share of journeys, but it was still reliable for the task at hand. He filled it with snow he had collected from outside, placing it near the fire to melt and eventually boil.

While the pot heated, Thorin sought out a pair of cups, carefully selecting ones that were less chipped and worn. He placed them nearby for when the water was ready. With a sense of purpose, he rummaged through his pack once more, this time producing a small pouch of dried herbs. He had picked these herbs during his travels afar, knowing that their spice and flavor would be a welcome addition to a tea to revitalize the body. It was to keep him going through tough treks and battles, but it would also help Bilbo gain his strength back at least temporarily.

Once the water had reached a rolling boil, Thorin added a handful of the dried herbs to the pot, allowing their aroma to fill the air. He let the mixture steep, his gaze never straying far from Bilbo's form. The young hobbit's skin was still cool to the touch, and Thorin's heart clenched with worry.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, Thorin carefully poured the fragrant tea into the cups, the steam rising in delicate tendrils. He moved to Bilbo's side, sitting up and gently propping the hobbit into a more upright position. Supporting Bilbo's back with one arm, he offered the warm cup of tea with his free hand.

“It’s time to wake, little one,” Thorin couldn’t help but murmur quietly, still hesitant to wake him. But his worry finally won out. “Wake up, Bilbo.” He stroked the curls away from Bilbo’s face, which finally made the hobbit’s nose twitch. A long, shaky inhale and some more coaxing later, Bilbo’s eyes finally fluttered open several times, his pupils dilating quickly. He pinched his eyes closed after swallowing drily. His eyes opened again and focussed on Thorin’s face. His gaze flitted about, still murky.

“Tho-rin?” Bilbo rasped and immediately coughed from the effort.

"Here, Bilbo," Thorin's voice was soft, laced with concern. "Take this. It will help warm you from the inside."

Bilbo's eyes struggled to remain open, heavy with weariness. Despite his fatigue, he managed to grasp the cup with fingers that trembled slightly. The warmth of the tea seeped through the porcelain, and Thorin's attentive gaze followed as Bilbo cautiously took small sips, his shivering gradually easing.

Relief surged within Thorin as he observed the lad's gradual improvement. Each sip appeared to bring more stability. Responding swiftly, Thorin had offered comfort by gently rubbing Bilbo's back in a soothing, circular motion. A sense of accomplishment settled over him as he saw color returning to Bilbo's pale cheeks. The room's tension seemed to dissolve with every sip, replaced by a growing tranquility.

Thorin remained a watchful presence as Bilbo regained his strength, observing the tightening of Bilbo's grip on the cup. He noticed the now prominent bulge on Bilbo's bare yet becoming masculine throat moving as he eagerly drank longer draughts. So much had changed and yet it was still Bilbo.

“More,” Bilbo gasped when the last drop had barely vanished, his grip faltering on the cup. Thorin's quick reflexes saved it from falling, his attention unwavering.

"Take a moment to catch your breath. We wouldn't want you to fall ill," Thorin advised, replenishing the cup and carefully placing it aside. He gently drew Bilbo close to his chest once more, providing support as the hobbit sat up, one arm securely encircling Bilbo's waist. Despair gnawed at Thorin's heart as he felt the thin and fragile form of Bilbo in his arms, his ribs starkly prominent under the touch of Thorin's warm hands.

Bilbo allowed his head to lean back against Thorin's chest, his breath coming in gasps after the exertion of drinking. He felt so feeble, the unfortunate state he was in weighing heavily upon the dwarf. Thorin refrained from bombarding him with questions, content to simply be there and to listen to the gradual easing of Bilbo's breathing.

Amid the ongoing crackling of the fire that filled the air with its warm ambiance, Thorin remained steadfastly by Bilbo's side, offering a silent but steady presence of support. His chest felt constricted, the discomfort not solely attributable to the cold. Guilt lingered heavily within him, a familiar burden that weighed down on him. If only he had arrived sooner. If only he hadn't missed Bilbo's birthday again. If only he had agreed to spend the winter at Bag End as he had always wished, just as the Bagginses had frequently urged. If he had, Bilbo would not have suffered so, and his parents… the fate of Bella and Bungo was still a mystery he needed to unravel.

"Are you really here, Thorin?" Bilbo's words were sluggish, his eyes struggling to remain open as he turned his head to meet Thorin's gaze.

Thorin held him close, his grip firm, a reassurance of his presence. "I am here, little treasure," Thorin replied, his voice steady. "I deeply regret my prolonged absence, especially upon finding you on the brink of freezing to death, *Mahal* ," he choked on his maker’s name, his gaze briefly flickering upward, seeking strength to banish the horrible thought away. "Bilbo, where are your parents? Why are you alone?" he asked, concern lacing his words.

Bilbo's eyes blinked slowly as he sniffled, his breath hitching with each shuddering inhale. “Did they not send you?” His voice was weak, almost a whisper.

Thorin's brow furrowed with concern as he shook his head. “No. They went to the Blue Mountains?”

Bilbo's chest rose and fell in a weary sigh. He shook his head slowly, his lips chapped and cracked. “They… they were going to try.” He wet his lips with a dry tongue, wincing as he swallowed. “Then… you must have received our letters finally?”

Thorin's eyes widened, his heart sinking with realization. ""Bilbo, the most recent letter I received was your invitation to spend the winter here, and I deeply regret not accepting. You would not be…" His voice trailed off, the weight of guilt settling heavily upon him. The ache in his chest was almost unbearable.

Bilbo's voice quivered, his confusion evident as he asked, “Roac never returned? Then… then how… why are you here?”

Thorin's jaw tightened, his gaze flickering away for a moment. “Roac has not, and I have been worried sick.” How could he put into words the desperate urgency that had driven him through blizzards and treacherous terrain? How could he convey the unspoken bond that had tugged at his heart until he couldn't ignore it any longer, driving him to seek out Bilbo despite the odds? The fire within him had burned hotter than any physical pain, pushing him beyond his limits to find the hobbit.

“Here,” Thorin said, his fingers deftly rummaging through his pack until he retrieved a piece of cram. He held it up to Bilbo's lips, aware of the intimacy of the gesture among hobbits but too concerned to care about conventions. The dwarf's fingers brushed against Bilbo's mouth, offering the morsel and Bilbo's lips parted without hesitation. He nearly devoured the piece of cram along with Thorin’s thumb, his teeth scraping against Thorin's finger as he swallowed it down.

A soft, almost involuntary moan escaped Bilbo's lips as the bland food brought much-needed sustenance. “Do you…” Bilbo's cheeks flushed with embarrassment, and Thorin saw it as a sign that the hobbit was finally warming up. “Do you have more?”

“Of course.” Thorin's heart ached at the vulnerability in Bilbo's voice. He hesitated, wrestling with his concern before asking the question that had been nagging at him. “How long has it been since you’ve eaten?” Without waiting for a reply, he broke off another piece of cram, ready to offer whatever relief he could.

Bilbo's response manifested in a simple shrug, accompanied by his gaze cast downward, a silent narrative of his struggles etched in his body language. As he inhaled the next piece of cram, his attempt to answer was punctuated by a fragile breath. “We were running out of food… We wrote to you… no answer came.” His voice carried the weight of weariness, growing feeble with each word. “Ma packed, and Da left with her. I wanted to come. They said I could.” A tremor shook his shoulder as he recollected the painful betrayal. “They lied. They left while I was asleep. Left a note. Left a note next to most of the food we had left that I had helped them pack for the road. I tried to go after them but the… the wolves…” His body shivered uncontrollably, the rawness of his memories breaking through in sobs. “And the snow–”

“Peace,” Thorin's voice was a soothing balm, his touch a warm reassurance as he rubbed his hands up and down Bilbo's arms before enfolding him protectively. “Enough now. Everything will be alright.”

“Please,” Bilbo's voice was a desperate plea, a fragile gasp amidst his tears. “Please don’t leave.” The grip of a small hand on Thorin's arm was tight, nails digging in as if clinging to hope. “Or take me with you, please!”

“I will not leave you, I promise,” Thorin's voice carried a resolute vow, an anchor for Bilbo in the midst of turmoil. “The storm will unleash its full force soon, and though the present might appear grim, there is hope on the horizon. Rangers often patrol the borders; your parents might have sought refuge with them. But for now, you must rest, little one. Drink some more tea and find solace in slumber. When you awaken, a proper meal will be waiting for you,” his words flowed like a gentle stream, a comforting presence that gradually lulled Bilbo into a state of tranquility. The hobbit's head soon dipped as sleep claimed him once more.

Bilbo's journey into sleep was punctuated by a few restless moments, his body initially reluctant to fully surrender to rest. But eventually, his breathing steadied, and his form relaxed enough for Thorin to carefully lay him down and tuck him in. Thorin's determined gaze swept across the surroundings once more, evaluating the situation. With a purposeful stride, he moved about the house, gathering coal, spices from the kitchen, and supplies from his pack.

In the flickering warmth of the hearth, Thorin set to work preparing a nourishing stew. He had chosen the hearth in the bedroom over the kitchen, mindful of conserving the precious wood and keeping the room as efficiently heated as possible. The crackling flames cast dancing shadows across the area as Thorin worked diligently, the scent of the simmering stew mingling with the lingering aroma of spices that adorned Bag End's cupboards.

As Thorin stirred the stew and tended to the fire, he couldn't help but notice the subtle unease that lingered in the corners of Bilbo's face even in slumber. It was as if the young hobbit feared that Thorin might slip away while he was asleep, just as his parents had done. The thought tugged at Thorin's heartstrings, stirring a mixture of emotions within him.

While he prepared the meal, his mind wandered to the news Bilbo had shared through his tears. His heart ached for the young hobbit, betrayed by his own parents' departure. It was clear they had made a difficult sacrifice, leaving Bilbo behind to give him a chance to survive. Thorin would have done the same if it had meant Bilbo’s survival.

The aroma of the hearty stew wafted through the air, it's comforting scent permeating the room. It was a smell that managed to stir Bilbo’s stomach from his slumber, the low rumble of his belly, a sound that resonated with hunger, made Thorin's own gut tighten in sympathy. The sight of Bilbo curled up in discomfort made a lump form in Thorin’s throat.

Thorin had worked diligently, combining the ingredients he had gathered from his pack and the remnants of the pantry. The fire crackled beneath the pot, simmering the concoction. He had made sure to create a meal that would provide Bilbo with the nourishment he desperately needed.

As Bilbo stirred, a soft groan escaping his lips, Thorin moved to his side. He crouched down, a hand gently resting on Bilbo's back. "Easy now, Bilbo," he murmured, his voice soothing. "The stew is almost ready."

Bilbo's response was a mixture of a mumble and a wince, his discomfort evident. Thorin's fingers rubbed circles on the hobbit's back, offering a touch of comfort. "Hang in there," he encouraged, watching as Bilbo slowly uncurled, his brows furrowing in pain. He understood the urgency of Bilbo's need, he'd been starving once. The simmering stew held the promise of relief, a warmth that would fill Bilbo's belly and provide the strength he needed to recover.

Finally, with a weary sigh, Bilbo managed to sit up. His gaze met Thorin's, gratitude mingled with exhaustion in his eyes. Thorin offered a reassuring smile, his hand still resting on Bilbo's back. "It won't be long now," he assured, his voice gentle. Bilbo's stomach let out another plaintive rumble, Thorin knew that soon, that hunger would be sated, replaced by the warmth and comfort of a hearty meal.

Thorin sought to break the silence that hung in the air, his words a tentative attempt to ease the atmosphere. It was usually Bilbo who filled their moments with chatter, but now Bilbo lay weakened, his energy spent. "Do not despair, Bilbo," he began, his tone gentle yet reassuring, "aid is coming from the Blue Mountains."

Bilbo's gaze remained distant, fixed on some unseen point. His voice was soft, almost resigned, as he voiced his concern. "The roads will be impassable."

Thorin refused to let despair creep in, his determination unwavering. "Do not underestimate the ingenuity of dwarves," he declared with a small, knowing smile. He directed the words to Bilbo, a silent promise that they would find a way, that they would overcome whatever obstacles lay ahead. The twitch at the corner of Bilbo's mouth, the faintest hint of a smile, was a response that Thorin welcomed with gratitude. It was a glimmer of hope in the midst of uncertainty, a small victory in their battle against the odds.

A sudden wave of discomfort washed over Bilbo, bending him at the waist as he clutched his stomach, a pained grimace crossing his features. Again, a deep, rumbling sound emanated from his belly, audible evidence of his hunger.

Thorin's concern deepened, his heart going out to the hobbit in his suffering. "Alright," he said gently, "let's get some broth into you. If you can manage to keep it down, then we can try some potatoes. May I feed you?"

Bilbo's eyes snapped to him, the lingering pain mirrored in their depths, but there was a sudden flush that colored his cheeks, his nose, and even the tips of his pointed ears. The vulnerability and embarrassment etched across his face were evident. He waited for a response, half-expecting Bilbo to decline his offer. Yet, to his surprise, the hobbit's head moved ever so slightly in a nod. "Yes, of course," Bilbo murmured softly. Said as if Thorin should have always had this right, that he should have known that such an intimate gesture was permitted.

Thorin recognized the familiarity in this action. He recalled the days when Bilbo was a carefree child, unburdened by the weight of adulthood, when he had taken food from Thorin's hands without reservation. Now, as Bilbo's features bore a striking resemblance to Bungo, his father, Thorin couldn't help but appreciate that at least Bilbo hadn't fully adopted his father's conservative demeanor. The corners of Thorin's lips twitched slightly, a subdued smile forming as he prepared to offer the nourishment that Bilbo so desperately needed.

Thorin picked up the ladle, scooping some of the warm broth from the stew and carefully transferring it into a cup. With the cup of broth in hand, he moved closer to where Bilbo was resting, his expression a mixture of determination and gentleness.

Kneeling down before the hobbit, Thorin held out the cup towards Bilbo’s lips, his actions deliberate and measured. The moment held a sense of reverence, as if this simple act of offering nourishment was some kind of sacred ritual between them.

Bilbo's dry lips grazed the rim of the cup as he carefully bridged the small gap between his mouth and the liquid. His eyes held a strange look, locked onto Thorin's. The intensity of the gaze held Thorin's attention captive as Bilbo blew gently into the cup before taking a slow, measured sip. A faint, almost restrained moan escaped Bilbo's lips, and Thorin's grip on the cup nearly faltered in response to the unexpected sound. It was as if a chord was struck within him at the sound but he knew not what it meant.

As if unable to hold back any longer, Bilbo leaned slightly further forward, his hand coming to rest atop Thorin's own, guiding the cup to tilt slightly more. The urgency in Bilbo's actions became evident as he downed the remaining broth in two large gulps, his breath coming in short gasps as he finally lowered the cup.

"More, please," Bilbo's voice was soft yet beseeching, his gaze imploring as he looked up at Thorin.

They were close, their faces mere inches apart, warm breaths mingling in the small space between them. Bilbo's presence was almost overwhelming, his flushed complexion accentuating the delicate features of his face. Thorin couldn't help but be captivated by the sight, a moment of clarity in the midst of their dire circumstances. He had never seen Bilbo in quite this light before – beautiful, a word he had never associated with the hobbit until now. Bilbo had been cute, adorable, comely... but now... The firelight played upon Bilbo's skin, highlighting the earnestness in his hazel eyes and the vulnerability etched into his expression. Thorin's thoughts momentarily drifted into uncharted territory, a realm of unfamiliar feelings that he hastily pushed aside, shaking his head to clear the fog that seemed to settle over his mind.

"Yes, of course," he replied, his voice coming out slightly hoarse, a peculiar sensation tugging at his chest. He blinked, focusing on the task at hand – serving more broth into the cup. Confusion lingered in his mind, a mix of strange emotions clouding his thoughts. He attributed it to the weariness that had settled over him, a lack of rest playing tricks on his mind. It was best to dismiss these thoughts and concentrate on taking care of Bilbo's well-being, especially in their current circumstances. For the storm had merely just begun.

# Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

> A little angst... going through stuff I guess. Thorin is not being an idiot on purpose lol. Promise.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The night felt like it stretched on without end, a seemingly interminable expanse of darkness that defied the passage of time. If not for his innate dwarven intuition, an inherent connection to the rhythms of the world around him, Thorin might have been convinced that he was enduring an eternal night, a singular stretch of darkness that knew no bounds. Yet, in reality, the passage of time was not as stagnant as it seemed. Despite the sensation of an unending night, two full days had surreptitiously slipped away, lost in the throes of their dire circumstances.

After a hearty meal and the infusion of warmth that the fire and their layered clothing provided, Bilbo's strength had remarkably rebounded. They had learned the art of staying close, sharing their body heat as a precious commodity. Despite the dire circumstances that surrounded them—the biting cold, the uncertainty of the weather, and the isolation—Thorin found himself enveloped in an unexpected sense of calm. A tranquil peace settled over him, as if the turmoil of the outside world had momentarily receded, leaving him and Bilbo in a cocoon of resilience and companionship. It was nice to be so close to someone else, someone who instilled such calm in him. It was blissful and Thorin felt wretched for it because Bilbo had no choice but to seek warmth, the awfully thin hobbit desperately needed it–he grew cold so easily if Thorin was not near.

To while away the hours, they engaged in the timeless art of storytelling, a pastime that Bilbo had always cherished. Yet, it was Bilbo who now held the spotlight as his storytelling prowess had outgrown even Thorin's, transforming him into a skilled wordsmith. The hours melted away as they caught up on one another's lives. Simple anecdotes from Bilbo's days took on the enchantment of grand adventures in his skilled hands, captivating Thorin's attention and leaving him eager to hear the next chapter.

When Bilbo finally concluded his recent tale, Thorin found himself still lost in his gaze, captivated by the transformation that had taken place within the hobbit. He looked at Bilbo as if he were a marvel, and indeed he was. What an exceptional young hobbit, brimming with confidence and talent.

Bilbo's response was a nervous chuckle, his eyes reflecting a hint of embarrassment. "What? Did I bore you to sleep with my rambling? Why are you staring at me like that?" Another self-conscious laugh escaped him.

Thorin gently shook his head, his gaze unwavering. "You haven't bored me, Bilbo. I am simply in awe of you," he admitted sincerely. "Who would have thought that the fauntling who used to hide behind my legs would grow into such a remarkable storyteller?"

A blush painted Bilbo's cheeks, the warm glow of the firelight accentuating his reaction in the dimly lit room. Bilbo's face blossomed into a pleased smile, though he seemed to catch himself and tried to suppress it by pressing his lips together. "I'm pleased you think so," he admitted, unable to fully hide the contentment in his expression. They shared a moment of silent connection, their gazes locked as they observed each other. Bilbo's head tilted slightly to the side, and a mischievous smirk played at his lips. "You, on the other hand, haven't changed much at all," he remarked, a teasing lilt in his voice. "Though I think I see a few silver threads in those locks that were not there before."

Thorin sighed with a touch of dramatic flair. "Aye, it would seem the more prosperous my clan becomes, the more work I have to keep it that way. Though two of those strands are dedicated to Fili and Kili."

Bilbo laughed and then hummed thoughtfully, clearly searching for a diplomatic way to express himself. "You do appear a bit... more burdened than the last time I saw you," he finally offered. His smile faltered, and a shadow crossed his features. "You've been away for so long..." His voice trailed off, leaving unspoken the longing and disappointment that hung heavily between them. "Please believe me when I say that I am genuinely happy your hard work has paid off and that your people are thriving," Bilbo's voice held a blend of earnestness and reassurance, his eyes locking onto Thorin's as if trying to convey the sincerity of his words through his gaze. “But I must confess that my…” he swallowed and bit his lip, “that I have missed you dearly,” he finally let out quickly.

Thorin's heart swelled and ached at the same time. He held Bilbo's gaze, the weight of his absence, the regret for not being there when Bilbo needed him, and the warmth of the hobbit's genuineness all converged within him. He reached out, his fingers brushing aside Bilbo's curls in a tender gesture.

"I, too, have missed you more than words can express," Thorin replied, his voice gentle and very sincere. "These past years have been marked by a longing for the company and comfort I found here in the Shire." He paused, his thumb caressing Bilbo's cheek softly. "It warms my heart to hear you say that," Thorin replied, his voice carrying a genuine warmth that matched the fire's flickering glow. His thumb continued its gentle caress against Bilbo's cheek, a silent reassurance of his sincerity. "And I promise you, I will not let time or distance keep us apart for so long again."

Bilbo's initial blush seemed to fade, replaced by a sudden pallor that caught Thorin off guard. His words had a more profound impact than he'd anticipated. "You mean to leave again?" Bilbo's voice trembled slightly, eyes searching Thorin's as if seeking confirmation.

Thorin's brows furrowed in genuine confusion, his thumb halting in its soothing motion. "Well, I have responsibilities," he explained, his tone a mixture of concern and explanation.

Bilbo's reaction was immediate and visceral. He flinched away from Thorin's touch, his expression closing off like a tightly sealed door. His breaths quickened, and an anxious

tension filled the air. "But my parents..."

Thorin's heart twisted at the distress that clouded Bilbo's eyes. He reached out to touch him again, only for Bilbo to recoil further. The reaction felt like a physical blow to his chest. "Bilbo," Thorin's voice softened with understanding, "I will stay with you until they come back. I won't leave you alone."

A hint of panic colored Bilbo's gaze, his emotions cascading like a river threatening to overflow its banks. "What if..." he began, his voice faltering as he fought back the tears that threatened to spill. "What if they don't come back? What if they're gone?"

Thorin's gut ached at the panic in Bilbo's words. He took a steadying breath and leaned in, gently cupping Bilbo's face, urging him to look directly into his eyes. "No, Bilbo," he said firmly, conviction lacing his voice. "Don't even think it. They are fine. We will wait for them together, and I won't allow you to bear this burden alone."

Bilbo shook his head, his lips quivering as he struggled to hold back his emotions. His eyes glistened with unshed tears, revealing the depth of his fears and uncertainties. "Their note…" his voice wavered, "It's in my father's study. You should read it," he whispered softly, his tone weighted with such sorrow and resignation that Thorin could almost feel his heart bleed. "I think I'll rest some more for now."

As Bilbo turned away from Thorin to face the flickering flames of their meager fire, a sense of chill descended upon the dwarf, despite the freezing temperatures outside of their small, warm bubble of firelight. The fragile connection they had been building was abruptly severed, leaving Thorin feeling adrift and uncertain. He wanted to reach out, to bridge the gap that had suddenly formed between them, but Bilbo's reaction had him second-guessing every gesture and word.

Thorin's chest tightened with a confusing mix of emotions. He felt the weight of a misunderstanding he couldn't quite grasp, an unspoken hurt that lingered in the air. He longed to beg for forgiveness, though he couldn't pinpoint exactly what he needed to apologize for. He yearned to touch Bilbo again, to offer comfort, but he feared his presence might be unwelcome.

Uncertainty gnawed at Thorin's resolve, and in that moment, he decided to heed Bilbo's advice and read the note. Perhaps within its words, he would find the key to understanding Bilbo's distress and how to soothe his troubled heart and hoping for clarity in the message within.

Thorin exited the room with quiet footsteps, the air cold enough to make his breath visible as he made his way to Bungo's study. The note, it turned out, was not hard to find at all, as he inadvertently stepped on it, the paper's gentle crunching sound under his boot serving as an unexpected guide.

He picked up the note, his gaze steady as he looked upon the familiar and gracefully looping handwriting. The words, written with love and concern, spoke of Bilbo's parents' heartfelt

sentiments.

*Dear Bilbo,*

*If you are reading this, then we are long gone. My dear son, we could no longer sit idly by and wait for help to reach us. We also could not risk your safety by bringing you along on this perilous journey. We've left behind the provisions we carefully packed for you, as we anticipate finding sustenance on our way.*

*Should we encounter any delays in our return, for whatever reason, we have arranged for a document to be left with the Thane. This document grants you permission to marry your heartsong, thereby securing your inheritance before you reach the age of legal ownership. We are aware that some of our cousins, those you are familiar with, may attempt to convince you otherwise, but we urge you to follow your own judgment. Their counsel may be tainted by their selfish desire to claim our smial for themselves.*

*Please believe, Bilbo, that he will return for you. We understand that hope may be dwindling with each passing day of separation, but we have faith that he will come. We know you will be safe in his care.*

*We love you, son.*

*Ma & Da*

As Thorin read the letter, a growing unease settled within him. Bungo, ever the meticulous scholar, had chosen his words with care, but the underlying message was undeniable. They had ventured out into the impending storm, fully aware that they lacked the necessary provisions. The rangers would have probably found shelter from the tempest before thinking on the notion of hobbits willingly braving such conditions. But he had told Bilbo to hope, and so he would follow his own advice.

However, there was another aspect of the letter that gnawed at Thorin's thoughts. The part about Bilbo being allowed to marry was perplexing. He read that portion repeatedly, trying to decipher its meaning. The term "heartsong" had been mentioned before in the Shire, and it wasn't entirely unfamiliar to Thorin. Bella had referred to him as Bilbo's heartsong once, and from what he gathered, it seemed to be a term of endearment for those deeply connected with someone.

Thorin couldn't help but wonder about the implications of this revelation. Bilbo had indeed been infatuated with Thorin as a young faunt, but those feelings had seemingly faded as he grew older. Could this heartsong be someone new that Bilbo had met during Thorin's absence? The thought twisted uncomfortably in Thorin's stomach. While hobbits didn't have Ones in the same way dwarves did, the idea of Bilbo marrying someone… especially at such a young age, left him feeling strangely unsettled.

Though he tried to dismiss these emotions, they lingered like a shadow, casting doubt on his usually steadfast resolve. Thorin's mind wrestled with the elusive feeling of discontent. It was like chasing after a fleeting shadow that danced at the edge of his perception but always seemed to slip through his grasp. He couldn't put his finger on it, couldn't quite grasp the true source of his unease.

He stared at the letter in his hands, the words now a blur as his thoughts spun in circles. There was something more, something hidden beneath the surface of his reaction to the letter. It wasn't merely concern for Bilbo's well-being or confusion about the concept of a heartsong in hobbit culture. No, it was something deeper, something he couldn't articulate. The room around him remained silent, providing no answers. Thorin's eyes settled on the letter again, and he felt a strange pang in his chest. It was a mixture of longing and frustration, a sense of loss that he couldn't quite identify. The more he delved into his own emotions, the more muddled they became.

With a sigh, he folded the letter. Bilbo needed him now, more than ever, regardless of the complexities of their situation. Thorin knew he had to put aside his own inner turmoil and be there for his little friend. Before departing the room, Thorin reverently placed the note on Bungo's desk. There, adjacent to it, lay the document bearing the signatures of Bilbo's parents. He reached for it, handling the parchment with care. His finger traced a deliberate path over their elegant signatures. With steady eyes, he delved into the content of the letter.

The document was meticulously drafted, bearing the mark of legality and formality. It read:

*"In accordance with the laws governing the inheritance of property within the Shire, we, Bungo Baggins and Belladonna Baggins, do hereby grant our beloved son, Bilbo Baggins, permission to enter into matrimony with his heartsong, who is of age and of good standing, and to thereby secure his rightful inheritance as an heir to this family's estate.*

*This decision is made with full cognizance of Bilbo Baggins' age, recognizing that he has not yet reached the legal age to own property within the Shire. We, the undersigned, as Bilbo's legal guardians and parents, hereby declare our endorsement of this union.*

*Bungo Baggins & Belladonna Baggins*

*Given under our hands and seals on this 15th day of Afteryule, in the year 2912 of the Third Age."*

That strange churning in Thorin's gut returned. He placed the document down before the urge to toss it in flames became too much.

The rest of the evening passed in an atmosphere thick with tension. Bilbo, for the most part, pretended to sleep or perhaps drifted into fitful slumber, while Thorin tried to sleep but found the letter and document weighing heavily on his mind. The words etched into the parchment haunted him. Bilbo's parents did not seem to hope to return. The impending end of the relentless storm hung over him like a shadow, and he knew that soon he would have to dig their way out of Bag End, an easy task for a dwarf. Then, they would need to assess the state of Hobbiton and how many had managed to survive the brutal cold.

Thorin couldn't help but wonder about Bilbo's future. He resolved that he would stay with Bilbo until his parents returned, ensuring the hobbit was cared for and safe. Surely, they wouldn't evict Bilbo in such dire circumstances. Thorin shuddered at the thought. Bilbo was old enough to fend for himself, really. However, the mention of the Sackville-Bagginses in the letter was unmistakable, and Thorin's thoughts darkened. Those vile and greedy hobbits had always been a thorn in Bilbo's side, and Thorin was determined not to let them take Bilbo's home. He would protect it at all costs.

But for now, he reminded himself, one thing at a time. Their immediate priority was survival. With any luck, the storm would pass during the night, allowing Thorin to venture out and hunt for food. With this resolution firmly set in his mind, he laid down next to Bilbo, ever so tentatively pulled up the blankets, and inched closer to the hobbit. Bilbo took a deep breath, as if Thorin's proximity had provided a small measure of comfort. As if they had both been holding their breath in anticipation, but now, Bilbo could finally breathe.

Then, in a hushed whisper, Bilbo spoke, "I'm cold," accompanied by a shiver that passed through his body.

Without hesitation, Thorin scooted even closer and wrapped a protective arm around Bilbo, who instinctively took Thorin's hand in his own and guided it to rest over his heart. Thorin couldn't deny the rightness of this moment, holding Bilbo close and offering whatever comfort he could. As he lay there, a fleeting idea crossed his mind, one that he couldn't help, *Bilbo could come live with me.* The thought made him smile before being replaced by the soothing embrace of sleep that finally claimed him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much everyone! I'm so glad you're enjoying the story.

# Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Surprise! Another update!

The next morning arrived, bringing with it a slight reprieve from the relentless storm. Thorin awoke before Bilbo, his muscles still stiff from cold since the fire had gone out. Unless Bilbo wanted to burn more furniture Thorin needed to find fuel for the hearth. He gently extricated himself from Bilbo's grasp, careful not to wake him, and got to his feet. His first priority was to assess the situation outside. Bag End was still buried under a thick blanket of snow, and the snowstorm had left everything eerily quiet.

Thorin knew they needed to dig themselves out, but he also realized the importance of conserving their strength. He didn't want to overexert himself and leave Bilbo vulnerable. He retrieved his boots and heavy coat and then moved to the kitchen, where he found some cram and some water.

With a quick breakfast in his belly, Thorin took a deep breath, mentally preparing himself for the task at hand. He knew that time was of the essence, and they couldn't afford to wait any longer. He stepped back into the bedroom, where Bilbo was beginning to stir.

"Bilbo," Thorin said gently, kneeling beside the hobbit and placing his breakfast down. Bilbo's brow furrowed adorably and Thorin had the urge to kiss it smooth. It's not like he hadn't done it before. But Bilbo was no faunt anymore. And the evening prior had left Thorin with doubts as to how familiar he should be. Instead, he settled for a boop on the hobbit's nose and chuckled when it twitched and scrunched as Bilbo finally woke. "I hate to wake you. The storm has eased, but we're still snowed in. We need to dig our way out as soon as possible. Think you can lend this old dwarf a hand?"

With a snort, Bilbo rubbed his eyes sleepily and nodded, understanding the urgency. "Please. You're hardly old," Bilbo muttered as he stretched, yawned, and shook his sleepiness away.

"Oh," Thorin drawled with an amused arch of his brow. "One-hundred-sixty-six seems too trivial a number to you?"

A grumble of Bilbo's stomach left the hobbit blushing and reaching for his meager breakfast. "Dwarrows age differently." He shrugged. "Why, in hobbit years you'd be about forty years of age, quite in your prime."

"Still twice your age," Thorin frowned, wondering why this news suddenly bothered him.

They both bundled up in their warmest clothes and Bilbo led the way to retrieve shovels from a nearby closet. “That may be true,” Bilbo continued, grunting as he lifted the shovel off the rack. “But I’ll catch up to you sooner than you can blink. Why I believe even if I live to be as old as my granda that I’d still be buried before you.”

“Mahal, forbid it.”

“Yes, well,” said Bilbo matter of factly, “regardless, that means I will soon be wiser than you, Mister Oakenshield!”

Thorin laughed. “You assume that wisdom is gained by numbers alone, Master Baggins.” He grinned. “When it is *experience* that is truly the way to achieve it.” He winked at the hobbit.

For some reason, Bilbo turned crimson and sputtered. Thinking he had won their little banter, Thorin turned to the front door with determined resolve. He opened the door and revealed the wall of thick snow.

They set to work, their breath forming frosty clouds in the frigid air. Thorin took the lead, using his strength to break through the thick layers of snow and ice that blocked the doorway. Bilbo followed closely behind, helping to clear away the snow that Thorin had dislodged.

Hours passed in silence as they worked tirelessly, their muscles aching and their bodies growing weary. But neither of them complained. The sun had begun to break through the clouds by the time they finally cleared a path to the outside. The sight that met their eyes was both breathtaking and daunting. The world outside was a pristine expanse of glistening white, with snow-covered trees and hills as far as the eye could see. It was a beautiful winter wonderland, but it was also a stark reminder of the struggles ahead.

Thorin turned to Bilbo, his breath visible in the cold air. "We're out," he said, a note of relief in his voice. "Now we need to check on the others in Hobbiton and gather supplies."

Bilbo nodded, his determination matching Thorin's. With their path cleared and Bag End no longer buried beneath the snow, Thorin and Bilbo immediately set about helping their neighbors.

They trudged through the knee-deep snow to reach house after house, finding most doors almost entirely blocked. After more hobbits were freed, they followed the duo to help with their cause. With shovels, pitchforks, hoes, picks and anything they could get their hands on, they worked together to clear each lane. Bilbo started a census to ensure everyone was accounted for, while Thorin led the digging efforts.

Eventually, Ferumbras, the Thain and Bilbo’s cousin, arrived with the remaining Boulders, providing much-needed assistance and additional supplies. Together, they continued to dig out their neighbors and share what resources they had. Despite the exhaustion that threatened to overtake them all, Thorin seemed indefatigable, outlasting even the most energetic hobbits. But Bilbo would come to stop him long enough to eat and hydrate.

As they toiled together, a symphony of shared effort filled the air, each member of the group contributing their skills and strengths to the task at hand. The sense of unity and purpose

filled them with newfound vigor, gradually dispelling the gloom that had shrouded them. The camaraderie that emerged from their collaborative labor became a beacon of hope, casting aside the shadows of uncertainty and fatigue that had clung to them.

During Thorin's absence, a discordant note had managed to creep into the harmony and it came in the form of Lobelia Bracegirdle.

Thorin arrived at the scene, his arrival going unnoticed amid the growing commotion. A public confrontation between Bilbo and Lobelia was in full swing, drawing a crowd of curious onlookers eager for a taste of local gossip. The sight was jarring for Thorin. He had never seen Bilbo so filled with hatred, his face contorted into a sneer as he faced the young hobbit lass.

"I don't care what your father says! My parents will return," Bilbo declared vehemently, his voice laden with determination.

"Give it up, Bilbo! It's been five days since they walked out that door without a crumb to nibble on! It's best if we move in with you to make sure you're cared for," Lobelia countered with a condescending tone.

"Cared for?!" Bilbo's voice roared with anger, resonating through the gathering crowd. "As if I'm some invalid? We are the same age, Lobelia! Can you truly not care for yourself?"

"Unmarried?!" Lobelia gasped dramatically, her tone dripping with disdain. "You're mad!"

"I am married!" Bilbo's shout sliced through the air, his voice cracking with desperation. Thorin's heart nearly stopped in his chest. Had Bilbo just lied? Or had Bilbo eloped without anyone knowing?

"Not on paper, you're not!" Lobelia sneered, her words like venom.

"My bond was made by Yavanna herself! My heartsong–" Bilbo tried to explain, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Doesn't want you!" Lobelia interrupted with a cutting shout.

A collective gasp rippled through the crowd, and then an eerie silence descended. Thorin's heart ached as he saw Bilbo's face twitch, a momentary falter, before it went blank.

Lobelia shrugged dismissively. "Everyone knows he doesn't want you, except you! Why can't you just accept that and move on?"

"You're just jealous!"

"You think I'm jealous of you? Who would want a greedy dwarf for a heartsong?! I'd rather be as I am and have no heartsong at all!"

Thorin thought he heard the gears in his brain grind to a stop. A dwarf? Bilbo was in love with a dwarf?! Thorin's heart clenched painfully. Was it someone he knew? Someone from the company? Perhaps even one of his sister-sons. Bile shot up Thorin's throat at the thought.

Bilbo's laugh was cruel, his eyes filled with a cold fire. "You stuck-up, *jealous* cow."

Another gasp emanated from the stunned crowd. Lobelia, seemingly unaffected by Bilbo's words, sniffed disdainfully and raised her chin. "Say all the hurtful things you like," she retorted with icy composure. "It doesn't change the facts. Your heartsong left you."

Thorin watched in silence, torn between his instinct to intervene and letting it all play out because it felt like he was on the verge of something–that fleeting knowledge that had nagged at him for years was within reach. He could *feel* it.

"He came back for me!" Bilbo advanced, his voice quivering with frustration. "And I have my parents' blessing in writing."

"And yet," Lobelia drawled with a smug expression, "There has been no happy announcement. Well then? When is the big day?"

“I caution you, Miss Bracegirdle, to hold your tongue or I will–”

“Or you’ll what?” Lobelia's taunting words and deliberate approach seemed designed to push Bilbo's buttons, and Thorin couldn't help but fear the glint in Bilbo's eyes. He knew that look well; Bilbo was prepared to fight for victory through any means necessary and really wasn’t thinking straight..

As expected, Bilbo didn't hold back. His retort was sharp, snarling, and aimed at striking right where it hurt. “I’ll tell everyone what a little *thief* you are!” The scandalized gasps from the onlookers echoed through the air, and Lobelia paled, clearly taken aback. Bilbo wasn't finished, though. "And!" Bilbo's voice rang out, determined and commanding the crowd's attention. "I never said you were jealous of me."

He gave her a moment to let his words sink in and the Lobelia staggered backwards, her expression one of dawning realization. "You... you know..." she whispered, her trembling lips betraying her.

"That you're in love with me? You are so obvious, a blind troll could see it." Bilbo's response was bold, and Thorin couldn't help but raise his eyebrows at Bilbo’s audacity. That was bad form.

The moment turned tense and deathly quiet, just when it appeared Lobelia might break down in tears, she unleashed a scream of frustration. Her anger surged, and she pointed an accusatory finger at Bilbo, her face turning as red as a tomato.

"I'm a better match for you! Oakenshield will go back to his mountain and leave you behind, just like he's done countless times before. Even your parents would have rather frozen to death than be near you any longer because you are unlovable! I’m the *only* one–"

Bilbo's reaction was nothing short of explosive. Before she could utter another word, a scream of rage tore from Bilbo's lips, and he lunged at the hobbit-lass with a furious intensity that left Thorin momentarily stunned. He braced himself for a physical confrontation, expecting bloodshed, but Bilbo had something else in mind.

He took a more creative approach.

With a wild and angry energy, Bilbo attacked Lobelia's hat, viciously tearing at it and ripping out flowers and lace. Lobelia's cries of distress pierced the air, echoing like the shrill wailing of a crow.

“ONLY YOU WOULD WEAR A HAT LIKE THIS AT SUCH A TIME! IT IS RIDICULOUS AND GARISH AND–”

“GET OFF ME!”

"ENOUGH!" Thorin's booming voice cut through the chaos, causing everyone to jump and scramble in surprise. Bilbo froze in mid-motion, torn hat clutched in his hands, his eyes wide with horror. He dropped the hat, letting his arms fall limply to his sides, and a sense of stillness settled over the scene.

"That is quite enough," Thorin said with more measured volume, his voice a commanding presence amidst the turmoil.

In the blink of an eye, Bilbo had turned and bolted towards Bag End, his feet carrying him swiftly away from the chaos and impropriety he had inadvertently caused.

Thorin let out a heavy sigh, the weight of his thoughts pressing on him like an anvil. "Some ale would be good right about now," he muttered, his tone tinged with weariness as he pinched the bridge of his nose, trying to ward off an impending headache.

The Thain grunted and wordlessly handed him a cup. "Hot cider."

Thorin accepted it with a nod. "I'll take it. Many thanks." He brought the cup to his lips and took a long sip, relishing the warmth that spread through him as the cider flowed down his throat and settled in his belly. He downed it in three hearty gulps and wiped his mouth with the back of his sleeve. "I didn't know that Bilbo still–"

"Don't you all have work to do?" The Thain's gruff interruption dispersed the curious onlookers, and he shooed them away with a wave of his hand. "Get back to it!" Once they were alone, he patted Thorin's shoulder and led him to the nearest bench, where he proceeded to fill his pipe. With a practiced flick of his thumb, he lit it, creating a perfect smoke ring before passing the pipe to Thorin, who accepted it gratefully.

As Thorin smoked and watched the older hobbit, the Thain withdrew a note and a document. Thorin's heart quickened its pace as he recognized the letter that Bilbo had shown him before. He couldn't believe the gravity of what he was about to hear.

"I figured you didn't really know the gravity of Bilbo's proposal twenty-some years ago," Ferumbras began, a hint of embarrassment coloring his cheeks. "And this is a talk a father should have with his son, delicate subject matter and all, but since you are no hobbit and I am Bilbo's older relative, in lieu of Bungo and Bella's absence... well, it falls to me."

Thorin, too stunned to interrupt, nodded and took another drag from the pipe, his eyes wide with surprise and disbelief.

"They say us Tooks have fairy blood, did you know?" Ferumbras continued, filling the conversation with a touch of whimsy.

"Bella said something like that, aye," Thorin replied, handing the pipe back when offered. But the Thain waved it away, urging him to continue.

"Our Tookish blood, blessed by the fairies, gifted some of us with... interesting quirks, let us say," the Thain explained, his voice growing quieter and more serious. "Like heartsongs, for one. Every other generation or so is born with a melody that can only harmonize with One other..."

It was as if a veil fell from Thorin's eyes. Heartsongs. Ones. The realization felt like a strike of his hammer crashing onto his thick skull instead of an anvil. Thorin was Bilbo's heartsong, and Bilbo was Thorin's One. He choked on the pipe, gasping for breath and clutching his chest as Ferumbras patted his back in concern. He needed to go. He needed to think. Most of all, he needed to talk to Bilbo.

# Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Thorin couldn't help but be astounded by the peculiar customs of the Hobbits. The Thain had revealed that he had been officially and, quite formally, engaged to Bilbo since the time the young Hobbit had proposed as a faunt! This revelation was nothing short of astonishing, for in Dwarf culture, forming such a bond with a child was strictly forbidden. Had this engagement been taken seriously in Dwarf society, Thorin would likely have been sheared bald from crack to cranium, given the countless breaches of tradition it would have represented.

Thorin was utterly taken aback by the revelation that Bilbo had recognized him as his One long before he himself had realized it. The idea that Bilbo had been suffering because of their separation weighed heavily on him. None of this had been done correctly, not according to Dwarven or Hobbit standards. It became clear that Thorin had been inadvertently shunning his heartsong every time he left Bilbo behind to attend to his duties.

When Thorin questioned what other choice he had available at the time, the Ferumbras explained that he had every right to take Bilbo from him! Imagine, Bella had been preparing for heartbreak every time Thorin announced his departure. Apparently, Bella and Bungo would have allowed him to do just that, even when Bilbo was a mere babe. This revelation was unfathomable to Thorin, but he tried not to judge the Hobbit customs too harshly. It seemed their separation had been uncommon and damaging to their bond. Everyone had assumed that Bilbo was not allowed in the mountain since Thorin never took him there, and they believed that the matter of their residence would be sorted out when Bilbo came of age. To Thorin, it all seemed preposterous, adding another layer of guilt to the weight he already carried.

It all made sense now. His long-standing melancholy, which he had attributed to growing resentment towards his duty, had, in fact, been his soul's longing for the Shire, or more accurately, for Bilbo. Those inexplicable bouts of sadness he had experienced were likely Bilbo reaching out to him in his loneliness… and Thorin had ignored it until the pain had been too much to bear. The realization hit Thorin like a ton of bricks. Bilbo could have faded away due to their separation, and the thought horrified him.

Thorin shot up from his seat, his heart pounding in his chest. "I have to speak with Bilbo," he declared urgently, his voice tinged with desperation. He moved to leave, but Ferumbras stepped in his way, a concerned frown etched on his face.

"Woah there, what do you plan on saying?" Ferumbras cautioned. "You can't just tell him you didn't even know you were engaged! It will break his heart, whatever's left of it."

"Are you suggesting I lie?" Thorin asked, his brow furrowed.

"No, no, of course not," Ferumbras replied hastily, shaking his head. "It's never a good idea to lie to your heartsong. Besides, it hardly works, even if you try. What I mean is, you can't admit to it. Just go on as if you've known all along. You could say our customs are different, that's why you never knew you could take Bilbo with you. And maybe add that it was always your intention to take him to the mountains; you did say so yourself."

Thorin regarded the older hobbit with a mixture of frustration and resignation. "I can't marry Bilbo," he finally confessed, his voice heavy with the weight of his decision.

"What?! What do you mean you can't? Or do you mean you won't?" Ferumbras exclaimed in disbelief.

"I mean I can't," Thorin reiterated, his tone resolute. "He's not of age, not even by hobbit standards, let alone dwarf customs. It's just not our way."

Ferumbras waved his hand dismissively, his expression unimpressed. "Oh, pish-posh," he retorted. "He's legally an adult, even if he's not mature enough to get his inheritance by our laws. He's been smoking a pipe for three years now, you know. He's in his twenties for goodness' sake. He should be experimenting with other hobbits by now if he didn't have a heartsong already!"

Thorin felt the weight of his responsibilities bearing down on him, threatening to crush him beneath their burden. He longed for the simplicity of a solid stone wall against which he could bash his head in to somehow make everything clearer. But in this complex situation, there were no easy answers.

He couldn't deny that his actions, or rather, his lack of knowledge about hobbit customs, had placed him in a precarious position. As a well-known dwarf leader (an uncrowned King no less), his every move was scrutinized, and this revelation could lead to dire consequences. Best-case scenario, he might be forced to abdicate his position.

But at this moment, Bilbo was his priority. He couldn't let his One suffer any longer. With a determined resolve, Thorin steeled himself for the challenges ahead. He would find a way to navigate this intricate web of customs and obligations to ensure Bilbo's happiness and well-being.

As Thorin listened to Ferumbras explain how things were normally done, anecdote after anecdote on how one relative or another went about courting their heartsongs, he drained the entire pipe, puffing away at it even after all the pipeweed had burned to ash. The Thain finally snapped him out of his daze. With a gentle pat on the back, Ferumbras sent Thorin on his way.

By the time he arrived at the green, round door of Bag End, the darkness of evening had settled in around him. The surrounding landscape was blanketed in a thick layer of snow, and the sky above was painted with hues of pink and orange as the sun dipped below the horizon.

A smile tugged at Thorin's lips as he stood there, everything settling within him like a warm embrace. He had a One. For years, he had believed that his constant yearning was for a physical home, a lost kingdom. It had been his One all along. Gratitude and nervousness

mingled in his chest as he contemplated his next steps, uncertain of how to approach the hobbit waiting inside.

Drawing in a deep breath, Thorin attempted to steady the unusual nervous flutter within him —a sentiment quite unfamiliar to a seasoned warrior like himself. He pushed open the door and stepped inside. The room was enveloped in silence, save for the subdued sounds of his boots hitting the floor and the rustle of his heavy coat as he removed it. Rather than calling out for Bilbo, Thorin made his way towards Bilbo's bedroom, where he discovered the door to be closed but not locked. With a gentle push, he entered the room to find Bilbo wrapped in a dressing gown, a blanket draped over his shoulders. The hobbit paced before the warm crackling fire, his hair in disarray, suggesting he had been tugging at it in distress.

Bilbo came to an abrupt halt, his back still turned to Thorin as he began, "I owe you an apology. I acted disgracefully and embarrassed myself and you in turn." His voice held a sense of somber reflection but rehearsed, as if he'd been practicing his words since he'd run from the scene earlier. "I know I acted like... like a child," he continued, his tone derisive and heavy with regret. "I've tried so hard to make you proud, to make you see that I could be good for you—just as good as any dwarf. But have… failed… Every time. I only ask that you give me another chance to prove myself to you. To prove that I can be a respectable partner."

That was… a lot for Thorin to unpack at the time and he had his own script he'd haphazardly rehearsed on his way home… *home.* But it all went down the latrine the moment it was his turn to speak. A hush hung in the air before Thorin finally cleared his throat and approached Bilbo's side. "Here," he murmured in lieu of the rehearsed speech, extending a piece of parchment towards the hobbit.

Bilbo regarded Thorin with a fleeting, anxious glance but accepted the document. "What is..." His voice trailed off as he began to read the words on the parchment. His eyes widened as he muttered some of the words to himself, and he looked up at Thorin, his eyebrows vanishing beneath his wild curls, his eyes wide and beautiful.

"It's a marriage certificate," he exclaimed, the realization dawning on him.

"The Thain has signed it, as have I," Thorin confirmed. He regarded Bilbo with utmost seriousness. "The petition your cousin made for your adoption and Bag End becomes null and void as soon as you sign this–before your Thain. But I implore you, Bilbo," he added with sincerity, "take your time to consider it. If it's truly what you want."

Thorin watched as Bilbo's wide eyes shifted rapidly between the certificate and his own gaze. The hobbit's voice was a soft whisper as he inquired, "Why?" His gaze held a mixture of wariness and hopefulness as he raised his eyes to meet Thorin's. "Is this pity?"

Thorin's response was simple and honest. "No," he said firmly. "I have been made aware that I have been neglecting my duty to you as your… heartsong."

Bilbo's ears flushed with a rosy hue as he shifted his gaze back to the parchment, his voice barely above a whisper. "You have a greater duty to your people," he murmured, his words laced with hurt.

"I didn't mean to make you feel cast aside," Thorin reassured him earnestly. "I was not aware... of a lot, apparently." He shrugged helplessly, hoping Bilbo wouldn't dig too much. "It's as if I've had a blindfold on this whole time, truly I am not usually this dense… but I can blame no one else. But Bilbo, please know that I do *see* you, that I *do* feel our bond, even though it is fragile due to my own neglect. I wish to mend it."

Bilbo sniffed and set his misty eyes on the certificate again, tracing Thorin's name. "Would it mean we would live together?" he asked cautiously.

"We need not marry to be near one another, Bilbo." Thorin assured him. "I will make arrangements for my sister to take my place regardless. You are my priority now." It was difficult to gauge whether Bilbo was happy with any of his words.

"Your parents may yet arrive," Thorin continued, a disappointed frown casting a shadow on his face, for he wanted only the best for Bilbo. He believed that Bilbo should have the wedding of his dreams, and indeed, he shouldn't have to marry at all at such a young age. Bilbo was still discovering his craft, growing into himself. Thorin leaned in closer. "My kin should be here soon with provisions. I doubt the Thain will allow you to be evicted from your home in such dire times. We can wait. I will stand guard by the door until you come of age if it means you get to keep your home. I know what it's like to lose one, and I do not wish it on you."

Bilbo's nervousness was evident as his nose twitched, and he stared unblinking at the certificate while gnawing on his lip. Without a word, he moved to his small writing desk, retrieved a quill and ink bottle, and signed the document. Returning to Thorin, he handed it over. "You are my home."

Thorin's breath caught as he took the certificate and carefully placed it on the mantle. He then gently cupped Bilbo's jaw, locking his gaze with the hobbit's. "As you are mine, nedith," he whispered in Khuzdul, the deep affection in his eyes unmistakable.

Bilbo closed his eyes and leaned forward, his tongue darting out to moisten his lips. Thorin could sense the anticipation radiating from the hobbit, and he knew exactly what Bilbo expected of him. Yet, a sudden wave of panic washed over Thorin. Instead of giving in to the intimate moment Bilbo seemed to be inviting, he chose a different path.

With tenderness, he lowered his forehead until it gently met Bilbo's. It was a familiar gesture, one they had shared countless times before. After a brief moment of hesitation, Bilbo relaxed into the forehead touch, a contented sigh escaping his lips. They remained like that for a while, simply standing in each other's embrace, their smiles radiant as they gazed deeply into each other's eyes.

Finally, it was Bilbo who broke the peaceful silence with a soft-spoken question."What happens now?"

Thorin chuckled softly. "Well, I know we've gone about this all backwards, but I'd like to court you in the ways of my people. However, I'm afraid that I will have to wait until my kin arrives."

"Well, I say we stay unconventional," Bilbo replied, a mischievous glint in his eyes. "Courting is for those who need to get to know each other. We already know one another. Twenty years is a long engagement by Hobbit standards, you know," he added with a playful grin, his voice laced with a hint of seduction. Then, Bilbo's gaze lowered to his own toes, and he glanced up at Thorin from beneath hooded lashes. "And we just got married by law." He swayed on his feet slightly, his cheeks flushing a deep shade of red. "I hear something special is supposed to happen on wedding nights."

By Durin's beard, Thorin nearly choked on air at Bilbo's unexpected boldness. His heart raced in his chest, and heat rushed to his cheeks as Bilbo's words hung in the air. Clearing his throat to regain some composure, Thorin managed to ask, "And how much do you know of the intricacies of such traditions?"

Bilbo pursed his lips, suddenly looking a touch flustered. He tugged on his collar and then discarded the blanket entirely. "Heh. Bit warm in here now that we have a proper fire," he chuckled nervously, as if his earlier boldness had suddenly evaporated. "Um, as to my knowledge of what, erm, happens between spouses on wedding nights, well, it's purely theoretical based on whispers and rumors since it's not proper to speak of with anyone else but your spouse. Maybe you can finally enlighten me?" he asked hopefully.

*May Mahal grant me strength,* Thorin silently prayed. "Perhaps we should wait until we have a proper ceremony," Thorin stalled, struggling with the archaic views he had suddenly been thrust into.

Bilbo, however, pouted briefly until the words sank in. "A wedding," he said suddenly with a dreamy look in his eyes. "We're actually married now," he whispered, his gaze locking onto the certificate on the mantel. Then, his smile vanished, and he continued, "Ma was supposed to help me plan our wedding. And Da was supposed to give me away."

Maybe it was the weight of those signatures on the parchment that made Thorin bolder, or perhaps it was the profound knowledge that Bilbo was his One. He walked up to the hobbit slowly, giving Bilbo enough time to withdraw if he wished. Then, Thorin took him into his arms and held him close. Bilbo went willingly and eagerly to Thorin's joy. "That can still happen, nedith. Your mother was quite the adventurer in her day. Have faith in her abilities."

Later that evening, Thorin grappled with a dilemma that seemed to tear at him from both sides. On one hand, the protocols of dwarven culture strongly emphasized the need for separate sleeping arrangements during the courtship phase. On the other, Bilbo's earlier request for an education in the private matters of spouses loomed in his mind. The undeniable truth was that they were not courting; they were already married. Thorin couldn't help but reflect on the fact that he hadn't been physically intimate with anyone since just before Bilbo's birth—a curious realization. He hadn't desired romance or any sort of physical connection since then. But now, with his husband– *his husband!*– in his arms once more, safely tucked beneath the covers, the temptation to explore that second option was increasingly difficult to resist.

Thorin thanked the Maker that his exhaustion acted as a shield against overthinking. The day had been a relentless procession of physical toil, mental challenges, and emotional tumult.

His muscles ached in protest, seeking respite. With his One nestled beside him, breathing softly against his chest, a soothing tranquility began to settle over him.

His final thought before sleep claimed him was fervent: that the simple piece of parchment, the marriage certificate now displayed prominently on the mantel, was the first step toward repairing their fractured bond. It was a symbol of commitment, a sign to Bilbo that he was cherished and secure after so many years of doubt and confusion. He wanted a future where their hearts sang in unison, where they could navigate the complexities of their relationship with newfound understanding and strength. But for now, with Bilbo peacefully resting against him, the world outside seemed to recede, and the burdens of the day were momentarily forgotten.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah so I think I'll be changing the rating soon. How smutty should we get, hm???

# Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Tropes ahead!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Thorin was jolted awake by a sensation he couldn't quite pinpoint. Years of living on the edge of danger had honed his instincts, making him vigilant even in the deepest slumber. His eyes remained closed, and he lay still, straining his senses to detect any signs of intrusion or disturbance in the quiet room. His hand, driven by an almost reflexive response, discreetly found its way to the hilt of the dagger tucked between the bed's frame and mattress.

A few moments passed in tense silence, with nothing amiss. Just as he was beginning to drift back into the embrace of sleep, Thorin heard it—a faint, distant howling that sent shivers down his spine.

Before he could react further, Bilbo suddenly sat up, his scream tearing through the room. Thorin's instincts took over, and he swiftly reached out, gathering the hobbit into his protective embrace. "Hush now, *my treasure* ," he murmured, his voice a soothing balm in the darkness. "We are safely indoors."

Bilbo trembled in his arms, his distress palpable. "He's gone," he whimpered, his voice laced with heartache. "He's left me again."

Thorin tightened his hold on Bilbo, his own heart aching at the depth of his beloved's pain. In that moment, he understood the source of Bilbo's torment—the shadow of abandonment, the fear of being left behind once more. And he vowed, in the face of this newfound clarity, that he would do whatever it took to banish that fear from Bilbo's heart.

Bilbo's eyes remained tightly shut, his cheeks stained with silent tears that trickled beneath his closed eyelashes. "No, no, Bilbo," Thorin whispered, his voice filled with reassurance. "I have not left you. I am here."

But Bilbo seemed to still be in the grips of sleep, caught in a nightmarish realm where his distress knew no bounds. He sobbed and sniffled, his despair palpable, and Thorin's heart ached so fiercely that he would have given anything to ease Bilbo's pain, even if it meant tearing his own heart from his chest and offering it to him on a silver platter. Following another bone-chilling series of howls, which Thorin could now discern as the haunting cries of wolves rather than wargs, Bilbo's quivering and whimpering gradually subsided. He sank back into a peaceful slumber, his rest finally undisturbed.

However, Thorin found himself unable to share in that rest. He had keenly sensed Bilbo's distress through their bond, and a disquieting realization had washed over him. It became

apparent that their connection resonated more strongly when Bilbo was unconscious, when his defenses were down. A pervasive sense of disappointment gnawed relentlessly at Thorin's heart. It was a sadness born from the realization that Bilbo should have no defenses against him within the sanctuary of their bond at all. The profound damage that had been inflicted upon it was achingly evident, the wounds far deeper and more intricate than he had initially comprehended.

Bilbo's earlier apology resurfaced in Thorin's mind, its intricacies now laid bare before him with stark clarity. At the time of its delivery, he had been too entangled in his own emotions to truly dissect the depth of Bilbo's words. Yet now, with the benefit of hindsight, the meaning behind Bilbo's apology became painfully evident.

A profound realization settled upon Thorin's heart like a boulder. It became clear that, despite the demeanor Bilbo displayed in his presence, he couldn't entirely trust the hobbit's outward expressions of emotion. What Thorin had initially interpreted as growing reservation had been, in truth, Bilbo's attempt to project an image of himself that would earn Thorin's love and acceptance. Someone mature, reserved, and respectable (like Bungo). He had strived to become someone he believed Thorin would deem worthy of his affections, ultimately suppressing his genuine self to accommodate Thorin's expectations. The enormity of the damage inflicted by his ignorance weighed heavily on Thorin, leaving him with a profound sense of regret.

In his quest to prove his worth to Thorin, Bilbo had unwittingly masked his true essence and feelings–had held himself back over and over for fear of trapping or disappointing Thorin… In hopes that Thorin would one day reward him with the affection and love he had always craved but somehow thought he did not deserve. It was a grievous misunderstanding, one that Thorin now regretted deeply. He longed to convey to Bilbo that he had always been enough, irrespective of Thorin's actions, and that Thorin's past decisions had been influenced solely by his duty as an exiled Prince of Durin's Folk, rather than any perceived inadequacies on Bilbo's part. The path to making amends seemed both daunting and essential, and Thorin was resolved to find a way to bridge the divide he had unwittingly created between them.

As he watched Bilbo's fragile form nestled in the cocoon of slumber, Thorin grappled with the weight of his own shortcomings. He understood the extent of his past actions, the ignorance that had driven a wedge between them. It was a burden he knew he must bear and a debt he was determined to repay, for he had pledged his heart and soul to Bilbo, and nothing would deter him from the path of redemption and reparation that now lay ahead.

Thorin started with the simplest of actions, the ones readily available to him at that moment. Gently, he ran his fingers through Bilbo's tousled curls, guiding them away from the hobbit's furrowed brow. As his hand cradled Bilbo's head, he began to hum a soft, soothing tune, an age-old lullaby from his homeland. The melody was a quiet reassurance, a gentle promise of safety and warmth, meant to usher Bilbo back into the comforting embrace of peaceful slumber. The gentle caress of Thorin's fingers and the familiar lullaby worked their magic on his One. His furrowed brow eased, and the tension that had gripped his features began to melt away. Slowly, his breathing deepened, becoming steady and even, a sign of his returning tranquility. A faint, contented smile graced Bilbo's lips as he surrendered to the embrace of

peaceful sleep once more. Thorin watched over him, a reassuring presence in the quiet of the night, knowing that their bond was on the path to healing, one tender moment at a time.

Their morning was abruptly interrupted by a loud, insistent knocking that stirred them from their slumber. Thorin's weary body protested as he tried to rise from the bed, the aches from the previous day's labor making themselves known. Bilbo, too, seemed to be in a state of discomfort, emitting a groan of his own as he blinked open his eyes. The salty traces of tears from the previous evening were evident, leaving his eyes bloodshot and tired. There was no time for further conversation or any lingering awkwardness as the urgent intrusion demanded their attention.

"I'll answer it, nedith, you can rest some more," Thorin gently murmured to Bilbo, who responded with a grumbling but contented noise as he curled further beneath the covers. Thorin couldn't help but smile at the sight, that is how his hobbit should always be, content and safe. He made his way to the front door just as the knocking persisted, revealing Ferumbras Took and Tobias Sackville-Baggins on the doorstep.

With a courteous nod, Ferumbras tipped his hat. "Sorry to trouble ya so early, but may we come in?"

"Of course," Thorin replied, though he couldn't hide the wary look he cast in Mister Sackville-Baggins' direction as he held the door open wider. "I'll get some tea prepared. We'd best have our discussion over breakfast."

Just as Mister Sackville-Baggins was about to interject, Ferumbras clamped a warning grip on the other hobbit's shoulder. "Thank you kindly, but we've already had our first breakfast," he said with a slight sigh. "We're all on rations, and that's part of the reason for my visit. Pardon my bluntness."

"Then I hope you don't mind if I make breakfast for Bilbo and myself while we discuss the food situation," Thorin proposed.

"That would be mighty fine, yes. Come along, Tobias," Ferumbras grumbled, taking a somewhat reluctant Sackville-Baggins along with him.

As Thorin busied himself preparing a humble breakfast, consisting of rations like bread, ham, and tea, Ferumbras provided an update on the dwindling food supplies. The situation was dire; they had, at most, two days' worth of provisions left. Thorin, ever the practical leader, estimated that it would take at least a week for the caravan from the Blue Mountains to arrive with much-needed aid as long as they encountered no trouble. The East Road was likely impassible. In response, he proposed organizing a hunting party, consisting of himself and two of the more skilled boulders, to procure additional sustenance. The Thain agreed to this plan, emphasizing the urgency of the situation.

However, their discussion was abruptly interrupted by a loud and pointed clearing of Tobias's throat. "Yes, yes, now that’s figured out, if we may return to my concerns now? Where is my nephew?"

"Your cousin," Ferumbras corrected. "Tobias, you have as much claim to Bag End as I do, which is to say, none at all."

Tobias's intentions were clear. "I simply wish to care for Bilbo. No one else has stepped up, so it falls to me now."

Thorin's grip tightened around his cup, his frustration evident. "Bilbo doesn't require anyone's care," he asserted through clenched teeth.

Tobias sneered, his tone dripping with disdain. "Oh, and why is that? Because you're here now? For how long this time, Mister Dwarf?" He continued, "Now, I wish to speak with Bilbo alone."

Ferumbras, maintaining his cool, offered a sly retort, "You'll have to ask his husband for permission if you wish to discuss the legalities of his inheritance."

Tobias gasped dramatically and turned his ire towards Thorin, rising abruptly from his seat. "You snake! You eloped?! There's been no wedding! You, taking advantage of my young nephew—!"

"Cousin," Ferumbras interjected once more.

"Whatever! I'll drag your name through the mud, you dishonorable–!"

Thorin's patience had nearly run out as he stood up abruptly, towering over Tobias, his dwarven temper flaring. "You will mind your words and your manners, Hobbit. Bilbo is my husband, and I will not tolerate any slander. Your family's misguided interference is precisely what Bilbo does *not* need. He will not be micromanaged by you or anyone else."

Ferumbras, trying to keep the peace, interjected, "Let's all take a step back and sit down, shall we? We're in the middle of a difficult situation, and there's no need for more conflict."

Thorin nodded, his gaze unwavering as he spoke directly to Tobias. "You may speak with Bilbo, but you will do so respectfully, and you will remember that he is not a child to be controlled. You may not agree with our marriage, but it is legal and binding. He is under no obligation to hear your grievances."

Tobias huffed indignantly. "I demand to see the paperwork. All of it."

As if conjured by his demand, Bilbo seemed to materialize out of thin air, forcefully slamming a stack of documents onto the table. "There you are, Tobias," he announced with a satisfied smile. "My parents' permission, complete with both their signatures," he declared triumphantly, "and the note my father left, not to mention our marriage certificate!" He punctuated his statement by placing his fists on his hips, wearing a smug grin that left no room for argument. Bilbo, still wearing that triumphant grin, wasted no time. He briskly ushered Tobias towards the door of Bag End, practically pushing him out. "Now that you've seen everything is in order, dear cousin," he said with a falsely sweet tone, "I trust there's no further need for your concerns?"

Tobias, still fuming, was practically shoved out the door. "How rude! This is far from over," he muttered before turning on his heels and storming away.

Bilbo couldn't resist adding one final remark as Tobias retreated down the path. "I'm certain Otho will be pleased Lobelia has no other options left," he called after his cousin with a mischievous grin, enjoying the sight of Tobias sputtering in frustration as he disappeared into the distance. Bilbo, still with that satisfied gleam in his eyes, slammed the door shut. He spun around, his enthusiasm unabated. "I've always wanted to kick him out!" he exclaimed with a wicked chortle. However, his jubilant expression froze when he noticed Thorin's surprised gaze, his mouth hanging open. Bilbo's demeanor swiftly shifted as he wrapped his dressing gown tightly around himself, crossed his arms, and cleared his throat. "How terribly rude of me," he mumbled,

Ferumbras, seemingly unfazed by the dramatic exchange, shifted his attention to Thorin. "I'll send two of my lads to you for the hunt. Well, Thorin, Bilbo," he tipped his hat again after he stood. "Apologies for interrupting the honeymoon as it were. I'll let myself out..." With that, he made his exit.

Bilbo's face turned a deep shade of scarlet as the door clicked closed behind Ferumbras. He shifted his feet awkwardly, fidgeting with the folds of his gown. "Good morning…" he hedged, his voice carrying a hint of uncertainty.

Thorin knew that every moment counted. He didn't want Bilbo to think, even for a second, that he was displeased with him for anything that had transpired. None of it was Bilbo's fault, and Thorin was determined to make that clear. With a soft smile, he reached out and gently placed a hand on Bilbo's shoulder. "It is now," he replied, his tone warm and reassuring.

Bilbo initially tensed under Thorin's touch, but as he met Thorin's reassuring gaze, a smile gradually spread across his face. "Do I smell food?" he inquired, his voice filled with a mixture of curiosity and delight.

Thorin couldn't help but chuckle at Bilbo's reaction. With a dramatic flair, he extended his arm in the formal manner he'd been taught as a pebble and executed a graceful bow. "Allow me to escort my husband to his breakfast," he declared with a playful twinkle in his eye.

Bilbo's initial giggle burst forth before he could stop it, and he quickly brought a hand to his mouth, eyes widening as if surprised by the sound that had escaped his lips. The air was filled with a sense of newfound lightness and ease between them. Bilbo took his arm with a pleased smirk as Thorin led them back to the kitchen. Before his One took his seat at the breakfast table, Bilbo hurriedly gathered their documents, handling them with great reverence, and carefully stashed them away in a safe place within the study. Returning to the table as Thorin was serving their simple meal, they sat side by side, their closeness more intimate than usual, yet they refrained from touching. It was evident that Bilbo had something on his mind, as he remained uncharacteristically quiet and fidgeted in his seat, opening his mouth several times only to halt before any words escaped.

Thorin, sensing his inner turmoil, encouraged, "Speak your mind, Bilbo. I can tell something weighs on you."

Bilbo took a moment to gather his thoughts, his hazel eyes fixed on Thorin's with a mixture of vulnerability and confusion. "It's just that... Well, there were moments when others wondered, and I too had some doubts. I thought perhaps you didn't want to marry me at all. It's just, you see, you're a dwarf, and there were questions about whether dwarves even have what we hobbits call 'heartsongs.'"

Thorin swallowed hard as his mind scrambled to come up with something that was not a lie. “We call them Ones,” he blurted and then quickly took a drink of his tea. It gave him a moment to gather his thoughts. “So, perhaps we do not have the same name for it but it is one and the same, from my understanding.” He took Bilbo’s hand in his and stroked his knuckles before looking into his hazel, honest eyes. “There is no doubt in my heart that you are my One.”

A soft, relieved sigh escaped Bilbo's lips, and his grip on Thorin's hand tightened, just slightly. "That's good to hear," he admitted, a genuine smile gracing his features. Thorin felt a warmth spread within him at the sight of that smile, a warmth that reached deep into his heart. "I'm glad it was merely a cultural misunderstanding."

Yet, Thorin couldn't help but notice the lingering unease in Bilbo's eyes, the hesitation in his demeanor. "If there's anything else on your mind, anything else you wish to discuss, you need only say, nedith," he assured.

“Well, it's only... I know we are waiting to have our honeymoon," he started, his voice soft and hesitant, his words already causing Thorin's heart to race with anticipation. "But I wondered if you'd be amenable to marking the occasion in some special way? Just for us. It doesn't have to be anything public," he quickly added, as if considering Thorin's potential concerns.

Thorin leaned in slightly, his interest piqued. "And did you have something in mind?" he asked, eager to demonstrate to Bilbo the depth of his commitment to their new relationship.

Bilbo blushed once more, the tips of his ears turning a delightful shade of pink. "Oh, I don't know," he replied with a playful lilt in his voice that suggested he might indeed have something specific in mind. "Maybe a..." Bilbo gave Thorin a sidelong look, his gaze filled with a mixture of shyness and longing, before he brought his tea cup to his lips, daintily sipping at it. Just before taking a sip, he mumbled into his cup, his words coming out in a high-pitched, somewhat nervous crack. "A kiss, perhaps?" Bilbo's question hung in the air, delivered with a hint of vulnerability that he quickly masked with a soft cough before finally drinking his tea.

A surge of desire coursed through Thorin, and he couldn't help but close his eyes for a brief moment, taking in a deep breath to steady himself. "Just on the cheek!" Bilbo quickly amended, misunderstanding the cause of Thorin's reaction.

Thorin snapped his eyes open, his gaze heavy with a newfound longing he had never experienced before. Grappling with these intense emotions, Thorin almost missed the moment when Bilbo began to retreat, apologizing. "I will hear no apology for a request I am eager to fulfill," he declared firmly.

"Really?" Bilbo questioned, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

Thorin nodded, squeezing Bilbo's hand in his own. He gazed deeply into Bilbo's eyes and began by kissing the hobbit's knuckles tenderly. Bilbo's breath caught in his throat. Slowly, Thorin pulled him in, tilting his head to place a gentle kiss on Bilbo's bare cheek. The touch sent shivers down their spines, and when Thorin finally leaned back, they were both left breathless, their hearts racing as One for just a moment.

Thorin was about to steal another kiss when Bilbo abruptly went limp, his body seemingly giving out as he melted off his seat and crumpled to the ground like a puppet with severed strings.

"Bilbo!" Thorin dropped to his knees just in time to catch Bilbo's shoulders and prevent his head from hitting the floor.

As suddenly as he had collapsed, Bilbo shot back into a sitting position. "What happened?" he asked, wide eyed and bewildered.

Thorin blinked twice, still trying to process the sudden turn of events. "I think, I think you just swooned!"

"No, I didn't."

"You did!" Thorin's lips curved into a grin. "I kissed your cheek, and you dropped like a rock in a pond!"

Bilbo shook his head, though his eyes remained clouded in a daze. "Nonsense. No one swoons over a-a-a kiss on the cheek, my mother kisses me on the cheek for goodness' sake!"

Unable to contain himself, Thorin burst into laughter, first snickering, then giggling, and eventually guffawing.

"Stop laughing at once!" Bilbo scolded, his pout deepening as he crossed his arms over his chest. He remained on the floor, sitting on his rear in the middle of the kitchen, and it only served to make Thorin laugh harder.

As Thorin's laughter filled the air, Bilbo's initial annoyance quickly melted away. Instead, he joined in the laughter, his giggles and chuckles harmonizing with Thorin's hearty mirth. Their laughter danced around the cozy kitchen, creating a joyous atmosphere that seemed to fill every corner of the smial. It was a moment of pure, unadulterated happiness, a stark contrast to the recent turmoil and uncertainty that had surrounded them. As they laughed together, the bond between them seemed to grow a little bit stronger.

Chapter End Notes

Now I feel like I need to at least graze every fandom trope just because lol. Mpreg anyone? XD

# Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

bath time of a hobbit and a real first kiss...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Three days had slipped through the hourglass of their newlywed life. In that span, Thorin Oakenshield, a seasoned warrior, had found himself embarking on a different kind of journey. The halls of Bag End, now his abode, resonated with a calm he hadn't anticipated. He leaned on the windowsill, gazing out at the Shire's serene landscape. The rolling hills of Hobbiton still blanketed in snow extended before him, a bitter cold wonderland outside. There was nowhere he'd rather be, because Bilbo was with him.

In these short days, Thorin had gripped onto his new purpose with eagerness. But he was out of his depth. For years, his family, his duty as a leader, had shaped his existence. Expectations bore down upon him like an unyielding weight, pressing the life out of his every breath.

But now, as a husband, his duty was different–not any less important. The weight, though present, had shifted. It was no longer the burden of a ruler but the responsibility of being a good spouse. The thought of fulfilling his obligations to Bilbo felt strangely liberating. It was a task he welcomed with open arms. Comparing the two, Thorin couldn't help but favor the latter. He found himself longing to leave behind the trappings of his past, his role as a ruler, and to embrace the simpler, yet profoundly meaningful, duty of being the best husband he could be.

Naturally, as it often happened, guilt accompanied his decision. After years of dedicated effort to uplift his people from poverty and transform their new halls in Ered Luin into more than just a coal miner's district, he had readily set it all aside with one solemn but swift signature.

His sister was likely to string him up by his jewels for eloping. As for Balin, Thorin was uncertain about his reaction. Nevertheless, he hoped that with time, they would come to understand. Both had experienced the loss of their Ones during the Battle of Azanulbizar. He hoped they would recognize that he hadn't shamefully abandoned his responsibilities. In truth, he was willing to continue his role if given the chance, but he also believed Bilbo should have an equal say in whether they chose to reside in the Blue Mountains. Thorin could always return to his craft of smithing. Over the past two decades, he had built a stellar reputation as a silversmith, crafting primarily for himself and only sending his least favored creations to auctions.

However, he refrained from discussing any of this with Bilbo until he had a chance to consult Dis. He had no desire to needlessly trouble his One. Once the caravan arrived, he resolved to send his sister a letter. Perhaps inquiring about marriage advice would not be remiss either. Although he cherished the role of a husband, he couldn't shake the feeling that he was consistently falling short of Bilbo's expectations.

In retrospect, Thorin contemplated the tender moments he and Bilbo had shared during these past three days. It had been Bilbo, technically, who initiated their first kiss—a chaste and innocent request that had stirred something deep within Thorin.

However, it became increasingly apparent that Bilbo was uncertain about how to initiate further intimacy. Each attempt seemed to oscillate between the fear of Thorin's rejection and a resigned acceptance. So, Bilbo, clever and reserved as he was, devised his own indirect way of "asking" for what he desired—through acts of service. Bilbo would rise before Thorin, diligently preparing their breakfast. No matter how soiled Thorin's boots were when he returned, they would always be clean and polished by the time he had to leave. Bilbo ensured Thorin's coat was readily available, ready to hand to him before his departure. Afterward, Bilbo would simply stand there, nibbling on his lip, gazing at Thorin expectantly.

Of course, Thorin never withheld his affection. He would tenderly press their foreheads together, bestowing a lingering yet chaste kiss upon them. Without fail, this left Bilbo dreamy-eyed, and Thorin found himself awash with love each time he witnessed that enamored look. During their most recent encounter, he had even quickly pecked Bilbo on the nose, earning a delighted giggle in response.

However, Bilbo's actions began to escalate. He not only attended to Thorin's basic needs but also took on an ever-expanding role, fluffing Thorin's pillows, diligently mending and laundering his clothes, and ensuring meals were ready upon Thorin's return from hunting. Whenever Thorin reached for his pipe, there was Bilbo, offering to light it for him. Bag End, once a cozy mess, now gleamed with spotless perfection. Thorin couldn't help but feel a rising concern that Bilbo was running himself ragged. Rations were still sparse, and Bilbo seemed to be neglecting his own well-being. He wasn't eating enough, and the weariness etched into his features deepened with each passing day. Thorin wasn't entirely sure what Bilbo was doing while he was out hunting, but whatever it was, it seemed to be taking a toll on his Hobbit, whose ribs appeared more pronounced by the day.

This left Thorin in a perplexing dilemma. While showing affection to Bilbo was never a chore, he didn't want Bilbo to feel obligated to serve him hand and foot. Yet, he also didn't know how to address the issue. On one hand, he didn't feel ready to progress their physical relationship beyond holding hands and tender kisses. He was still grappling with the profound changes in his life, particularly the revelation of his One. On the other hand, he didn't want Bilbo to perceive his hesitation as rejection.

Thorin wrestled with finding a balance between these two concerns. Although he possessed more age and experience, his prior encounters had been shallow physical diversions with willing strangers, devoid of any emotional depth or romantic involvement. His only guidance came from rudimentary teachings on courtship and the scant advice Ferumbras had offered.

Thorin was beginning to suspect he might need to seek out the Thain once more for additional guidance.

As per the Thain's counsel, the key to bridging the gap with any hobbit was comfort and reassurance, combined with thoughtful gifts and gestures. However, there were no flowers in the mountains to offer Bilbo and there was no time for the forge, so Thorin embarked on a journey of subtle expressions of affection. He aimed to outpace Bilbo in preparing breakfast, insisted on taking charge of the washing up after their shared meals, and held Bilbo close during their quiet moments in bed. Thorin's arm found a comfortable resting place around Bilbo's shoulders, and he often ran his fingers through the soft curls of Bilbo's hair while the Hobbit engrossed himself in reading.

Of course, Thorin couldn't resist peppering these moments with unexpected kisses, trying to catch Bilbo off guard. Each time, Bilbo would yelp in surprise and leap as if tickled, only to dissolve into giggles and perhaps playfully shove Thorin with a satisfied grin.

Yet, he couldn't shake the feeling that this was still not enough. While these gestures were undoubtedly sincere, Thorin sensed a longing for something more profound—a change that would reflect the significance of their union beyond the mere signing of a certificate.

Kissing Bilbo's lips was the most apparent course of action, but it proved to be far from straightforward. Thorin found himself waiting for that elusive, perfect moment to seize those tender lips. Every opportunity seemed to slip through his fingers, as if he were striving to meet some external expectation rather than allowing his heart's desire to guide him. The weight of the unspoken words between them hung in the air, making the task feel forced and awkward. Thorin feared that any attempt to initiate such intimacy would come across as mere appeasement, as if he were checking off a list of expected actions rather than following his heart's instinct.

The most agonizing part, however, was that lingering, empty gaze that Bilbo wore each time Thorin left the comfort of Bag End to embark on his hunting excursions. Bilbo appeared to be merely going through the motions, his smiles forced, and the usual spark in his eyes conspicuously absent. Each farewell seemed to weigh heavily on his heart. No matter how many delightful moments they shared together, that blank expression when he had to say goodbye to his One felt like an arrow piercing his chest, a painful reminder of what was missing in their connection.

Thorin's return, in contrast, was greeted with an entirely different atmosphere. Warm smiles lit up faces, cheeks flushed with a rosy hue, and a palpable sense of relief seemed to permeate the air. The moment he stepped back into their shared space, it was as if a missing piece had been seamlessly fitted back into place. However, an unsettling feeling nagged at Thorin. Something was amiss, and he couldn't shake it off. Thorin had always been a quick study, and he knew that the bond between him and Bilbo was not to be underestimated. While he had inadvertently ignored its subtle cues in the past, this time he was determined to pay attention.

He exercised patience and keen observation, waiting for the moment when everything would fall into place. And finally, his diligence was rewarded.

Bilbo was perched on his father's chair, engrossed in a book. One leg was curled under him, and the other was bent at the knee. A cozy, sunlit corner of Bag End was his sanctuary, where he could lose himself in the words of the tome. His brows were knitted in concentration, and occasionally, he would absently rub his calf muscle, wincing as if in pain.

Thorin, from his spot across the room at the writing desk, continued to study Bilbo's expression. He noticed every furrow of Bilbo's brow and every little hiss that escaped from his lips.

Finally, he finished the letter to Dis that he had been drafting and set it aside to dry. "Are your muscles sore?" Thorin asked, his deep voice laced with some worry.

Bilbo's head snapped up from the book, and then he looked down at his hand that had betrayed his discomfort. "N-no, no, well, maybe, yes. A bit. I've been walking more than I'm used to lately. Seems I'm a tad out of shape."

"You should be resting as much as you can, Bilbo. Your body burns through food much faster than mine."

"Well, if I were a bear, I could hibernate, but alas, I am a mere Hobbit." Despite his discomfort, Bilbo managed to muster a mischievous smirk and wink at Thorin.

Thorin chuckled. "Well, then," he rumbled, his voice taking on a deeper tone that he knew would elicit a certain reaction from Bilbo. "I am going to get a hot bath going for you."

"Oh, that's too much trouble! But of course, if you want a bath, I can prepare it for you. Goodness knows you've earned it, keeping us all fed."

Bilbo tried to stand but Thorin gently pushed him back into the chair. He shook his head, a fond smile gracing his lips. "I am hardly the only one doing that. I'd say we could bathe together, but the tub won't be big enough for us both. If we were in Ered Luin, we could go to the hot springs and while away there together."

Bilbo's blush spread like delicious strawberry jam. "What a thought," Bilbo said, his voice breathless.

With a grin, Thorin leaned down and pressed a gentle kiss to the top of Bilbo's head before heading off to prepare the bath, leaving Bilbo in his sunlit sanctuary.

His eyes swept over the bathing room, anticipating the task ahead. On the polished wooden shelf, he spotted the essential items, a pitcher, a delicate bar of fragrant soap, and a pristine, plush towel.

With the determination of someone setting out to craft a masterpiece, Thorin embarked on the meticulous ritual of preparing the bath. The tub itself was a remarkable feat of dwarven ingenuity, a gift forged by Thorin's own hands. Nestled at one end of the tub, a hidden gem of functionality awaited. Here, Thorin had ingeniously designed a coal chamber, a miniature furnace seamlessly integrated into the tub's sturdy frame. This furnace, meticulously

insulated, was connected to a network of pipes concealed beneath the smooth granite surface of the bath, allowing the bathwater to be warmed by the steady burn of coal.

As fortune would have it, the surplus of coal distributed among the smials alleviated any concerns about indulging in the luxury of this single bath.

It was good fortune that the pipes had thawed enough for water to pour forth. With the tub filled to the desired level, Thorin assessed the water's temperature with a practiced touch, ensuring it straddled the line between soothing warmth and scalding heat. A modicum of fragrant soap, added with precision, dissolved into the water, yielding a rich, foamy lather that promised both cleansing and solace. His discerning eye scrutinized the chosen towel, verifying its spotless purity and luxurious softness.

With all the elements impeccably arranged, Thorin retraced his steps toward where Bilbo sat, his hand extending in a gesture of warm invitation. His voice, deep and resonant, carried the unmistakable essence of an offer. "Your bath awaits, husband. Shall we?"

Across the room, a faint sound caught Thorin's ear, the audible swallow of anticipation. Bilbo responded with a nod, setting his book aside and rising, his steps initially unsteady as he walked towards Thorin.

"If you're trying to let me know in some roundabout way that I smell—"

"Hush, silly hobbit. You always smell lovely."

"Then why are you being so insistent?"

"Maybe this is just an excuse to put my hands on you, what do you think of that?"

Bilbo sputtered but let himself be led to the bath without protest. "We're married, I don't think you need much of an excuse now."

"Is that so?" Thorin replied with an arch of his brow. "Then I can say the same for you, husband." He removed Bilbo's housecoat and began unfastening his bracers with the ease of practiced familiarity. It was as if he'd done it a thousand times before, not just acting on impulse. "I have kissed you many times, but you've yet to return the gesture." Thorin turned Bilbo around abruptly before Bilbo could retort and untucked his shirt from his trousers with a firm yet gentle touch. "But perhaps you don't wish to kiss me yet, and that is alright."

Bilbo squawked as his shirt came out, but he lifted his arms in time for Thorin to pull his shirt overhead. "That's not true! It’s not that I do not wish to-to kiss you!"

"I'm teasing, nedith," Thorin assured him, his voice low and warm, as he placed his hands on Bilbo's bare, bony shoulders. The sudden sensation of skin against skin sent a tingle up Thorin's spine, an electric spark in his fingertips that made him acutely aware of the intimacy of the moment. Goosebumps formed on Bilbo's flesh.

Thorin's heart raced beneath his chest, the rhythm of anticipation quickening his pulse. His cheeks flushed with a mix of surprise and desire but it simmered down as he looked at Bilbo's

back, noticing the prominence of his ribs and the knots of his spine with a deep frown. Concern welled up within him, but he decided not to comment on any of it just yet, understanding that this was a delicate moment.

"Shall I remove your trousers too, or would you like to manage that?" Thorin asked with a gentle smile, his eyes filled with a mixture of affection and amusement.

Bilbo cleared his throat, his voice still a little shaky. "I-I think I can manage this time."

Thorin smiled but nodded. “I need to fetch something. Why don’t you finish getting undressed and get comfortable.”

“Okay.”

With a final, reassuring smile, Thorin withdrew his hands from Bilbo's shoulders, leaving his hobbit to finish undressing. He turned and walked to their shared room where his travel-worn pack lay. Kneeling down beside it, Thorin carefully unclasped the buckles and opened the pack, removing his favorite comb with a handle made from dark, polished mahogany. He turned and made his way back to the bath, ready to attend to his beloved hobbit.

With a tender smile, Thorin approached the tub, stopping by the side where Bilbo had nestled himself. His fingers gently brushed over the surface of the water, causing soft ripples to dance around Bilbo's submerged form. The play of light and shadows on Bilbo's skin in the warm, steamy air made it seem as if he were a living work of art.

"How does the water feel, nedith?" Thorin murmured softly.

“Very nice,” Bilbo replied, his words slurring slightly as he ended with a contented hum.

“Come here, turn around,” Thorin coaxed Bilbo to face away from him and settled on a stool behind him, rolling up his sleeves. “I’d like to wash your hair first.”

Thorin filled the pitcher with water as Bilbo sat straighter, tilting his head back. He poured the water carefully, ensuring it didn't spill onto Bilbo's face. Then he lathered his hands and began the process of gently and methodically washing Bilbo's hair, punctuating the act with a soothing scalp massage that threatened to put Bilbo to sleep.

“At this rate, I’ll drown in the bath,” Bilbo slurred, his voice heavy with relaxation.

Thorin smirked. “Do not fret. I will jump in and rescue you, if need be.”

Bilbo snorted out a laugh, but it trailed off into silence again. “You’re very good at this. Makes me wonder how many you’ve bathed.”

Thorin detected a hint of jealousy in Bilbo's tone and decided to play along. “Hmm. Three before you, but many times between them.” He realized it might have been a mistake. Bilbo tensed immediately and tried to pull away.

Without hesitation, Thorin's strong arms encircled Bilbo, drawing his husband closer until his shirt grew damp from Bilbo’s soaked hair. Thorin's lips found the point of Bilbo's ear, and he planted a soft, lingering kiss there, his warm breath caressing Bilbo's skin. Then he held up a hand in front of Bilbo’s face and started to count. “My sister, Dis, when she was still a pebble. Fili and Kili,” he lifted two more fingers and chuckled. “You make four.”

Bilbo turned his head, meeting Thorin’s amused gaze with an unimpressed glare. “Jokes don’t suit you.”

Thorin laughed. “Many agree with you.”

Another lingering silence ensued as Thorin began to comb out some curly hobbit tangles. Then, almost accusingly, Bilbo spoke again. “So, you compare this to bathing children.”

“You are not a child,” Thorin murmured absentmindedly as the comb snagged on something that didn’t feel like a knot. He dug into the locks with deft fingers and pulled out a twig, giving it a frown of bewilderment.

“Yes, that’s rather the point I’ve been trying to make for some time,” Bilbo grumbled. “Yet, here I am, in a tub, being bathed like a faunt who’s just come in muddy from playing in the gardens.”

Thorin pulled out yet another small piece of bark from Bilbo's hair and finally showed his findings to Bilbo. “Is that where you got these? Playing in the gardens?” He leaned further forward so that Bilbo could see his smirk.

Bilbo stammered, clearly embarrassed. “No, of course, not!” He chuckled nervously. “Must have been Lobelia again. I thought I felt something land on my head. Wicked cow.”

Thorin shook his head, disposed of the debris, and continued combing. “I do not bathe you or see you as a child, Bilbo, but as a husband. This is my way of caring for my One. If you’re uncomfortable–”

Bilbo turned around so fast he nearly spilled water out of the tub. “I’m not. Really!”

“Then please push those thoughts aside, nedith.”

“But, see, there.” Bilbo accentuated by holding up a finger. “You call your nephew's nedith too. So, how am I to understand what you expect from me? Do you truly see me as your husband now or just someone else you are duty bound to care for?”

Thorin reared back as if scalded. He studied Bilbo’s face but found no ill will, only genuine confusion. How many times had he failed his One for there to be such doubt? It physically pained him. Still, he reigned in his own pain. This was his chance to get Bilbo to talk, and he couldn’t be the reason for Bilbo to put up his walls again.

He smiled wistfully and placed the comb down to take Bilbo’s face in both his hands, making sure Bilbo kept eye contact. “I may have bathed and called my nephews dear to me, but I would not have married them.”

Bilbo snorted. “I hope not.”

“Yes, regardless of my poor choice of words, what I mean to say is that I would not have married at all if I did not have my One. And I do have a duty to you as your husband, but it is a duty I welcome and am eager to have. I love you, Bilbo, and perhaps we’ve known each other for so long that it comes across as unchanged, familial perhaps, but I assure you…” He used a thumb to stroke Bilbo’s bottom lip and studied his beautiful face. “I desire more.” He watched the bob of Bilbo’s throat and saw his eyes widen and a fresh blush spread across his cheeks. “But we have all the time in the world to explore such–”

Bilbo launched himself at Thorin’s face, lips crashing against his own forcefully, teeth clacking together painfully. Thorin caught his hobbit in his arms, water sloshing over, wetting his socks. The small wet body soaked through his clothes, but he did not care. Thorin kept his arms around Bilbo’s waist and let Bilbo have his fill, let him lead. It was clumsy, and he might have a broken lip after it all, but it was still glorious. It was as if he was in his forge, watching sparks fly behind his eyelids and feeling his whole body go hot. It was the best kiss Thorin had ever experienced, and it left him breathless and drunk.

Their lips finally parted, leaving them both panting and flushed, their foreheads pressed together. Thorin could feel the rapid thumping of Bilbo’s heart, mirroring his own. Bilbo sagged in his arms, and Thorin lowered him back into the warm water with great care, though Bilbo's weak grip told him everything he needed to know.

“Have you swooned again, beloved?” Thorin leaned back slightly to check on Bilbo's condition.

“Nah,” Bilbo drawled, his eyes nearly closed, and a blissfully dopey smile on his face. “Very… comfy, is all.”

“I’m glad,” Thorin replied softly.

“I like that better, by the way.”

Thorin furrowed his brow, curiosity piqued. “What do you like better?”

“Beloved… instead of nedith,” Bilbo admitted bashfully.

“Ah, then I shall call you 'beloved' from now on. How about 'Amralime,' amral?”

“All those sound nice. Can I call you… darling?”

Thorin smiled fondly. “I’d like that.”

“Even in public?” Bilbo narrowed his eyes playfully, testing the waters.

“Especially then,” Thorin responded, his voice filled with affection. He rubbed his nose against Bilbo's, which made him laugh. As Thorin's affectionate words and touches enveloped Bilbo, his bashfulness seemed to melt away, and he let out a contented sigh.

Thorin turned Bilbo around again and began to add oil to his newly mussed locks. “Now, tell me what Miss Bracegirdle stole from you that has made you dislike her so?” He asked now that Bilbo seemed more comfortable talking openly about his feelings. “You said she’s in love with you. Do you not pity her at least?”

“Psh!” Bilbo waved a dismissive hand. “She’s in love with Bag End and my inheritance more than me. And as for what she stole…” He glanced over his shoulder briefly. “It belonged to you.”

“A gift for me? What was it?”

Bilbo ducked his head, a touch of embarrassment coloring his cheeks. “My first kiss. Are you angry?”

Thorin's expression darkened, not out of anger towards Bilbo but at the audacity of Miss Bracegirdle. “She should not have touched you against your will.”

“But are you jealous?” There was concern in Bilbo’s voice but a glint of hope in his eyes that made Thorin grin with mischief.

“Aye. I am a jealous and greedy dwarf, didn’t you know?” He growled playfully and leaned forward, his face getting closer to Bilbo's in a mock-threatening manner, but a wolfish grin played on his lips. Bilbo moved back until his back hit the edge of the tub, trying to suppress his smile. “No one shall touch what is mine!” He lurched forward, kissing Bilbo hard but more gently than their first kiss, then proceeded to attack the rest of Bilbo's face with kisses until Bilbo flailed and begged for mercy through his laughter.

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone! Hope you are all still enjoying this story! There is a group of writers about to start a Bagginshield writing game. If you love Bagginshield, I think you'll enjoy the server!
Here is the invite link: https://discord.gg/xSb2nKye8

# Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

What happened to Bella and Bungo? All shall be revealed, finally.

Chapter Notes

The muse is strong with this one....
::chanting:: Tropes! Tropes! Tropes!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sight of Bag End was a welcomed one as Thorin trudged through the snow after yet another day out with nothing but bad news to show for, and today's news was even worse than usual, to be precise. The round green door opened before Thorin could even reach for the handle, and it became apparent that Bilbo must have been waiting at the window again.

"Hello, darling," Bilbo greeted him, a faint blush still tinging his cheeks whenever he used the new endearment. "How'd it go?"

Thorin leaned down, his lips gently meeting Bilbo's in a kiss. His hand found its place on the nape of Bilbo’s neck, the other resting around his waist, just in case his hobbit fainted again. Bilbo smiled into the kiss and returned it, a moment of comfort shared before the impending storm. Thorin took a deep breath, attempting to steady himself as he removed his cloak and gloves and meticulously stowed his weapons. He was fully aware that Bilbo would not take the news well. The peaceful days they had recently been enjoying were about to be disrupted.

"No game," Thorin began, his voice soft yet tinged with concern. “And there is more foreboding news.”

An immediate shift took place in Bilbo's expression. He looked up, his eyes locking with Thorin's, his face now a blank canvas prepared for the worst. "What is it?"

“We found warg tracks."

Bilbo's face paled, and his grip on Thorin's hand tightened. "Wargs? Are they... are they close?"

Thorin nodded solemnly. "Close enough that we need to be cautious. We've taken measures to secure the area by the river. It’s still frozen and easily crossed if they find it."

Bilbo's worry was evident in his eyes. "What do we do, Thorin?"

"We'll be vigilant, first and foremost," Thorin reassured him, his voice laced with conviction. "We've faced dangers before, and we'll face this one together. But I need you to promise me something, Bilbo."

Bilbo met Thorin's gaze with unwavering determination. "Anything."

"Stay here in Bag End," Thorin said firmly, his tone resolute. "I don't want you venturing out alone until we're certain the threat is gone."

Though Bilbo nodded, a hint of reluctance lingered in his eyes. "All right, but what about you? Surely, you don't mean to go out again?"

Thorin had been dreading this part. "It is a threat that cannot be ignored. An orc attack is the very last thing we need." He leaned in, planting a gentle kiss on Bilbo's forehead. "I promise, amral. I'll come back to you, safe and sound."

Bilbo remained silent, his gaze solemn as he watched Thorin pack his bag. "You plan to sleep in the wilderness?"

"It may come to that," Thorin nodded with a sense of determination. "I'll take some cram but nothing else. You should eat my rations–"

"Fine."

Thorin stopped packing, looking up to see that expressionless mask once more. "Bilbo–"

"I said fine." Then Bilbo sniffed and left the room.

Later in the day, as the sun dipped lower in the sky, Thorin finished his meal. He knew he had a long evening ahead and had assigned himself the evening watch after sundown. Bilbo's worried gaze lingered on him, a silent but palpable concern. Still, Thorin tried to reassure his hobbit with a warm smile.

However, Bilbo couldn't shake the anxiety that had taken hold of him since Thorin had shared his plans to leave temporarily. He picked at his food, eating only when Thorin prompted him to, and he spoke barely a word. As Thorin went about preparing for his departure, Bilbo sat at the kitchen table, seemingly lost in thought. His eyes remained fixed on Thorin's pack, placed near the door, as if he feared Thorin would never return.

Noticing Bilbo's distant expression, Thorin joined him at the table, gently taking Bilbo's hand in his own. "Amral, I'll be fine," he said softly, his voice filled with warmth and reassurance. "I'll be back soon, and I will not be far."

Bilbo finally tore his gaze away from the pack to meet Thorin's eyes. There was a desolate quality in his expression that struck Thorin's heart in two. "I know, but I can't help worrying about you." Thorin leaned closer, his forehead resting against Bilbo's. His One sighed,

closing his eyes as if trying to calm his racing thoughts. "I just hate the idea of you being out there while danger lurks nearby."

Thorin gently tilted Bilbo's chin up, forcing him to meet his gaze once more. "I promise to be cautious, to watch my surroundings carefully. You've made me promise to return in one piece, remember?"

Bilbo gave a small, rueful smile. "Yes, I remember."

Thorin pressed a soft kiss to Bilbo's lips, savoring the sweetness of their connection. "I'll be back before you know it," he whispered, his voice filled with affection and reassurance.

Bilbo nodded, but there was a shimmer in his eyes that Thorin did not like, not at all. He could sense the underlying fear and anxiety in his beloved's gaze.

“You understand I’m not leaving you?” Thorin whispered, his thumb gently caressing Bilbo’s cheek as a single tear finally escaped. “No, my love,” he cooed, pulling Bilbo closer into his arms. “Do not weep. I am only going to protect you, my heart, and your beloved home.”

“Our home,” Bilbo sobbed.

“Our home,” Thorin agreed, his voice filled with unwavering devotion. He held Bilbo close, relishing the warmth of their embrace. The evening sun cast a gentle glow across the room, and for a moment, they forgot about the impending danger, finding solace in each other's arms. But the moment could not last, and finally, Thorin had to leave.

As Thorin made his way through Hobbiton, his heart weighed down by the thought of Bilbo alone and distraught at home, he passed by Lobelia Bracegirdle. Of course, she couldn't resist the opportunity to make a snide comment.

"Leaving your dear husband already?" Lobelia sneered, a condescending smile playing on her lips. "I knew you'd get tired of him soon enough. Don't worry, I'll be there to pick up the pieces, as usual."

Thorin, already burdened by worry and the weight of his mission, stopped dead in his tracks. He turned to face Lobelia with a dangerous glare, his brows furrowed in anger. "When I return, Miss Bracegirdle," he growled, his voice low and filled with warning, "you'd better not have been anywhere near my husband. You and your ilk have done enough damage with your whispers and malicious gossip."

He turned to leave, taking a step away from her, but then hesitated. There was one more thing. "And stop throwing dirt at him."

Lobelia, ever the master of feigned innocence, scoffed in response. "What? As if I'd stoop so low! Why, I haven't seen Bilbo since he brutally attacked me!"

Thorin shook his head, realizing the futility of reasoning with such a hobbit. Without another word, he left Lobelia to her annoying ranting, determined to fulfill his duty and return to

Bilbo’s side as swiftly as possible.

His mission was simple: scout the area, gather information, and report back with his findings. Ferumbras had attempted to insist that one of his Shirriffs take on the task, but Thorin couldn't bear the thought of a peaceful hobbit-lad facing the dangers posed by wargs.

As he ventured farther from Bag End and the warm glow of hobbit holes, Thorin's senses went on high alert. The frigid air stung his cheeks, each breath crystallizing in the chilly atmosphere. The landscape stretched out before him in pristine white, with only the occasional snow-clad tree breaking the monotony.

Thorin moved with deliberate caution, his keen eyes scanning the surroundings for any hint of danger. Each step he took was measured, every sound analyzed for potential threats. His heart maintained a steady rhythm, yet beneath the surface, a taut anticipation simmered in the wintry landscape.

As Thorin went deeper into the snow-laden woods bordering the river, the persistent sensation of being observed clung to him like an unshakable specter. In these woods, where the ancient trees loomed tall and gnarled, their twisted branches reaching out like skeletal fingers, an unsettling unease settled over him. There was something about this forest that put him on edge, as if the very trees possessed sentience, their silent presence tracking his every move.

He knew these woods well, having spent countless hours hunting and exploring them. But today, the atmosphere was different. The pervasive silence felt stifling, as if the very trees conspired to make him feel as unwelcome as possible. Thorin's keen eyes darted repeatedly across his surroundings, his senses poised at their highest level of alertness. Every rustle of leaves and every creak of branches sent a shiver down his spine.

Numerous times, he whirled around abruptly, bow poised for action, only to discover the silent, snow-covered trees and nothing more. The sensation of being observed was maddening, as if some unseen presence lurked just beyond his line of sight.

Despite his mounting unease, Thorin pressed onward.

Then, a sudden snap pierced the stillness of the snowy woods, halting Thorin in his tracks. He pivoted swiftly, bow primed for action, and his discerning eyes methodically scanned the area. Not far from his position, a warg loomed, its massive frame hunched in predatory anticipation as it sniffed the ground. Thorin's fingers tensed on the bowstring, his aim resolute. He knew that dispatching this threat with a single, silent arrow was well within his capabilities.

Yet, just as he prepared to release the arrow, a low, menacing growl reverberated from a nearby source. Thorin's heart plummeted as he turned, his movements measured, toward the

ominous sound. Another warg, equally fearsome and ferocious, had materialized from the underbrush. Its bared fangs and unwavering gaze conveyed deadly intent.

Now, Thorin found himself ensnared between these two loathsome creatures. He retreated cautiously, his watchful eyes darting between the menacing wargs.

However, he had no time to react before a third growl sliced through the frigid air, causing him to whirl around once more. The grim reality hit him like a physical blow; he was surrounded on all sides. Three wargs, each as vile as the next, had closed in on him. Their gleaming eyes betrayed both hunger and malice, their emaciated forms testament to their ravenous appetites. Fangs bared, they growled menacingly, closing in for the kill.

With the agility honed through years of battle, Thorin let loose an arrow aimed straight at the eye of the closest warg. The projectile struck home with brutal precision, causing the warg to convulse in agony before collapsing to the ground.

Wasting no time, Thorin turned and sprinted through the deep snow, desperation fueling his every step. He knew he couldn't outrun them indefinitely, but he needed to create some advantage, find a way to turn the tide.

As he weaved through the ancient trees, his breaths coming in heavy gasps, Thorin couldn't shake the relentless pursuit. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw a white warg, larger and more formidable than the others, leading the chase. Its eyes bore into him with a predatory hunger that kicked up Thorin’s speed. The other two wargs flanked him, cutting off any possible escape routes. He was trapped, and he couldn't afford to be overtaken.

With a swift and practiced motion, Thorin drew his sword, ready to face the encroaching danger with every ounce of skill and strength he could muster. The clash of steel against claw and fang rang out through the ancient woods as Thorin defended himself against the relentless assault.

Despite his valiant efforts, the wargs were closing in, their relentless attacks proving overwhelming. In a sudden and brutal display of power, one of them clamped its massive jaws around Thorin's midsection, hoisting him into the air with chilling ease and shaking him like a mere chew toy. Agonizing pain coursed through his body as he was flung aside, his sword slipping from his grasp, landing far beyond his reach.

Lying amidst the snow, battered and bloodied, on the precipice of losing consciousness, Thorin was gripped by a harrowing sense of despair. He had promised Bilbo he would return… it seemed he’d break his heart once more. The world around him blurred, and darkness began to claim his vision. But just as he teetered on the brink of oblivion, a sharp and enraged cry pierced the frigid air, snapping him back to the brink of consciousness. Thorin's fading sight glimpsed a figure charging toward the white warg, a glimmer of hope in the direst of moments.

It was Bilbo, his Bilbo, who had come to his rescue. The Hobbit's eyes blazed with an inner fire, and his blade gleamed ominously in the fading light. With a swiftness that betrayed his fierceness, Bilbo lunged forward, his weapon finding its mark in the heart of the white warg. In a violent spray of crimson, the warg pack leader met its end.

Thorin, his vision blurred from pain and exhaustion, watched in awe as the formidable white warg fell to the forest floor, defeated. The searing pain in his body began to wane, and he teetered on the precipice of unconsciousness again, his strength nearly depleted. With a rasping voice, he managed to utter just one word, a name filled with love and relief, "Bil-bo."

Gradually, Thorin stirred, his battered body protesting with every ache and pain. As he drifted back to consciousness, a soft whispering filled the air around him. The words, spoken in a language entirely foreign to him, carried an oddly soothing cadence that seemed to envelop him like a gentle embrace.

At first, his vision remained blurred, and he could only discern hazy shapes and the muted play of light filtering through the ancient trees. Summoning every ounce of his willpower, Thorin forced his eyes open, blinking away the remnants of a deep slumber.

The sight that met his gaze was nothing short of surprising. Towering above him was a figure cloaked in a gray, hooded robe, their hands moving in intricate patterns as they continued their enigmatic incantations. The wide brim of a hat concealed the figure's face, allowing only a glimpse of a long, silvery beard that cascaded like a shimmering river.

As Thorin lay there, his strength gradually returning with each whispered word, he felt as if the enchanting incantations were breathing new life into his weary body. With a voice that was little more than a raspy whisper, he croaked out the one word that filled his thoughts, "Bilbo..."

The mysterious figure paused in their incantation, and with a graceful gesture, the hat lifted to reveal a face that was both familiar and astonishing. The eyes that met Thorin's were deep and piercing, glinting with an otherworldly wisdom that sent shivers down his spine. Thorin blinked twice, his disbelief slowly giving way to recognition.

"Tharkun?" Thorin whispered, his voice tinged with astonishment.

The wizard nodded solemnly, his voice carrying the weight of ages. "Indeed, Thorin Oakenshield. It has been a long time since we last saw each other."

Summoning every ounce of strength, Thorin fought through the pain and pushed himself into a sitting position. "Where is Bilbo? Is he safe?"

Tharkun's gaze remained steady, a calm reassurance in his eyes. "He's here, safe and sound."

Relief washed over Thorin like a tidal wave, and he couldn't help but release a heavy sigh. At that moment, a familiar face peeked around the wizard's robes, and Thorin's anger and frustration melded with his relief. He pushed himself up from the ground, each movement a struggle against his battered body, and advanced on Bilbo with an intensity that could rival a thunderstorm, his voice rumbling like distant thunder.

Thorin's words sliced through the tense air like a blade, each one sharp and filled with a potent mix of anger and concern. “What were you thinking? You could've been killed! Did I

not say for you to stay safe in Bag End? Did you not *promise* me that you'd stay behind?"

Bilbo flinched under the weight of his reproach. His shoulders slumped, and he shrank in on himself, the guilt and unease evident in his every movement. His gaze dropped to the ground, avoiding Thorin's piercing eyes, as if the earth itself could offer him some solace.

Thorin's stern features softened instantly, and his eyes, once filled with fearful anger, now held a glimmer of wonder and affection. "I have never been so wrong in all my life." Thorin's voice gentled, the edges of his anger dissipating like mist in the warmth of the morning sun.

With purposeful steps, he closed the distance between them, his arms reaching out to envelop Bilbo in a tight and reassuring embrace. The initial shock on the hobbit's face was replaced by a mixture of relief and a deep, comforting warmth as he allowed Thorin to hold him close.

"I was so frightened," Thorin confessed, his voice a soft, heartfelt whisper that brushed gently against Bilbo's ear. The raw vulnerability in his tone was unmistakable. He couldn't help but relive that moment when he had watched in terrified disbelief as Bilbo charged the warg. As Thorin spoke, something caught his attention, a prickling sensation against his cheek. He turned to find... a twig nestled amidst the curls of Bilbo's hair. With a gentle touch, he plucked the wayward piece of tree from his partner's hair and held it up for both of them to see.

“Bilbo?” Thorin's voice took on a questioning lilt as realization slowly dawned upon him. The pieces of a puzzle began to fit together. Bilbo's gradual weight loss despite more regular meals, the occasional bark and twigs tangled in his curls, and his hobbit's sore legs and feet—all of it started to make sense.

"Have you been following me every time I’ve gone hunting?” Thorin's inquiry hung in the air, heavy with both surprise and bewilderment.

Bilbo's arms wound tightly around Thorin before he remembered his husband's injuries, seeking solace in their embrace. "I'm sorry," he murmured, his words tinged with regret. "I couldn't just sit in Bag End, waiting and worrying. I had to make sure… you’d come back."

Thorin's response was to hold Bilbo even closer, their hearts beating in perfect harmony. “We need to have a talk about this, amral.”

Bilbo sighed, a mixture of weariness and acceptance in the sound. “I know.”

“Well,” Tharkun drawled, his voice carrying a hint of amusement, “things are certainly not as grave between you two as Bella and Bungo feared.”

The unexpected comment from the wizard drew both Thorin and Bilbo's attention. They turned toward Gandalf, their expressions a blend of surprise and curiosity. Bilbo cautiously inquired, “Gandalf? You’ve heard from my parents?”

Thorin, though familiar with the name Gandalf, had previously known the man as nothing more than a maker of rather questionable fireworks. This revelation, that Gandalf was the legendary Gray Wizard, was a piece of information he tucked away for later consideration.

Gandalf offered a warm smile and a confirming nod. “I was fortunate to encounter them when I did,” he explained. “They had strayed from the path, attempting to avoid a storm. I accompanied them to Rivendell, where they are now recovering and regaining their strength. I bear a letter for the two of you, but I'm delighted to hear I need not make the journey all the way to the Blue Mountains to deliver it."

Bilbo's emotions overflowed, and he couldn't contain his joy. With an exclamation of gratitude, he gently disentangled himself from Thorin's embrace and practically leaped toward the wizard. “Oh, Gandalf!” Bilbo exclaimed, his voice filled with relief and happiness. "Thank you! Thank you! I've been so worried. When will they come home?!"

They hugged.

Thorin couldn't help but note Tharkun's familiarity with his hobbit, a detail that didn't sit entirely well with him, considering his current state of injury. After all, he had recently been the main course at a warg's dinner table. But despite his discomfort, he couldn't begrudge Bilbo his happiness at this moment. The news of his parents' well-being was a gift beyond measure, and Thorin himself was too overwhelmed with relief to dwell on anything else at that moment.

Gandalf's demeanor turned serious as he crouched down and offered Bilbo a comforting pat on the shoulder. “In the Spring, when it is safe to travel,” he informed them. “These lands are not safe right now. But fear not, the shadow cast upon this land is being dealt with. Help from Rivendell is close behind me.”

Bilbo's eyes lit up with hope, and he turned to Thorin, excitement bubbling in his voice. “Did you hear that, Thorin? The elves are coming to The Shire!”

Thorin grunted, his scowl deepening a little further. “My dwarrows will arrive sooner, you’ll see,” he retorted, not one to be outdone by *elves* of all things.

Bilbo laughed merrily and skipped over to his husband, his arms encircling Thorin's middle with gentle care. He patted Thorin's back consolingly, even as Thorin tried to maintain his stern expression, which proved challenging with Bilbo's warmth and laughter. "Yes, darling, of course they will."

Tharkun, finding the interaction amusing, chuckled heartily and took the opportunity to light his pipe. “Come now,” he said, “regale this old man with what has happened since my last visit on our way to Bag End.”

Bilbo beamed, unable to contain his enthusiasm. "I got married!"

Tharkun raised an eyebrow, clearly intrigued. “Is that so?!”

When they returned to Hobbiton, a sense of relief washed over both Thorin and Bilbo as they saw Thorin's kin hard at work, efficiently distributing goods and hot food to the Hobbits. The

dwarrows had finally arrived.

“Everything is going to be okay,” Bilbo breathed, his voice tinged with disbelief. “I... I had nearly given up—”

“Hush,” Thorin interjected quickly, not wanting to dwell on those dark thoughts. “Everything is well now. And I was thinking, now that we know your parents are safe in Rivendell, and the caravan is here… I thought maybe you’d like to finally meet the rest of my kin in Ered Luin.”

Bilbo's eyes sparkled with delight as he spun in Thorin's arms, nearly making the dwarf stumble. “You wish to take me with you to Ered Luin?!”

“If you'd like—”

“Yes!!”

Thorin laughed heartily. “Good. We shall make plans to join the caravan back.”

Bilbo was practically floating with joy. “I must kiss you this instant.”

“Oh? In public? How... *improper* of you, my hobbit.”

“Shut up and kiss me.”

Thorin chuckled at Bilbo's enthusiasm and willingly obliged. He tilted his head and pressed his lips to his One’s, savoring the sweetness of the moment. Filled with joy, Thorin felt bold. He slipped his tongue out to graze against Bilbo’s lips. When Bilbo gasped, Thorin took the opportunity to deepen the kiss. Bilbo's participation was slow and uncertain, but he quickly gripped onto Thorin's braids and did his best to match his pace. Heat spread within Thorin, and his head felt like a beehive was stuck between his ears. He was euphoric, as if he were floating on a smoke ring made of the finest pipeweed.

After the moment of sweet intimacy, Thorin pulled back, not wanting to get too carried away in public. He smiled down at his love, who looked about ready to collapse once more. Thorin's wicked grin played on his lips as he teased, "I told you my dwarrow would get here before the *elves* ."

Bilbo blinked up at him, momentarily puzzled before rolling his eyes and scoffing, pushing Thorin away in mock annoyance. "Bebother and confusticate you, dwarf!"

But Bilbo laughed, and that was all that counted.

Chapter End Notes

It would be awesome if ya checked out my OW's... out there... somewhere in a rainforest...

# Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Making shit up as I go, ya'll. I changed all the rules. Don't hate me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Thorin reclined on the cot, propped up by a mound of blankets, his chest exposed save for the tightly wound bandages that enveloped his battle-worn wounds. Oin, their seasoned healer, had taken it upon himself to personally tend to the dwarf leader's injuries. Gathered around him were Fili and Kili, Balin and Dwalin, ever vigilant by his side while Bilbo got poked and prodded by Oin in the next tent.

Meanwhile, Dis remained in the mountain to oversee things in his absence, as usual. She had, however, sent a letter with news that bore mixed emotions. Roac, his raven,who had dispatched for aid, had finally returned, yet his return was accompanied by a tale of injury, hobbits and wizards. Roac had been nursing his wounds for several weeks under the care of two hobbits who had stumbled upon him. They had taken the ailing raven to Rivendell with them, where he had been on the mend, at least, with friends. Thorin couldn't help but harbor a begrudging sense of gratitude toward the elves for their role in assisting the healing of Roac, Bilbo’s parents, and the whole of The Shire now too. Indeed, The Shire was a hive of activity, with representatives from various races converging to aid their diminutive neighbors during this time of need. The solidarity on display was inspiring.

Now that his kin had converged upon him, Thorin knew it was time to break the news of his most recent nuptials.

"Oh, amad is going to kill you, uncle," Fili lamented, anticipating his mother’s reaction.

Kili chimed in, "You might as well plan your funeral right here and now."

Thorin managed a chuckle despite the aches that still reverberated throughout his body. "I've faced dragons, orcs, and battles aplenty. Your amad doesn't frighten me."

It was a lie, and everyone in the room knew it, though no one was inclined to point it out.

Balin, who had been conspicuously silent until now, spoke up. "Well, now can I say *I told you so* ? I knew they’d taken that engagement seriously..."

Fili cleared his throat, his tone tinged with concern. "Uncle, we are genuinely happy for you. However, there is a matter we should probably discuss."

Thorin raised an inquisitive eyebrow, sensing that the conversation was about to take a more serious turn. As he expected. "Go on."

Kili's youthful visage bore an earnest expression as he voiced their collective concern. "Bilbo is exceptionally young by dwarf standards. Not many dwarves comprehend the strangeness of hobbits, including their relatively shorter lifespans."

“And without a beard,” added Dwalin with a shake of his head.

Balin, known for his blunt honesty, crossed his arms and weighed in. "Aye, lad. We harbor reservations regarding how our people might perceive this union. As our king, your choices carry immense weight."

Thorin had premeditated these concerns thoroughly. "Bilbo is not merely my spouse," he asserted firmly. "He is my One.”

Balin huffed. “Mahal finally saw fit to open yer eyes, eh? About time. Though I suppose it is good you did not know of it.”

“I beg to differ,” Thorin murmured.

“Ah, well, ye never know.” Balin leaned forward, his voice laced with curiosity. "So, the Longing...?"

Thorin nodded, a gentle smile gracing his lips. "Gone so long as Bilbo is near."

Fili and Kili exchanged a meaningful glance, and even Balin appeared to soften his stance. Thorin elaborated further, "Bilbo is my heartsong, as the Hobbits know it, the one who completes me in every way. I will not allow the opinions of others to impede our happiness. However, if you believe it would be unwise to bring him to the Blue Mountains, then I shall abdicate my position and build a life here with Bilbo."

Balin, ever the pragmatic thinker, grumbled, "Perhaps, at first, you should exercise discretion until we can disseminate the accurate information concerning your unique circumstances. As long as everyone is apprised of Bilbo's maturity and his status as your One, we should have little to worry about. By the way, does Bilbo even know that you were *completely* unaware you were engaged this whole time, that he was your One?"

Thorin sighed deeply. "I shall speak with him soon on the matter. We had no word, until recently, regarding his parents, and I couldn't bear to shatter his heart anew. I beseech you, for now, do not tell him."

His kin agreed, recognizing the sensitivity of the situation. It was, after all, a matter that pertained solely to the couple's private life.

The healers' tent flaps parted, revealing Tharkun and Bilbo. Having already exchanged pleasantries with the company outside, Bilbo hurried to Thorin. "How do you feel?"

"I'm fine, amral," Thorin assured with a gentle smile. "By the way, they all know now."

"Know what?" Bilbo inquired, his curiosity piqued.

Kili playfully ruffled Bilbo's curls. "Congratulations, *Uncle* Boggins!"

Bilbo, his cheeks flushing, swiftly evaded Kili's grasp, trying to conceal his radiant smile. "Oh," he stammered, "thank you! We'll have a proper ceremony someday, and you're all invited." The dwarrows erupted in cheers. "Speaking of invitations, I wanted to extend one to all of you to stay at Bag End for as long as you'd like. I know my parents would insist. After all, we're officially family now."

The company responded with smiles and expressions of gratitude.

"Thank you, my heart," Thorin whispered and drew Bilbo closer to kiss his hand.

Oin approached Thorin, grunting in Khuzdul, " *Your Hobbit needs to gain weight yesterday. If you don't fatten him up soon..."*

Thorin nodded solemnly. "Come, beloved," he said, rising carefully, and Bilbo assisted him with his shirt and coat. "Let's go home."

The dwarves, Bilbo, and Gandalf made their way to Bag End, where a joyful celebration would begin as soon as they stepped through the round green door. They planned to celebrate Bilbo and Thorin's union, and the air was filled with a sense of merriment and camaraderie.

Thorin’s Company insisted on taking over the preparations for the feast. Bilbo protested, wanting to do it himself, but the dwarves were having none of it. They kept taking things out of his arms and busied themselves with cooking and setting the table. Singing about what Bilbo Baggins hates. Bilbo eventually gave in, realizing that it was futile to argue with their stone heads.

The party began in earnest, with laughter and singing filling the cozy hobbit hole. The dwarves had even brought a harp for Thorin to play, and his music added to the joyful atmosphere. The table was laden with an abundance of food and drink, prepared by the dwarves themselves, despite Bilbo's outcry of scandal.

As the evening wore on, the ale flowed freely, and both Bilbo and Thorin indulged a little more than usual. Bilbo, in particular, found himself enjoying the ale, and his appetite seemed to awaken with each sip. He relished the taste of hearty dwarf-made dishes, and his laughter echoed through Bag End.

Thorin watched as Bilbo regaled Fili and Kili with an animated tale, their laughter filling the room. It warmed his heart to see his beloved so carefree and happy. By dwarf standards, Bilbo was no longer so far apart in maturity from his nephews.

Instead of calling Bilbo to his side and monopolizing his time and attention, Thorin decided to step outside for a smoke. He knew that Bilbo needed moments like these, surrounded by loved ones after so many weeks alone and frightened. Thorin was content to let him have his space and relish in the joy of the evening.

Outside, Thorin lit his pipe and took a deep drag, the fragrant smoke curling around him. He leaned against the side of Bag End, gazing out at the starry night sky. The air was crisp and

cool, and he could still hear the laughter inside.

The soft creak of the wooden bench beside him signaled the arrival of Tharkun. Thorin turned to find the wizard settling himself comfortably, producing his own pipe and a pouch of pipeweed. With a nod of acknowledgment, the wizard proceeded to pack his pipe thoughtfully. The two of them sat in companionable silence for a moment, each lost in their own contemplation of the starlit sky.

Finally, Gandalf spoke, his voice tinged with amusement. "You've found your One, Thorin, son of Thrain."

Thorin nodded, a small, contented smile gracing his lips. "Indeed, I have."

“Under your nose the whole time, hm?” Gandalf's eyes sparkled mischievously. "When Belladonna wrote to me about young Bilbo’s proposal to a Thorin *Oakenshield* , I couldn't help but wonder why there was no announcement about the crown prince of Erebor finding his One."

Thorin inclined his head in reluctant agreement. "In hindsight, I really should have figured it out sooner. But he was a child, and I did not question certain things when I should have."

The wizard took a contemplative puff of his pipe before exhaling a cloud of smoke into the night air. "And you no longer see him as a child?”

“Of course not. Why is everyone so concerned with how I see him? There were nasty rumors going around that I did not want Bilbo, all because I did not forcefully take him from his parents when he was just a faunt.”

Tharkun chuckled. “You must not know the whole of it then.”

“Please enlighten me,” Thorin begged with frustration. “Even the Thain did not tell all, I’m certain.”

“Ah, well,” Tharkun began after taking a generous drag from his pipe and conjuring a magical smoke ring in the form of a flying eagle, “In Hobbit customs, they reach adulthood at eighteen, they call it the Pipe Year. However, they have until the age of thirty-three to prove themselves mature enough to settle down and start a family, which is a hobbit's priority, right after food, of course. There are three ways to earn one's inheritance early: getting married, because that signifies their readiness to start a family, completing an apprenticeship to help support a future family, and lastly, though unofficially, returning from an adventure with me.

The wizard chuckled to himself before continuing.

“Bilbo's efforts to earn respectability, a significant matter among hobbits, has been quite challenging from the start, I’m afraid, with a Took and Baggins as his parents. Then, of course, having a dwarf for a heartsong is no trifle. I suspect," Tharkun continued with a twinkle in his eye, "that Bilbo has had a harder time than most trying to prove himself an adult. Being left behind by your heartsong is quite unheard of. The gossip probably runs rampant every time you’ve visited and gone without him. I believe Bilbo is not convinced

he's earned his respectability in your eyes because of that. Deep down, he's still waiting for you to leave him."

Thorin listened attentively to the wizard's explanation, his expression thoughtful but pained. It shed light on Bilbo's lingering insecurities and the unspoken burden he carried. "I see," Thorin murmured, a mixture of understanding and determination in his gaze. "Then it is my duty to make it abundantly clear to him that I have no intention of leaving him ever again, that he is my One in every sense."

Tharkun nodded in approval. "It will take time. Be patient."

Thorin took one final draw from his pipe, releasing a puff of smoke into the night. "Indeed," he muttered to himself, his voice carrying a newfound determination. With renewed resolve, he set aside his pipe and made his way inside.

Upon entering, his eyes immediately sought out his One, who had somehow ended up on top of a table, ale in hand, merrily belting out a pub song. The drink in Bilbo's cup sloshed over the rim as he hopped and stomped along to the rhythm of the music. Thorin stood there, utterly transfixed, as his heart swelled with affection and pride for his lively hobbit. This is how he should always be. Happy, comfortable in his own skin, surrounded by loved ones. The others in the room egged Bilbo on, their cheers and laughter filling the air with jubilation.

He didn't want his beloved to overindulge, especially after so many days without proper hobbit meals. Too much ale could lead to Bilbo losing his dinner, and he was determined to prevent that from happening.

"There'sss my husband!" Bilbo slurred loudly with a bright smile. "Isn't he lovely?"

Dwalin reared back and laughed. "Don't you mean…" he curled his hands under his chin and batted his eyelashes like a blushing maid. "Pwetty?" The whole room erupted with laughter.

"I was right then and I'm right now!" Bilbo hollered back. "He is *very* pretty!" Again they all howled with laughter but Bilbo frowned as he looked at them all. "He is!"

"Aye, aye," Dwalin chortled while holding his sides, "he's got all the Durin qualities that all adore, right down to his tiny nose and his hairless arse!"

The Company threw their heads back and guffawed, minus Fili and Kili.

"Fightin' words, I say," slurred Kili in their defense of their Durin qualities.

"Us Durins may not be the most handsome," Fili added and then leaned forward threateningly but so drunk. "But we have hair where it counts." Then he knocked on Dwalin's bald head, which seemed to sound hollow, making everyone cackle again.

"Well," Bilbo belched, "I haven't seen Thorin's ass yet, but I'm sure it's hairy enough and pretty too!"

The whole room went dead silent, and all heads turned slowly to Thorin, who would never admit he was blushing down to his toes. “Beloved,” Thorin pleaded, “I think it’s time for bed.”

The awkward silence turned into boos. As everyone started to get ready for some sleep, Balin cornered him. “You haven’t consummated the marriage yet?” he hissed.

Thorin glared at him but swallowed nervously. “That’s none of your concern.”

Fili and Kili appeared on either side of Thorin and threw their arms over his shoulder. “Do you need us to explain the *birds and the bees* , uncle?” said Fili with a smirk.

“Oh, I’ve heard that phrase thrown about!” Bilbo exclaimed as he swayed through dwarfs to get to Thorin, eyes bleary with drink. “Always wondered what it meant! What does it,” he hiccuped "mean?”

Thorin wanted the ground to swallow him up. Everyone had turned, mouths agape and eyes wide.

“He can’t mean…” Kili whispered to Fili.

Thorin picked Bilbo up bridal style who yelped and immediately started giggling and stomped away before his nephews could stop him.

“Oh! There he goes to show him what it means!” Dwalin yelled, and everyone whistled and cheered with lewd Khuzdul remarks in between.

He laid his hobbit on their bed and brushed away his mussed curls from his face. “You, Master Baggins, are very drunk.”

Bilbo smiled and stretched with a groan, his shirt riding up without his braces to hold it down, exposing his flat belly. The sight made Thorin’s gut clench, and he was filled with a mad desire to bite that soft patch of skin.

“It’s Mister, now,” Bilbo corrected. “I’m a grown-up Hobbit now. Married and everything.” He sighed happily and lolled his head to the side to wink at Thorin.

“ *Mister* Baggins,” Thorin amended. He smiled and walked to the dresser with the mirror as he removed his shirt with a slight hiss of pain. In the reflection, he could see Bilbo was staring at his back with great interest. “Like what you see, Mister Baggins?”

Bilbo frowned. “Not really.”

“Just stab me next time, Bilbo; it would hurt less,” Thorin said as he unwrapped his bandages and watched as Bilbo shot up to sit and nearly fell off the bed, hurrying to Thorin.

“Oh! What I mean-mean to say is,” his eyes on the scabbing wounds on Thorin’s middle, “I don’t like seeing you hurt.”

Thorin took Bilbo’s small hand and placed it over his heart. “I know.” He lifted the jar with balm for his wounds. “Will you help me with this?”

Bilbo stared at the jar cross-eyed for a silent moment and then nodded his head slowly with a hard swallow.

Thorin sat on the edge of the bed, his gaze fixed on Bilbo, who was holding the jar of balm. The room was dimly lit by the large fireplace, a golden glow luminating their surroundings. Bilbo's eyes were focused and determined, his brows furrowed in concentration.

“You’ve many scars,” Bilbo murmured. With gentle fingers, Bilbo dipped his hand into the jar, scooping out a small amount.

“Do they displease you?” Thorin watched as Bilbo's hands moved with uncoordinated purpose, but his touch was still tender and careful.

Bilbo shook his head. “No, but I don’t like seeing you hurt,” he said. He spread the balm evenly over Thorin's healing wounds, his fingers moving in small, soothing circles. “I didn’t like seeing you nearly swallowed by a warg either.”

“It wasn’t that big that it could swallow me.”

Bilbo gave him an unimpressed arch of his brow. “Your lessons finally came in handy,” Bilbo chuckled without mirth. “My first kill…”

Thorin felt the tension in his body, that had been gradually melting away, come back full force. Thorin gently took Bilbo's wrist to stop him and capture his attention. His eyes bore into Bilbo's, and his voice was earnest as he asked, "And how do you feel about that?"

Bilbo shrugged, his nose twitching as he contemplated his thoughts. "I dunno," he admitted, releasing a soft sigh. "The blood was rather off-putting," he shuddered at the memory. "But you're alive, so... that makes me happy." A genuine, lazy smile played on his lips, and he sniffed, planting a kiss on Thorin's hand before gently releasing himself. "Here, let me finish up."

Once the balm was applied, Bilbo reached for a fresh set of bandages. His movements were precise and confident as he wrapped them around Thorin's torso, ensuring they were snug but not too tight.

The scent of the balm filled the air, a soothing and comforting aroma that seemed to envelop them both. Thorin closed his eyes for a moment, savoring the sensation of Bilbo's touch and the healing properties of the balm.

When Bilbo had finished wrapping the bandages, he leaned in and planted a gentle kiss on Thorin's forehead. "All done," he whispered, his voice radiating warmth and love.

Thorin opened his eyes and bestowed a loving smile upon his beloved hobbit. "Thank you, Mister Baggins."

Bilbo responded with a joyful grin, his eyes shimmering with affection. "You're welcome, my dear dwarf."

They settled into bed, arranging themselves comfortably. Thorin adjusted his arm to invite Bilbo to take his usual position beside him. Bilbo hesitated, his gaze drawn to the freshly wrapped bandages. "It's fine," Thorin reassured him. "You barely weigh a thing, you won't hurt me."

Bilbo voiced his concern, pointing out, "You're shirtless."

Thorin glanced down at himself and then back at Bilbo. "Would you rather I wasn't?"

"No!" Bilbo responded quickly, flustered. "I mean, if you're comfortable, why not?" He let out a nervous laugh and bit his lip as he stared at Thorin's chest. "Okay then," he muttered to himself, trying to muster courage. "It's fine. Just fine." With a deep breath, he snuggled into Thorin's warm embrace.

"Are you comfortable, amral?" Thorin's lips met Bilbo's forehead.

"Mm, very," Bilbo purred contentedly.

"If you'd like to remove your own shirt—" Thorin began, but before he could finish his sentence, Bilbo's arm was flung off him with surprising speed. The hobbit leaped off the bed, his movements frantic as he nearly tossed his shirt into the flames in his haste. Then, without hesitation, he hopped back into bed and clung to Thorin's side.

Bilbo’s moan nearly made Thorin’s head spin on his shoulders. “This feels *so* nice.”

Thorin swallowed hard, a flush creeping up his neck. "I couldn't agree more," he replied, his voice laced with a hint of nervousness that he hoped Bilbo wouldn't pick up on.

Bilbo yawned long and loud. “Should we have our ceremony in the Spring when my parents arrive?”

“That can be arranged,” Thorin murmured, his eyes closed in contentment.

“We haven’t talked about where we'll raise our faunts,” Bilbo said in the middle of another yawn.

“Mm,” Thorin mumbled, lost in thought until Bilbo's words struck him like an anvil. His eyes snapped open wide, and he blinked at the ceiling in confusion. “Faunts?”

“Or would they be called dwobbits?” Bilbo giggled. “Dwobbits. Get it? Dwarf and hobbits make dwobbits.” He laughed. “Mm, I hope they’ll have your eyes.”

Bilbo was clearly quite inebriated, unless he genuinely didn't know about certain matters, which Thorin found hard to believe. Nevertheless, he decided to leave that naivety intact, at least until morning, as Bilbo started snoring lightly, and sleep began to claim Thorin as well.

Chapter End Notes

Soooooo... some hot and heavy make out sessions are probably coming in the next chapter.

# Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

***Rating change from T to M***

Chapter Notes

***Rating change from T to M***

This chapter had a human beta for once! Thank you so much Lucigoo89 for beta-ing this chapter! Check out their Bagginshield fics!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was morning when Thorin truly understood the monumental blunder he had made. He had casually suggested that Bilbo sleep without a shirt, thinking it would be more comfortable for his beloved hobbit. What he hadn't anticipated was the effect it would have on his own mind and body. Now, as he lay in bed next to Bilbo, both half naked, the room seemed to have transformed into a furnace. The mere thought of Bilbo's bare skin against his own was causing his heart to race faster than a dwarf running from a dragon. He would know.

Thorin shifted uncomfortably, trying to banish the images that kept popping into his head. Images of Bilbo's smooth chest, his delicate collarbone, and the soft curve of his waist. It was as if his brain had decided to play a cruel joke on him, bombarding him with vivid fantasies while the object of his affections lay so innocently in his arms. He blamed his nephews. He cursed Dwalin and Balin too for good measure. It was their fault. And the ale.

He hadn't felt the stirrings of arousal in so long, he didn't know what to do with himself. Quickly, he tried to focus on Bilbo's chatter. His hobbit had snuck out in the early morning to bring first breakfast in bed to ease their hangovers, and now they were just idly lounging in each other's arms, caressing and petting absentmindedly as Bilbo recounted the events of the previous day.

Thorin desperately wanted to kiss him, among other things, but Bilbo seemed rather inexperienced and uninformed when it came to matters of a more intimate nature. Thorin worried that he might inadvertently frighten his beloved hobbit if they didn't have some kind of discussion about it. So, he prepared to broach the topic, searching for a way to segue into it when Bilbo completely derailed his thoughts with a question.

Thorin valiantly adjusted his thinking to catch up with Bilbo. They were nestled in bed together, the soft morning light filtering through the curtains. Bilbo's question hung in the air, and Thorin knew he needed to address it.

"I was afraid for you," Thorin began, his voice softening. "My words came out harsh because of it. I am not angry with you. But breaking promises is a serious matter to dwarves, Bilbo. We need to be able to trust one another implicitly."

Bilbo raised an eyebrow, ready to defend his actions. "Technically, I didn't make the promise in the first place. And even if I had, you said I was not to go out alone. And I wasn't alone. You were there."

"Bilbo," Thorin cautioned, his tone gentle.

"Alright, alright," Bilbo conceded. "But if I hadn't gone, you'd be warg food. So, really, I shouldn't promise anything that would keep me away from you because you obviously need rescuing from time to time."

Thorin sighed, their conversation taking on a more serious tone. "I would rather you disagree with me outright than pretend to make a promise and then put yourself in danger regardless."

Bilbo mused, "Are we having our first fight?"

Thorin shook his head. "We're not fighting."

"Feels like it," Bilbo muttered.

Turning on his side, Thorin positioned himself to look Bilbo in the face. He smiled sadly, his thumb brushing Bilbo's cheek. "I still can't exactly feel you in our bond," he admitted. "Only when you are in distress, or sleepy, or drunk," he added with a wry smile. "I felt like I was being watched, but I couldn't sense it was you. I could have let an arrow loose on my One without an inkling… That is… a sign that our bond is… frayed, Bilbo."

Bilbo couldn't meet Thorin's gaze, and a blush of shame colored his cheeks. But Thorin gently turned Bilbo's face back to him. "In order to mend it," he continued, "we must let each other in. We can only do that if we are willing to be completely open with one another."

"So, I should just obey your orders next time then?" Bilbo asked.

Thorin smirked, his eyes filled with affection. "No, Bilbo, we are equals. Just tell me what's on your mind, even if you think it will upset me. If you feel like something I say needs to be challenged, then do so, instead of just agreeing with me and then doing the opposite."

Bilbo pondered Thorin's words for a moment before asking with a playful glint in his eye, "And what would you have done if I had? If I had said that I wanted to go with you?"

Thorin's smirk deepened. "I don't think there is much I can refuse you, beloved."

"Oh?" Bilbo raised an eyebrow. "What if I ask for a kiss right now in the middle of our ‘not a fight’?" he asked, testing the dwarfs words.

Without hesitation, Thorin dipped his head and captured Bilbo's lips in a sweet, lingering kiss. When he pulled back, Bilbo followed, their mouths meeting again and again. The kisses grew slower with each tender press of their lips until Bilbo pressed a tentative tongue to the seam of Thorin's lips. The need to claim was so visceral that Thorin growled and opened his mouth, deepening the kiss further, tongues exploring one another.

He pressed closer, half on top of his hobbit with one arm propping him up, his hair falling over his shoulders to curtain them from the rest of the world, one hand snaking down from Bilbo's waist, to his hip, and finally down his lower back until he grabbed a handful of pert hobbit cheek firmly.

A surprised noise from Bilbo was swallowed down along with other pretty sounds in between pants and gasps.

"Thorin," Bilbo rasped when the dwarf dragged his lips further down and used his teeth to scrape the soft skin of his hobbit's exposed neck.

He groaned upon hearing his name said with such need and bit down hard on the tender flesh between his shoulder and neck.

Bilbo cried out, tensed, and went limp all in the span of a second.

Thorin let go and blinked through the fog of arousal to see Bilbo… unconscious. Again. He nearly whined with despair, and thrust his hips into the mattress to alleviate the terrible ache between his legs. He cursed under his breath and tried to remind himself that it was better this way. They hadn't talked yet, after all, and more importantly…

He looked down and extricated his hand from Bilbo's rear to gently caress his abdomen, softly dragging his spread fingers over each rib with a sad frown. He needed to fatten up his hobbit.

Bilbo gasped awake with a jolt but Thorin's weight kept him pinned and safe. "It happened again."

Continuing to map the contours of Bilbo's body, Thorin simply nodded.

"How embarrassing," Bilbo grumbled.

"Don't be embarrassed," Thorin murmured and bent low to kiss the love bite he'd left on Bilbo's pale neck. "I think it's because you are… using up too much energy."

Bilbo gave him a dubious look but nodded. "You mean I'm severely malnourished."

"This," Thorin said with a furrow to his brow and caressed Bilbo's pronounced sternum, "pains me. My hobbit should be fat and happy."

Bilbo snickered. "Well, I'm happy. So, that's a start. And now we have more food than we can eat by Spring."

"So, you will allow me to feed you every chance I get?"

A furious blush crept down Bilbo's neck. "Even in public?"

"Would that eliminate all doubt from every blasted hobbit in The Shire that I want you?"

The blush turned darker and Bilbo cleared his throat. "It's considered very intimate… yes."

"Would you like me to, then?" Thorin grinned wickedly and nuzzled Bilbo's cheek. "I will feed you right out of my hands, while you sit on my lap. And I'll make sure Miss Bracegirdle has a good view."

"Oh my," Bilbo breathed and then fanned himself. "It will be quite scandalous."

"Amralime, we are a walking scandal."

Bilbo barked out a laugh. "Can't argue there!"

Thorin chuckled as well and couldn't help but play with Bilbo's belly button, which made Bilbo squeal deliciously and try to escape him. But Thorin saw an opportunity, the tip of Bilbo's ear was peeking out through his copper curls and he dove for it.

"Ah! Thorin-oh! Not the ear–oh goodness–I'm going… to faint again…"

And he did.

Unclamping his mouth Thorin sighed and pouted. A trip to the washroom was definitely in order.

The Shire was alive with celebration, and despite the cold, it was a sunny day with no harsh winds. The past days of turmoil had now given way to a jubilant atmosphere. Food was aplenty, and the aromas of various dishes wafted through the air. Long tables were set up, groaning under the weight of delicious offerings. There were platters of pies, heaping bowls of mashed potatoes, roasted meats, vegetables, and more. Every hobbit had contributed their family's best recipes to share with their neighbors and saviors.

Barrels of ale and cider were tapped, and the laughter and merriment flowed as freely as the drinks.

Thorin felt lighthearted, and less… frustrated since taking care of certain matters. As Thorin walked down the road with Bilbo and his kin, the bustling atmosphere of the Shire's celebration surrounded them and set his spirits alight. Stalls filled with all manner of treats and delicacies lined the street, offering a tantalizing array of foods.

They held hands as they walked, fingers intertwined like newlyweds, which, in essence, they were. It was a small act of affection, yet it meant the world to Bilbo, and Thorin couldn't help but feel a warm sense of contentment as they strolled together through the lively celebration, surrounded by the laughter and cheer of the hobbits, elves, rangers, and dwarrows.

Thorin couldn't resist stopping at these stalls, eager to share the delicacies with Bilbo. He would select a sample, perhaps a freshly baked pastry or a piece of fruit, and offer it to Bilbo right from his fingertips. Bilbo's blushing and stuttering only fueled Thorin's mischievous side. He would purposefully suck on his own fingers after Bilbo took the morsels, a subtle and intimate gesture that was a lewd indirect kiss by hobbit standards. Thorin, however, merely put on an innocent expression, pretending as if nothing remotely salacious was happening, all while enjoying the way Bilbo's cheeks flushed.

Thorin was mindful to keep an eye out for any unwelcome onlookers or nasty whispers. He knew the Bracegirdles and Sackville-Bagginses had a penchant for meddling, and he didn't want their prying eyes to miss a single moment of his adoration for his husband. Whenever he caught them staring, Thorin would swoop down on Bilbo, showering him with affection and attention, drawing all eyes to their love.

Most would chuckle and snicker, even toast to their good health and happiness. But, of course, not the Sackiville-Bagginses, and definitely not Lobelia Bracegirdle.

Thorin had only left for a moment to fetch their drinks, and upon his return, he discovered his hobbit was gone. He inquired with his kin if they'd seen Bilbo leave, but no one had. Placing down their ales, he set out to find his One, his heart tinged with worry. There was a nagging feeling deep within, and he stopped dead in his tracks, rooted to the ground. Closing his eyes, he focused his intent. For a long, sorrowful moment, Thorin felt nothing, but then, a gentle tug on his heart. He opened his eyes, a relieved smile gracing his lips.

He followed the thread of their bond.

"You're causing a scene!" Lobelia's hissing voice reached Thorin's ears from around the corner.

The dwarf halted when he heard Bilbo's determined reply. "You just can't stand the thought that I'm happy, can you? We are a married, bonded couple. There is nothing you can do or say that will ever change that. Now, please, leave me alone once and for all."

"You selfish little beast," Lobelia retorted bitterly. "Who was there for you every time your dwarf left you all alone? Who wiped your tears? Whose shoulder did you cry on? Who held you while you wept? I was only ever a friend to you, and this is the treatment I get?"

Bilbo scoffed, his voice filled with disappointment. "I thought you were my friend at the time. I didn't know your friendship came with such a price until it was too late. Your poisonous words had already driven me to despair! Thorin loves me and has always loved me. You just wanted me to feel alone and desolate so that you could swoop in and try to trap me into marrying you!"

"He's married you out of pity and some foolish notion of self-sacrifice and duty. You've been fading away since before this dreadful Winter came, and you know it. He'll leave you again for some noble cause, like the hunts. There will always be an excuse for him to leave you behind."

Thorin waited, expecting Bilbo to respond, to argue, to refute Lobelia's words, but Bilbo remained silent. That's when Thorin decided it was time to intervene. He swiftly rounded the corner, and Lobelia paled in his presence. Bilbo turned to face him, his expression blank, a clear sign that he was hurt and trying to conceal it. Thorin wrapped a possessive arm around Bilbo's waist, pulling him in and tilting him backward as if they were in a dance, kissing his One as if he couldn't survive without it. When he finished, Bilbo's eyes were open and alert, though tinged with surprise.

"My beloved," Thorin whispered into Bilbo's ear, which twitched at the endearment, "I've been looking for you." He glanced at Lobelia briefly, his expression one of bored disdain. "Ah, now I know what smells so putrid."

Lobelia gasped, affronted. "How dare you?!" She launched into one of her customary rants, but Thorin simply ignored her and guided his husband away.

"Despicable little lump of coal, isn't she," Thorin muttered. Bilbo remained silent, looking distant. Thorin squeezed his hand. "You know she was trying to hurt you."

Bilbo bit his lip and nodded.

"Come," Thorin murmured, a hint of dejection in his tone, "let's dance."

"Dance?" Bilbo blinked up at him. "You said I shouldn't exert myself."

"A slow one. What do you say?"

Bilbo smiled and nodded. "Yes."

Thorin requested a song from his kin, who gladly supplied it with their instruments. With a gentle tug, he pulled a flustered Bilbo along to a quiet spot where they could sway and twirl lazily to the melodic tunes. They indulged in more food and drink, but this time, they paced themselves with care. As they danced, more hobbits came over to join them, smiling warmly and offering their best wishes. However, despite the festive atmosphere, there lingered a hint of resignation in Bilbo's expression that Thorin found unsettling.

“Bilbo,” Thorin said, his eyes scanning the cloud-speckled sky, his voice soft yet earnest. He took a deep breath, inhaling the crisp, cool air of the Shire. “Do you want our visit to the Blue Mountains to be the start of our honeymoon?”

Bilbo's brows knit together in surprise. “But you said you wanted to wait until after our ceremony.”

“Aye, I did,” Thorin admitted, his gaze shifting to Bilbo's wide, curious eyes. He gently cupped Bilbo's jaw, his thumb brushing across his cheekbone. “But I didn't ask you if that's what you wanted.”

A spark of excitement ignited in Bilbo's eyes as he considered the idea. “We can go to my Halls in Ered Luin,” Thorin continued. “I wouldn't have been proud to show you before, but

we've come a long way. I can finally share with you the fruits of my labor. We don't have to stay there, of course. We can travel, explore, and be treated like royalty wherever we go."

Bilbo beamed, his face illuminated by the thought. "That sounds lovely. Yes."

"You know," Kili interjected from his nearby bench, "you can have more than one ceremony, Uncles."

Fili chimed in, "A dwarf wedding back home and a hobbit wedding in the Spring!"

"A Winter wedding?" Bilbo said, surprised.

"Aye," Balin confirmed, lifting his mug with a smile. "It's a lovely time for a wedding among us dwarves."

Thorin added with a hint of playfulness, "Unless you wish to wait for your parents?"

Bilbo shook his head with a grin. "No, no. Da says he's planting himself in our garden and never leaving The Shire again once he gets back. I won't put him through another adventure so soon."

Thorin's bashful smirk grew into a warm smile. "So, will you marry me in the traditions of my people, Bilbo Baggins?"

Bilbo laughed, his gaze sweeping across the expectant faces of their friends and well-wishers nearby. "Yes!" he exclaimed, his voice carrying with it a sense of joy and adventure. "Thorin Oakenshield, I will marry you!"

The announcement was met with cheers, applause, and delighted chatter from the assembled crowd. Well, everyone cheered except for a certain someone, whose disapproval only served to make the occasion all the more memorable.

Chapter End Notes

Major blue balls.
Okay, what are some things you'd wish to see happen in this story? I may or may not include them but I'd like to try!

# Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Some smut and topes.
Thank you, Lucigoo, for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It turned out that the prospect of a honeymoon was the perfect incentive for Bilbo to gain some weight. Oin had made it abundantly clear Bilbo was not to embark on any journeys until he was in tip-top shape, and the Hobbit had taken that to heart. He made the most of every opportunity to snack between the seven Hobbit meals a day. Oin had also concocted a special drink for him, made with goat's milk and honey designed to supplement his meals.

In a remarkably short time, Bilbo, though not quite as filled out as he had once been, was at least fit enough for travel.

Thorin had also healed rapidly from his wounds inflicted during the warg attack. Dwarven resilience and stamina played no small part in his swift recovery. As Bilbo regained his health, Thorin found himself increasingly attracted to his husband, both physically and emotionally. It was as if their bond had deepened and healed alongside Bilbo's body. Their connection had grown stronger, and the desire that had simmered for so long was now a blazing fire, difficult to contain.

However, Thorin exercised restraint, especially with their wedding ceremony approaching in the Blue Mountains. Dis had sent a letter that expressed her livid surprise about his elopement. She had exercised great self-control in her communication, clarifying that she would plan the entire wedding herself.

It thrilled Thorin to move forward with their wedding plans, but it was becoming challenging to keep his hands off his beloved Hobbit. It didn't help that Bilbo had become more attached, and while Thorin cherished every moment, he couldn't deny the rising pressure building within him. By Durin's beard, Thorin felt like he was on the verge of implosion any day now. Their wedding night couldn't come soon enough.

Bilbo's newfound attention seemed to know no bounds. He had become Thorin's shadow, constantly by his side, filling every possible moment with his presence. He would seize any opportunity to sit on Thorin's lap, as though he couldn't bear the slightest distance between them. It didn't matter if Thorin was working in the forge or just lounging by the hearth; Bilbo was there, perched on something nearby or on Thorin's person, making himself quite comfortable.

Bilbo initiated kisses and embraces without the slightest hint of hesitation or reservation. He would often steal a quick kiss when they passed each other in the hallway, or wrap his arms around Thorin's waist from behind. Thorin found himself both enchanted and overwhelmed by this flood of affection. He welcomed it with open arms, reveling in the warmth of Bilbo's love. Their bond, once fragile and tentative, was now building like a crescendo in a beautiful song. It pulsed with life and vitality, each day bringing them closer together.

The hobbit he had married was no longer the same, and yet, in some ways, he was more like himself than ever before. It was a paradox that both fascinated and delighted Thorin. Bilbo's once-reserved nature had given way to a newfound boldness. Thorin was ever-drawn to him like a dragon to precious metals.

Bilbo's transformation mirrored Thorin's own. He remembered a time in his childhood when he had been more carefree, more open to the world around him. The weight of duty and responsibility had gradually chipped it away, but now, with his One by his side, he felt free… he felt young again. They were rediscovering themselves in each other. And with each stolen kiss, lingering embrace, and shared moment, Thorin knew that he was falling more deeply in love with his hobbit, with his One, with his Bilbo.

How Thorin had survived without Bilbo for long was a mystery to him. The entire time he had lived with half of himself, how did he endure? Thorin prayed to Mahal that Bilbo would never be taken from him. The mere thought of losing him now was unbearable, for he knew he could never return to the half-life he had recently led.

Thorin crowded Bilbo behind their closed door after they had second breakfast. His hobbit yelped, trapped between Thorin and the wall, Thorin's arms bracketing him on either side. "Although I am eager for the journey ahead," Thorin rumbled low into Bilbo's sensitive ear, "we will not have much privacy on the road." He nipped at its point, eliciting a cry of surprise and pleasure. "It is a good thing these are our last moments alone, or our honeymoon would take place right here. Right now." Thorin couldn't help an instinctual slow thrust of his hips that never touched Bilbo.

"Wh-what, would we do differently than what we've been doing?" Bilbo asked quietly, his voice cracking and his breaths coming in quick.

"Tell me, Bilbo," Thorin whispered, "what do you know about marital relations? Sex."

"O-oh, by the green gardens, um," Bilbo flustered. "Well, my mother told me that you would most-likely know what to do on our wedding night, so she didn't really explain in detail. It's considered taboo to talk about it, considered couples business only."

"So it falls to me, does it?" Never in his life did Thorin think he'd be giving The Talk to anyone else after Kili.

"Oh, please tell me, I've been dying to know for years! Most of my cousins are either married or have experimented, as they say."

Thorin could not help the blush that crept up his cheeks. Just the thought of sex with Bilbo made his gut clench and stones ache. He moved closer, pressing their chests together as he

nuzzled that adorable nose. “Why tell you when I can show you?”

Bilbo swallowed hard but nodded eagerly. “Yes,” he whispered quickly.

Just a taste, Thorin thought as he kissed his husband deep, sweet at first and slow. “We can save the main event for our wedding night,” Thorin justified to himself aloud as he picked Bilbo up by his rear and pressed him up against the door. He dove into the crook of Bilbo’s neck and scraped his teeth on his husband’s sensitive flesh before soothing it with a kiss.

Bilbo instinctively wrapped his legs around Thorin’s waist and gasped when their erections pressed together through their clothes. They both froze and groaned as if in relief. “Oh my,” Bilbo panted, eyes closed tight.

This, Thorin thought with sudden frenzy, is what it must be like to go mad. “Open your eyes,” Thorin pleaded with a murmur.

Bilbo snapped his eyes open, half-lidded and bleary with arousal. “I feel a bit… strange,” he slurred.

“Are you going to swoon?”

Bilbo shook his head in the negative but Thorin was not convinced. “I always feel a bit odd when we do things like this, but lately…” his brow furrowed, “It’s been stronger.”

“Tell me,” Thorin commanded. He needed to know how Bilbo felt. If he felt the same way Thorin did; ravenous.

With a slightly bashful look between them, Bilbo bit his lip. “Like, um, down there. It feels hot… and… h-hard and w-wet… it aches.”

Thorin took in a long hissing breath. It was not what he thought Bilbo would say, but by Mahal’s mighty hammer it was the most errotic thing that had ever graced his round ears. Thorin rested his forehead against his husbands, and breathed slowly to compose himself before doing something rash, like claiming his husband right then and there.

“You desire me as I desire you,” Thorin gruffed out finally.

“You feel it too?”

“Yes. Have you not felt this before?” Thorin queried. “Arousal?”

“Not like this. Not until recently. I think our bond was too weak for me to feel this way. Wait… does that mean you have felt this before?”

Thorin shook his head. “I have been with a few partners in the past, it’s true, but this feels different to me as well.”

Bilbo blinked, surprise flickering across his features. “What do you mean, you've been with a few?”

It was becoming increasingly difficult to not let his hips piston into the heat that spread on his groin. Thorin moaned and adjusted his grip, but that slight movement nearly finished him so he banged his head on the door next to Bilbo's and just stayed as still as stone until he could gather a thought. "Huh? Oh. Um, my own experimenting years with previous lovers."

"What? You…" Bilbo began to push Thorin away, he resisted until Bilbo said his name with a firm tone. "What do you mean?"

The hurt in his eyes is what finally sobered Thorin. He didn't want to put Bilbo down, but the mounting distress in their bond was telling him to take care. Jealousy, Thorin realized. Bilbo was hurt and jealous.

"I used the wrong term," Thorin explained gently. "Lovers would imply that I had romantic feelings for them, which I did not. They were merely shallow companions. I have *never* felt this way before with anyone but you."

Bilbo's lip trembled. "So, you've had sex before… with, it seems, several people. Okay. When? When you'd leave me for your *duty* ?"

Thorin felt a stabbing pain in his chest. He had clearly made a colossal error. "What? No." He shook his head, struggling to think amidst the whirlwind of emotions – having gone from achingly aroused to feeling like he had his heart ripped out of his chest. "Before you were born."

The hurt and anger that had been building suddenly deflated from Bilbo, and he visibly sagged with relief as he moved to sit on the bed. Although he still appeared upset, it was a different kind of upset – no longer heartbroken.

Thorin realized the weight of his words. If he had indeed been with someone else while Bilbo believed they were engaged, it would have shattered the trust between them. Thankfully, he hadn't, and he was grateful for it. He felt like a complete fool for not realizing the implications of his earlier statement.

Taking a deep breath, Thorin sat next to Bilbo with a weary sigh. "I'm sorry I worried you."

Bilbo shrugged. "You experimented before I was born, I can't be upset about it."

"But you are." Thorin extended his hand, palm up, a silent invitation. Bilbo glanced at it for a moment before sighing and entwining their fingers.

Bilbo nodded. "I'm sorry."

"No, no. It's alright." Thorin understood the complex emotions swirling within his husband. Any stray thought of Bilbo with someone else made Thorin want to lose his breakfast and burn everything to the ground. "Can you forgive my youthful search for companionship? Would it matter if I said that those encounters pale in comparison to just being near you?"

Bilbo seemed to shrink into himself momentarily, but Thorin noticed the tips of his ears turning pink. "There's no need to ask for forgiveness, but if you need it, then of course I will

give it. And, yes," he finally looked up and smiled, "it does matter." Then Bilbo pulled his hand out of Thorin's, crossed his arms, and lifted his chin with a sniff. "But now I demand I get the same treatment as your previous companions. It's only fair."

"Oh, Amralime," Thorin breathed as he leaned over his hobbit until Bilbo had no choice but to lie back on the bed, "I will treat you so much better than that." He dragged his knuckles gently over Bilbo's cheek and kissed him soft and long. "I will treasure you." He teased Bilbo's lips with his tongue until he gave Thorin access within. While his hands explored his husband's body, their tongues slowly danced until Bilbo moaned beneath him. They drew apart to breathe. "I will worship you." He nipped at his bottom lip, his hand creeping down, down, until Bilbo nearly levitated off the bed and cried out sharply. He covered Bilbo's mouth with his own so the rest of the house wouldn't hear what they were up to. He palmed Bilbo's clothed erection, continuing to swallow down his moans and whimpers. Thorin pulled away to let his hobbit breathe. "Hush or the whole house will hear."

Bilbo whimpered but nodded weakly. "Please," he whispered urgently, "I feel… I need something… I don't know–"

"Shh," Thorin kissed him, "I know what you need." He wasn't going to tease his hobbit, not today. He gave Bilbo the friction he needed using his large hand, slowly at first and then speeding up in reaction to Bilbo's restrained cries and groans.

He was gorgeous.

"Something's ha-happening–"

"Let it happen," Thorin encouraged, eyes wide and wild, as he took in his husband's sweaty forehead, scrunched-up brow, gaping mouth, and eyes rolling up under his lids. Not one microexpression escaped Thorin's hungry gaze. "Yes," Thorin hissed and increased his speed.

"Oh-oh-I don't-ah, I don't know, Thorin…! It's to-too… *m u c h* !"

But it was just enough because then Bilbo's mouth fell open in a silent O before a high pitched cry ripped out of him, his blunt nails digging into Thorin's shoulders, hips jutting sporadically into Thorin's gentling hold. And Thorin watched, riveted by the contours of Bilbo's exposed throat that sported several marks of varying ages on the delicate slope of his shoulder, placed there by Thorin himself.

He didn't even have to touch himself. Thorin's climax was nothing short of explosive and he let out a guttural cry into the pillow and Bilbo's locks.

He was in… a state. They both were. Dazed and floating down from the hazy clouds of lust and love. If that's how it felt just rutting in their clothes…? Thorin thought he should best prepare his funeral arrangements for the day after their wedding.

A gentle knock on the door was barely registered by the couple that laid splayed out and limp on the bed. "If yer both quite done in there," Balin said cheerily, "we best get on with it!"

“Go away,” slurred Thorin as he got more comfortable, wrapping his arms around his husband who easily turned into him like a sunflower to the sun, soundly asleep already.

A loud sigh came from behind the door. “Fine. One hour and that’s all I’ll give ye!”

Their journey to Ered Luin was fortunately uneventful. While some members of the caravan had chosen to stay behind to help protect the Shire, most of Thorin’s kin, along with Gandalf, returned with Thorin and Bilbo. Gandalf was insistent on officiating their wedding to Bilbo’s delight. Thorin supposed it would be good luck to be wed by an Istari so he made no protest.

When they finally arrived, they were met by a receiving party complete with guards. His sister, Dis, greeted him first, the thud of their heads knocking together with an extra touch of sibling ‘affection’ before she turned her attention toward his husband.

Bilbo looked like a bunny caught in a wolf’s den–ears slightly droopy and everything. His eyes darted about, wide and shifty, trying to take in the vastness of everything. It was evident that he was overwhelmed by the sheer scale of it all—the impressive architecture, the expansive open spaces, the lack of a visible sky, the countless dwarves bustling about their daily lives, and the imposing figure of his overbearing sister towering over him and bombarding him with questions.

In Bilbo’s moment of need, it was Kili and Fili who came to the rescue. They skillfully intercepted Bilbo, ushering him away from Dis’s inquisition and giving her their undivided attention. This intervention allowed Thorin to sweep in and envelop Bilbo in a reassuring embrace, his arm serving as a protective shield around his husband’s shoulders.

“Are you alright, amral?” Thorin whispered into Bilbo’s ear.

Bilbo nodded, though his eyes remained round with awe. “It’s just so... much.”

Thorin chuckled softly. “This is the busiest part of the mountain because the district halls branch off over there.” Thorin pointed ahead. “My Halls are to the west. Initially, it was primarily a coal miner’s district when we first settled,” he explained as they approached. “But,” he added with pride, a twinkle in his eye, “it has since evolved into much more.” As they entered the heart of the district, their small procession came to a halt, and a horn sounded. Every dwarf and dam in the vicinity stopped and turned toward them, wearing expectant smiles. A loudhailer stepped forward and announced their arrival in Westeron for Bilbo’s benefit.

“We welcome back His Highness, Crown Prince Thorin II, son of Thrain, known as Oakenshield, and his One, Bilbo Baggins, son of Bungo Baggins of The Shire!”

The entire hall erupted in cheers, and Thorin greeted his people with pride. However, when he glanced down at Bilbo, his Hobbit appeared on the verge of fainting. Thorin quickly signaled to his kin about the situation. They promptly cleared a path back to their wagon, where Thorin shielded his husband from the overwhelming crowd.

“Bilbo, are you all right?” Thorin asked, concern filling his voice.

Bilbo blinked, his eyes still wide with surprise. “You’re a-a-a pr-prince?!” he stammered, clearly taken aback by the revelation.

Thorin cursed his love-addled mind; he’d forgotten to tell Bilbo about his royal status. “I meant to tell you, but it slipped my mind,” he admitted, his voice tinged with regret.

Bilbo’s jaw dropped in incredulity. “How, pray tell, does one simply forget they are royalty and will one day be *king* of an entire mountain?!” he exclaimed, his shock evident.

Thorin quickly covered Bilbo’s mouth with his hand and glanced around. “There is no King of this mountain, Bilbo,” he explained in hushed tones. “I’ll explain later. I promise it’s not as big a deal as it seems.”

“Not a big deal...” Bilbo muttered, still in disbelief. Nevertheless, he followed willingly when Thorin wrapped his arm around Bilbo’s.

“Come,” Thorin said eagerly, “we will get clean and rest until tonight’s festivities.”

Balin took on the role of tour guide, pacing their steps so he could point out various landmarks and districts within the mountain. He wove narratives of their history and their significance.

“These are Thorin’s Halls, lad,” Balin said, his voice infused with pride, gesturing broadly to embrace the grandeur of their surroundings. “Thorin has been a great leader.” He acknowledged Balin’s words with a humble smile. “You see, Bilbo,” Balin continued, “we came to these mountains as poor refugees, fleeing the dragon’s wrath in Erebor. We had nothing, but under Thorin’s leadership, we’ve built a new home, and our people prosper once more.”

As Balin continued to narrate their people’s story, Bilbo’s expression evolved from confusion to awe and, ultimately, a quiet reverence.

Thorin’s chest swelled with pride that he could finally share all this with his One, and he gave Bilbo’s hand an affectionate squeeze. Bilbo, however, wore an expression of admiration tinged with a hint of sadness, contemplating the sacrifices Thorin had made.

Balin’s gaze shifted to a more serious tone as he placed a comforting hand on Bilbo’s shoulder. “I know what it’s like,” he said gravely, “to be apart from your One. Thorin didn’t have a good time of it either, lad.”

Thorin grunted a warning, but Balin pressed on.

“What I want to impress upon you with this,” Balin said, “is that Thorin has made many sacrifices, too many, since he was about your age. It’s time he gets rewarded for his efforts. You make each other happy. That’s all that matters now.”

Dis chimed in, “I will be named Thorin’s successor on the day of your wedding until Fili is ready to fill the role so that you both can live the rest of your lives how you please.”

Bilbo nodded slowly and smiled, although there was a hint of wariness in his eyes as he glanced at Thorin. “If that’s what Thorin wants…?” He looked up at Thorin with a bland smile.

Thorin felt a pang of concern through their bond. Bilbo wasn’t entirely happy about something. “We can decide these matters at a later time,” he assured his kin and his husband. “For now, let’s get settled and have something to eat, amral.”

Balin cleared his throat. “Certain traditions must be adhered to, for now.”

Dis nodded in agreement and smirked at Bilbo. “You’ll have your own chambers until you and my brother are married.”

Bilbo’s eyes widened with panic before he forced a nervous chuckle. “B-but,” he stammered, “we’re already married. Why would we need to be separated?”

Balin took on the task of explaining the situation, “Thorin is the closest thing we have to a king. He’s the beloved Crowned Prince, and his people will despair at the fact that he eloped and broke a third of our laws and traditions in the process.”

Dis chimed in with a wink, “Just a wee bit delicate. But not to worry, you will be reunited in no time after you’ve cleaned up! Come along, dear Bilbo,” she said, taking Bilbo’s arm and steering him away.

Bilbo tried to hold onto Thorin as long as he could, swallowing hard and appearing as if he were being abducted.

"I'll see you very soon, beloved," Thorin assured him, adding a wink to the promise. A wicked grin danced on his lips. They might have to maintain the facade of not being already married, but behind closed doors, and secret passages, they could indulge in their desires without restraint.

“Your Highness,” Balin drawled with a knowing arch of his brow. “Your hands are trembling.”

Thorin snapped out of his musings and cleared his throat as he clasped his hands behind him. “Must be exhaustion,” he muttered.

“Your eyes are bloodshot,” Balin agreed with a sagely nod but then narrowed his eyes with suspicion and quickly touched Thorin’s forehead.

Thorin flinched back, confusion in his eyes.

“I knew it,” Balin tsked, “You’ve got the grun-kund. I told you that you should have consummated the marriage. But did ye listen? No. It will only intensify until you’ve done the deed properly, lad. A dwarf can lose their marbles if they let that go on too long. Go on now, off with ye!”

Thorin pinched the bridge of his nose. The grun-kund. The bond fever. Of course. It was so intense all of a sudden. What was he supposed to do? Ah, yes… sneak into his One’s

chambers.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like poo-poo-caca so my writing has slowed. I've already started writing the next chapter, however.

# Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

> Too anxious to post so no beta this time! Sorry!!! I did try to proofread as much as I could bear.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He had intended to head straight for their rooms, as the nagging sensation in their bond was growing increasingly worrisome. But well wishers on finding his One detained him. When he finally used the secret door in his room that connected to Bilbo's, he realized that the concern had been justified. There, he found his husband weeping on the bed, curled into a ball.

“Bilbo,” Thorin exclaimed and hurried to the bed, “what’s happened? Who’s beard must I claim?!”

Bilbo scrambled to a kneeling position, shocked at finding Thorin in his room. “How did you–where did you?”

“The secret door,” Thorin thumbed at the wall that finally closed behind him, “didn’t Dis tell you about it?”

Looking from the dimming runes of the secret room to Thorin, Bilbo gaped. “I thought she was trying to hint at something… oh how silly of me!” Bilbo hid his face in his hands and sobbed. “I thought I’d have to sleep without you. It’s so stupid to be crying over it but—”

“No, no, my love, look at me.” Thorin sat on the bed and opened his arms, but Bilbo hesitated and looked away. Thorin would have preferred to face the scorching flames of a dragon. His arms dropped to his sides. “Bilbo, what’s wrong? Does me being royalty disturb you so much? I didn’t mean to keep it from you, it just wasn’t very relevant–”

“How could it not be relevant, Thorin?!” Bilbo cried out desperately. “You left me behind time and time again because you are an exiled king and I’ve been such a fool! I had no right to cry over your absence. Look at all that you have accomplished! Balin is right, you have sacrificed so much… too much… and I’ve been a spoiled crybaby all this time!”

Thorin didn’t exactly understand what was happening, but he tried. “You had every right to feel hurt, amral,” Thorin whispered, inching closer, his longing to hold his husband near dire.

Bilbo shook his head vehemently. “No,” he said, his voice trembling. “I was so jealous of your people... angry that you chose them over me every single time. Your duties took you further and further away from me, until years passed by, Thorin... years. I swallowed all the poison Lobelia and my cousins said about you. I let it make me bitter... How narcissistic of me!” Bilbo’s voice cracked as he berated himself.

Thorin's heart ached as he listened to Bilbo's confession. He moved closer to his husband, gently placing a hand on Bilbo's trembling shoulder. When he didn't move away, Thorin sighed with relief and put an arm around his hobbit's shoulders.

"I should have communicated with you better, made you understand the reasons behind my actions. It was never about choosing them over you; it was about fulfilling my duty to them as their leader," he whispered, his voice filled with understanding and love. Thorin cupped Bilbo's face, his thumb brushing away a tear. "And as for the poison they fed you, I should have been there to protect you from their words and reassure you of my love." Thorin leaned in, pressing a tender kiss to Bilbo's lips. "We both made mistakes, my love. But we are here now." He squeezed Bilbo tighter and placed a gentle kiss on his temple.

Bilbo's eyes shimmered with fresh tears, but this time they held a glimmer of hope. "You can't just abdicate the throne for me, Thorin."

Thorin smiled. He could feel Bilbo reach through the bond tentatively, looking for comfort, and Thorin immediately gave it by pulling Bilbo onto his lap, his legs straddling Thorin's hips so he could look at his husband in his precious hazel eyes.

"There is no throne to abdicate. I never received a coronation, and this is not my mountain. And even if I were a king, I would have every right under our laws to abdicate the throne if we decided together that we did not wish to rule. We are One. Where One goes, they go together. Our bond is sacred and above mortal laws."

Wrapping his arms around Thorin's neck, Bilbo pressed closer until he buried his face in Thorin's mane. "I'm sorry I ever doubted you," Bilbo murmured into his neck and left a small kiss under Thorin's jaw that immediately sent sparks down his body.

Reveling in the sensation of his husband in his arms, Thorin took in a deep breath, inhaling the smell of the sun in Bilbo's hair–dusty from travel. "And I am sorry I gave you cause to doubt me." He carded his fingers through travel-tousled curls, raking blunt nails on his sensitive scalp. Thorin couldn't help but stroke the point of Bilbo's ear and grinned at the reaction it elicited.

Bilbo's grip turned fierce, and he pulled on one of Thorin's braids with a moan, which reminded him… "I have something for you. Come to my chambers." He gave Bilbo's backside a playful slap and tried to pry away, but Bilbo groaned with frustration at the same time he pressed his hardness against Thorin's belly.

"Can we… first?" Bilbo questioned quietly, with another kiss to Thorin's rapidly heating flesh.

The action elicited a moan from Thorin, his middle aching with longing until it dipped further still and he was hard in his trousers again. "Yes," Thorin husked back and made sure Bilbo's rear felt exactly what his Hobbit did to him. He turned over suddenly with Bilbo still in his arms. His husband made a noise of surprise, but instantly relaxed on the bed, pulling Thorin down by his braids and kissing him soundly. Bilbo had become quite the proficient kisser, but seemed to enjoy it more when Thorin led the way.

He pulled back for air and to appreciate how his husband looked beneath him, Thorin's desire only escalated. Bilbo whined and thrust his hips up, not quite reaching Thorin. He dropped back to the bed with a pout. But Thorin did not disappoint him for long–he had no will or desire to. The need to take his Hobbit became flames that licked at his mind, burning his reasons for waiting until their wedding night near to ashes. But Thorin shook his head to dispel some of the lust that had clouded his judgment.

"This feeling," Thorin explained to his One, "this desire will only increase the longer we wait to consummate our marriage. We call it the grun-kund."

"Grun-kund," Bilbo repeated dutifully, adding to his Khuzdul vocabulary.

Thorin nodded. "Aye. Bond fever."

"Oh," his husband replied, his eyes dilating and nostrils flaring. "An apt name for it then," he said as he pulled on his collar. "It does, somewhat, feel like a fever. Is it dangerous?"

Thorin shrugged, but shook his head. "I don't think so, but many a dwarf has described it like a madness." It worried Thorin, to be quite honest, since true madness was in his blood. "And it does not abate, only grows. The longer the bond fever holds, the more intense the union."

"Union," Bilbo breathed and shot up onto his elbows, eyes earnest. "I want that. Whatever that means, I want that."

"For every pair, it is different." Said Thorin as he nuzzled Bilbo's nose with his own, breathing in his husband's warm, quick breaths. "But for us," he finally lowered himself on Bilbo, forcing his husband to lie back again, pinned. He rolled his hips, pushing his desire against Bilbo's own. He watched and listened intently as Bilbo gasped and squirmed beneath him. "For us, I think it will only pass when one of us has finally," he rocked forward again, hissing at the intense pleasure the friction gave, "entered the other."

Bilbo's eyes widened. "How? I've had this notion, when we lie together sometimes, of wishing to just… merge with you. Melt into you," he described quickly. "I thought it was too ridiculous to voice aloud, but you say there is a way? How?"

The back of Thorin's neck felt like a lit forge. "Yes." He pulled away just enough to pull Bilbo's shirt up and splay a hand on Bilbo's belly before dragging just one finger under the hem of his trousers. "There are many ways it can be done," he rumbled, low and tinged with ravenous hunger. The tip of Thorin's finger grazed over Bilbo's tip, which made him gasp and jerk his hips with a soft cry that made Thorin's stones tighten with need.

He held up his finger, glistening with moisture in the firelight between them, and watched Bilbo turn beet red. Thorin grinned briefly down at his husband and then slowly pushed his finger into his own mouth. Bilbo's flavor burst on his tongue and made his cheeks ache while Bilbo himself flustered at the lewd act and whimpered.

"Tell me," Bilbo pleaded, hips seeking and constantly moving.

“I could take you into my mouth,” Thorin offered with a pointed look. “I would love nothing more than to swallow you down.”

“You mean my…” Bilbo looked down at himself, then up at Thorin with round and eager eyes. “Really?”

Nodding his head eagerly, Thorin showed his enthusiasm for the idea. “Would you like that? Right now?”

As he anxiously chewed on his bottom lip, Bilbo eventually gave a nod of approval. “But…”

“But what?” Thorin prompted.

With a shy demeanor, Bilbo blushed and avoided eye contact by looking away. “I’m filthy from the road.”

“I care not.”

“... I do.”

Thorin's face broke into a fond smile as he looked down at his One. “A dilemma easily solved, beloved. Come with me.” With great reluctance, Thorin raised himself off his husband. Rather than telling Bilbo to follow, Thorin scooped him up into his arms and took pleasure in Bilbo's joyous giggle as he carried him towards the secret door.

“Speak Husband in my people’s tongue and enter.”

“Zatab,” Bilbo said, and the door opened. “Incredible,” his husband whispered in awe as they passed through.

“Wait until you see the washroom.” He walked straight there and placed Bilbo on his feet at the entrance.

“Oh my,”

The chamber had been a marvel of dwarven design, with walls and floors hewn from sturdy stone, adorned with intricate healing runic carvings. The centerpiece that had caught Bilbo’s attention had been a stone tub built right into the floor, a true masterpiece of dwarven craftsmanship. They had crafted it from the finest black marble, with its own runic design etched intricately into its surface that promised cleansing and peace.

“That’s not a bathtub, Thorin—it’s a lake!” Bilbo had exclaimed, his eyes widening with wonder.

Thorin, unable to contain his amusement, let out a chuckle. “Crafted by our finest artisans. A modest size, I think.”

Bilbo had turned to face Thorin, eyebrows raised under his curls, and jaw dropped. “Modest size?! I guess Kili’s swimming lessons will finally come in handy,” he uttered.

Thorin smiled, but shook his head. “It’s shallow, I promise. No swimming required.”

Bilbo looked back at the tub, unconvinced. Thorin shook his head playfully and led Bilbo further into the room. “May I relieve you of your clothes, amral,” he whispered with anticipation.

The steam was thick, carrying with it a fragrant blend of oils that only amplified the feeling of relaxation. As Bilbo let out a contented sigh, he giggled with anticipation, looking quite excited at the prospect. “Yes, please,” said Bilbo, and lifted his arms expectantly.

Thorin’s smirk was playful as he helped. “Eager to get naked?” he raised an eyebrow suggestively.

Bilbo blushed, pink rushing to his cheeks. “Eager to get the muck off me,” he stammered, but looked at Thorin with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes. “And eager for your earlier suggestion.”

With a wicked smile plastered on his face, Thorin advanced towards his husband. “As am I.” He winked removed Bilbo’s shirt.

Amidst the steamy atmosphere, Bilbo looked otherworldly. “Will you be joining me this time?”

“It’s your bath, beloved,” Thorin murmured with a soft smile. “I will happily join you if you wish.”

“It’s technically your bath,” Bilbo muttered and bit his lip, but nodded. “I want to see you, and-and touch you… too.”

“*Our* bath,” Thorin said with a nod. In no time at all, despite wanting to go slow, Thorin had already undone Bilbo’s trousers. The wet spot on his husband's tented pants made Thorin want to suckle it. Just imagining the scent of his musk there made his mouth water.

As Thorin reached out to grab Bilbo's pants, Bilbo quickly stopped him in his tracks. In a hushed tone, he uttered the words "You now," and Thorin, with a smile on his face, followed through with the request.

Thorin removed all his clothing, stepping out of his pants that had gathered at his feet, and took a step back to allow Bilbo to inspect him. Although he had seen his husband's naked body before, this was the first time Bilbo had ever seen Thorin completely undressed. “Shall I turn in a circle for you?” Thorin offered.

“Yes, please,” was the fervent reply, and it made Thorin huff out a laugh as he turned slowly with his hands palm up. He heard Bilbo gasp and Thorin looked over his shoulder to see his husband staring at his rear.

“It really isn’t that hairy, is it?” Bilbo quipped.

In a sudden move, Thorin whirled around, let out a menacing growl, and then lunged forward to hold his husband's face in his hands. Bilbo laughed and took a few steps backward before

standing still for Thorin to nibble on his lip. “That may be so, but is it to your liking?”

Bilbo's eyes were once again clouded with desire, and he nodded his agreement. “Very much.” He swallowed hard and shyly looked down between them. “You are… much larger than I am.”

With a low hum, Thorin pressed his lips to Bilbo's neck and then moved to his shoulder. His knuckles grazed Bilbo's arms as he trailed them down before finally settling on his waist. “You are beautiful,” Thorin murmured into soft flesh. Slowly and deliberately, he trailed his fingers down Bilbo's body, finally reaching his pants and untying them until they fell to the floor without a sound. “Bilbo,” he whispered and pulled back, catching his husband by his chin with his thumb and forefinger.

With a soft smile, Bilbo took Thorin’s hand and walked backward until they both stepped into the warm water together. They stood in the center, the water lapping at Bilbo’s chest. “Can I touch you?” Bilbo asked, raising his hand but waiting for Thorin’s permission.

It filled Thorin’s heart with warmth, and he nodded. “Explore to your heart’s content.”

A beaming smile graced his One’s lips. Bilbo raised both hands and placed them on Thorin’s chest. He traced Thorin’s scars with a frown, raked nails through his chest hair, squeezed his muscles, and when he was done with that area, he placed a kiss over Thorin’s heart.

“You can touch anywhere you please,” Thorin encouraged into Bilbo’s damp curls.

Without acknowledging Thorin’s words, Bilbo trailed kisses over his chest until he reached a nipple and tentatively nuzzled it as if asking for permission. He sighed, feeling Bilbo’s breath linger for a moment more before his husband took Thorin’s nipple into his mouth.

Thorin hissed, which made Bilbo reel back with an apology, but Thorin ignored it and pulled Bilbo back in. “Go on. It felt good.”

With a lick of his lips and a nod, Bilbo continued where he’d left off–licking, kissing one nipple before moving on to the other one. All the while, Thorin raised his eyes to the ceiling and concentrated on not bursting before it was time. Small hands continued to explore, lips continued to map out his hands, his arms, his back, until Bilbo’s hands grabbed one cheek each and squeezed.

Thorin groaned, using every ounce of willpower not to turn around and ravage his hobbit. Then those seeking hands moved over his hips from behind and very slowly inched their way to Thorin’s cock. He turned swiftly before Bilbo could reach his target and arrested his hands, kissing each palm hard before picking Bilbo up and settling himself on the steps with Bilbo’s legs wrapped around his waist, their erections bumping together underwater, making them both moan.

Lust-addled and aching, he reached for their lengths and wrapped a large hand around them both. They both cried out, sparks flying behind Thorin’s eyelids, his whole body feeling taut as a bowstring. His hand moved before giving it permission and Bilbo’s face went from pleasant shock to intermittent wails of “Thorin!” And “More!” And “Please!” Until Bilbo lost

his words altogether and tensed in Thorin's arms, bucking his hips uncontrollably, mouth falling open, and eyes rolling up under his eyelids. Thorin grunted as he came right after Bilbo, watching his stunning husband fall apart in his arms.

As they descended from their peaks, Bilbo and Thorin shared a deep, slow kiss, with Bilbo moaning softly and sighing in bliss. "You didn't put your mouth on me," Bilbo muttered, still dazed.

Thorin snickered. "Patience, my love." He bit Bilbo's neck and sucked a mark there before reaching for the soap. "You wanted to be clean."

"Ah, yes," Bilbo smiled.

They gave each other a slow and thorough scrubbing, often getting delightfully distracted with tender kisses and passionate caresses in between, but everything remained chastely passionate despite the surging arousal as time went by. Every touch became a promise of more to come.

Once they had finished washing up and were clean and dry, Thorin had scooped Bilbo into his arms, as loved to do, and carried him back to his bedroom and placed him on his large four-poster bed. Bilbo looked beautiful there, flushed and happy.

"Do you know what happens next?" Thorin asked carefully as he knelt on the bed, looming over his One.

"I have some idea," Bilbo admitted, and Thorin could tell he was trying to seem brave.

"What do you know?"

"You said that, um, you could take my, my penis, ahem, into your, erm, mouth?"

"And you are certain that is something you want?"

"Yes." Bilbo's voice had a breathless quality to it, his eyes shining.

"Then come closer to me," Thorin invited, and his One scrambled toward him.

He settled between Thorin's legs and was looking at his length, already showing interest.

"What do I do now?" Bilbo asked quietly, eyes wide.

"Take it in your hands and stroke it," Thorin suggested, his voice strained and husky.

"O-okay," Bilbo stammered, and wrapped his hand around his hardening cock with a hitch in his breath and a blush spreading down his chest. He looked so shy. Thorin couldn't resist and pulled his husband into a gentle kiss.

"We don't have to do anything else, Bilbo," he murmured against his husband's lips. "You are safe here with me."

“I-I want to, though. You said the, uh, the bond fever won’t go away until we...”

“Until we make love, yes.”

“Then make love to me, Thorin,” Bilbo whispered, and the raw vulnerability and trust in his voice was nearly Thorin’s undoing.

“We’ve been making love already, technically. It’s until we are satisfied with our union... I think.”

Bilbo chuckled, a beautiful and bright sound. “So we will be at this for some time, because I’m nowhere near satisfied.”

Thorin snorted. “It seems neither am I.” He looked down at his own erection and then gave Bilbo a wry smile. “There are different ways, as I mentioned.” Thorin explained, “and we can try them all until we are satisfied and the bond is fulfilled.”

“Yes,” said Bilbo breathlessly, “I want to try it all with you.”

“Then we can try to pace ourselves until our wedding night. Though I am uncertain whether I can control myself in the throes of it.” It was a genuine concern now since the fever was still present, urging him to become One with his husband in every way. Still, if Bilbo wished for more, he would give Bilbo more.

Thorin watched as Bilbo continued his slow stroking, experimental movements. He saw Bilbo’s tip glisten, releasing his slick, and Bilbo moaned softly, eyes struggling to stay open while staring into Thorin’s.

“Am I doing well?” Bilbo rasped out with a whimper.

“So well. Perfect. You are a feast to behold,” Thorin replied truthfully.

Bilbo smiled briefly. “I like it better when you touch me.”

“Then I will touch you.”

“Will you... put it in your mouth now?” Bilbo stroked faster, using the impressive amount of slick to ease his strokes and moaning louder for it.”

“If you like,” Thorin replied, his voice shaking. He was very much looking forward to that.

Bilbo shuffled closer. “What do I do now?”

Thorin smiled gently and placed his hand over Bilbo’s, stopping his movements. “Just relax.”

His husband nodded and placed his hands by his sides, fisting the covers beneath his naked body. Thorin guided his husband’s cock to his lips, giving it a kiss and waiting until Bilbo stopped hissing before the tip slid over Thorin’s tongue and hit the roof of his mouth. Thorin fought back a wave of lust as Bilbo howled out his pleasure. He hollowed out his cheeks, and the sensation made Bilbo jerk forward. His husband’s eyes went wide, but he kept sucking

and soon, his lips stretched over Bilbo's smaller cock. Bilbo clenched his teeth, trying his hardest not to thrust forward. But Thorin encouraged him to move.

Bilbo cried out as he pushed himself deeper into Thorin's mouth. Thorin's hand came up, his fingers pressing and caressing Bilbo's tight sac. His husband jerked forward again, and his hands flew to Thorin's head.

"Oh, gods, Thorin," Bilbo shouted.

Thorin groaned as his husband tugged on his hair and moved his mouth, sucking him in and out, tasting the salty sweetness of his skin.

"Thorin! I'm gonna–"

Thorin knew, and he wanted Bilbo to come down his throat–thirsting for it. He doubled his efforts, rolling his husband's balls gently in his hand. He pulled his mouth back a little, swirling his tongue along the slit. Bilbo shouted again, and he came, pouring himself into Thorin's waiting mouth.

He swallowed it all, savoring his husband's taste, his scent, and the feel of him as he came down from his orgasm. Finally, he released Bilbo as he softened.

Bilbo was near wheezing, breathing harder than he usually did when training.

"How was that?" Thorin asked, smiling softly. It was good he at least had a mind to check in on his One, though he felt no distress from their bond.

Bilbo's smile was lazy and euphoric. "I can't feel my legs," he panted.

"Good, then?" Thorin said with a chuckle.

"Good." Bilbo agreed with a vigorous nod. "Can I return the favor?"

Thorin hummed. "This was no favor." He crawled over his husband and growled. "It was purely selfish of me. And I would love nothing more than for you to put your mouth on me, but you don't have to. You could use your hands. Or," he grinned wickedly, "I can just stroke myself right now and spill myself on this lovely body beneath me. I'm embarrassed to admit I will not last long either way."

"Oh?" Bilbo raised a questioning eyebrow, his chest still heaving.

"Mhm," Thorin replied and kissed him, sharing his own flavor with him. "Whatever you want, amralime."

So Bilbo smirked and wasted no time in gripping onto Thorin's cock and giving it an experimental pull that made Thorin choke on his next words–whatever they were.

"Like this?" Bilbo asked, a look of awe on his face as he watched his handiwork.

Thorin groaned and thrust. "Lick your hand. Perfect. Just like that. Faster. Squeeze harder."

“Like this?”

“Mahal, yes.”

“I can try using my mouth too–”

“Bilbo, don’t stop. I’m close. Mahal, I’m so close.”

Bilbo stroked faster, his saliva easing his way. He kissed Thorin and moaned into his mouth just as Thorin shouted out his release.

He collapsed beside Bilbo and took deep, steadying breaths. “You are a miracle, my husband.”

“As are you, darling.” Bilbo replied sleepily as he turned into Thorin’s side, placing an arm around his waist. “And did we... is the fever gone for you?”

“Hmm, I can still feel it, but it is a pleasant tingle now.”

Relief and excitement passed through their bond from Bilbo, making Thorin smile widely. “Me too. And I would like to use my mouth next time.”

“You may have me as many times as you wish and in any way that you wish, beloved.”

“I may wear you out, my king.”

Thorin kissed his husband’s forehead before adjusting the blankets to cover them up for a brief rest before they had to get ready for their return feast in the dining hall.

“You can certainly try, my insatiable hobbit.”

Chapter End Notes

I think this fic is almost done...! I... Think....
And, yes, I will have Thorin faint soon. XD

# Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Rating change from M to E.

Chapter Notes

***Rating change from M to E***

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The wedding preparations were a whirlwind of activity, from choosing the perfect wedding garments to deciding on the location within the Blue Mountains. As the days flew by, Thorin felt a mixture of anxiety and anticipation building within him. He had waited so long for this moment, and now it was almost here. The thought of seeing Bilbo in his wedding attire, the prospect of vowing to spend the rest of his life with his beloved One, filled him with a profound sense of joy.

They could hardly stand to be apart. And as they yearned for the day they could officially seal their union, the world around them seemed to blur, leaving only the two of them in focus. Time seemed to warp and weave around Thorin and Bilbo as their bond deepened. Each passing day brought them closer together, their hearts and souls entwined in a way they had never imagined possible. The bond fever, a relentless desire that coursed through their veins, made it increasingly difficult to keep their hands off each other.

Thoughts of Bilbo filled Thorin's days, making it difficult for him to concentrate on anything else. His hobbit was always at the forefront of his mind. His yearning for Bilbo's company pained him, and his body overcome with an overwhelming desire.

Dis clapped her hands before his face several times. "Have I been talking to myself this whole time again, brother?"

Thorin startled, his brow furrowing. He blinked, taking a moment to register his surroundings. The room was familiar, his study, yet he'd been lost in thought, unaware of his sister's presence. "Don't sneak up on me," he muttered.

His sister's mouth dropped open before she scoffed. "I've been talking to a statue, it seems. You've been sitting there, staring at that bead for ages, and you haven't heard a word I've said."

Thorin's gaze shifted to the small bead in his hand. It was a finely crafted marriage bead he had made for Bilbo out of mithril. During the recitation of their wedding vows, he intended to weave it intricately into Bilbo's hair as a symbol of their union. And then Bilbo would do the same.

"Did. You. Hear. Me?"

"I heard what you said," he lied, his voice distant, "something about the wedding."

Dis did not look impressed with his guess. "Have you looked at the seating arrangements?"

Thorin rolled the bead in his fingers, the shine of it suddenly captivating him. "I don't care where people sit, Dis."

"Did you finish the list I asked you to complete before I take over?"

Thorin gave her a long sideways glance before his eyes drifted back to the bead, his focus drifting like a ship without a captain. "It will be done."

"You said that two weeks ago! You can't have been playing cards with him this whole time!" She threw up her hands and huffed. "Why haven't you bedded him properly?"

A scowl formed on his face when he finally glared at his sister, the intensity in his eyes rekindling. He then cast his gaze back to the bead. It represented their intertwined lives and his own hand expertly crafted the promise of their future together. He could picture it in Bilbo's lovely soft curls. It would probably rest just below his ear until his hair grew longer. Bilbo was determined to grow it.

"Off to the clouds again," Dis said, shaking her head and rolling her eyes. Then she took a long, suffering breath and placed a hand on her brother's shoulder. "I think you're afraid."

Thorin snorted, his gaze locked onto the bead. "Of what?"

"That you will lose him."

Thorin snapped his head up, his eyes narrowing as he focused on Dis' face. They held compassion and understanding, a mirror to the pain and fear he'd been harboring deep within. He looked away in shame, feeling exposed. He was a warrior, a leader, but he couldn't escape the dread that clung to him.

"I'm terrified," he admitted in a whisper, his voice heavy and raw. "I want to satisfy the bond, but I'm afraid… once I do…"

"What?" She asked with a wry smile. "His desire for you will diminish? Come to his senses once he's older and resent you for trapping him so young? That he will one day be… gone?"

Her One. Her husband. Dead along with their brother, mother, most likely their father, too. But her One. The thought brought a searing, physical pain to Thorin's core.

“I am so sorry, Dis,” Thorin suddenly wept, his voice choked with sorrow and guilt. He grabbed onto her hand, his grip desperate, seeking solace from his sister in the turbulent sea of emotions that threatened to drown him. “We’ve lost so many, but this fear of losing him, it’s unbearable. And you… how have you endured such pain?” he pleaded. He needed the secret knowledge to find his courage once more. Maybe gaining such intelligence would stave off the despair once Bilbo… once he… “I fear I will outlive my One…”

“Oh, nedith,” she cooed as tears fell silently, her hand comforting him. “He is alive and well and is your One. He won’t leave, resent, or desire anyone or anything else. That’s the nature of the bond. “And I endure because I must. I have two boys who need me. Just like they need you.”

Thorin smiled wistfully and wiped away his tears with his sleeve. “You’re right. Of course.” He groaned, trying to regain his self-control. A change in subject was his tactic.

“I think Bilbo wants children,” Thorin sighed dejectedly, his heart heavy with a sense of inadequacy. Not the best segue. “I cannot give him that.”

“Why not? You’ve raised children before,” she bumped him playfully, trying to lighten the heavy atmosphere. “You would be a wonderful father. There are many young ones who would be fortunate to have you both as parents.”

“No dwarf children,” Thorin retorted, “certainly no hobbit children, either. They have many, but love them just as fiercely as we do our own. A child of men would be… odd.” He didn’t bother mentioning elf children.

“You never know, Thorin. Sadly, regardless of how much they are loved, babes become orphans..

That wasn’t even the key problem. Thorin still had to break the news to Bilbo that they were physiologically incapable of having… What did he call them? Dwobbits. But Thorin was not about to bring that up to his sister. He didn’t want to embarrass his husband. It wasn’t Bilbo’s fault that hobbits were so prudish, thus leaving Bilbo in ignorance of such things.

The door flew open, revealing the object of their discussion. Bilbo raced into the room and took Thorin’s face into his hands, brow furrowed with concern and eyes searching for injury. “What’s happened, darling? I felt such pain, and now I find you weeping?!”

As the heat from Bilbo’s touch seeped into his skin, Thorin immediately calmed and sighed dreamily. His head went fuzzy, his eyes glassy, and he was hard as stone in his trousers.

Dis chuckled, her voice filled with warmth, and gave Thorin’s shoulder a vigorous shake. “He’ll be fine now that you’re here, Bilbo.” She gave them both a kiss on the cheek and left them to each other.

Thorin looked upon his husband with fierce fondness. “Hello, beloved.”

Bilbo’s lips twitched into a brief, dopey smile before growing serious again. “What’s wrong?”

Thorin took his hands and kissed his knuckles. “I missed you.”

A soft chuckle escaped his husband and Thorin felt a kiss placed on his head before he let Bilbo’s hands go, only to grab him by the waist to make sure he didn’t take a single step away from him.

The bond fever also affected Bilbo, making his hands quiver in Thorin’s equally shaky grip. “I’d call you a silly dwarf, but I’ve been jumping at the chance to end my lessons early and come back to you.”

The once-proper hobbit had gone from merely attached to shamelessly affectionate, barely able to keep his hands off Thorin. Even now, Bilbo caressed and petted him all over, as if not knowing where to keep his hands.

“I’ve been a miserable student, poor Balin,” Bilbo babbled. “I’ve been feeling very odd. Even more than usual. The things that go through my mind, Thorin,” he chuckled breathlessly with a flush, “would make a dwarf blush!” He fisted Thorin’s shirt and tried to give him a shake, which Thorin went with just because. “I’m not sure I can take much more of this, but…” Bilbo stole a kiss, his touches and caresses growing bolder with each passing moment. He leaned close to Thorin’s ear and whispered devilishly, “I like this burning need. Knowing there is more we can do with one another and still not get enough.” The fever had turned Bilbo into a bold and wanton creature.

Thorin trembled, breath coming out in shaky puffs. “It is… addicting,” he concurred.

They exchanged heated breaths until Thorin’s body flushed with unabatable heat. He surged to his feet, kissing his husband with reckless abandon. With a swift, passionate motion, he pushed Bilbo up onto his desk, clearing an armful of likely very important documents to make room for their fervent embrace.

“So you wish to wait as well,” Thorin finally rumbled between kissing and fumbling with Bilbo’s shirt and trousers. “I know what will satisfy our bond, but I have been holding back. I’m sorry I’ve made you suffer–”

Bilbo shook his head and caressed Thorin’s cheek. “No, you haven’t, not really. We’ve been enjoying ourselves. At least I have.”

“I have as well,” Thorin quickly reassured.

“Then don’t worry,” Bilbo said softly with a warm smile, “we will satisfy the bond together when we are both ready. Plus, it’s quite romantic to save something so important after literally celebrating our union.” He beamed happily. “Just a few more days.”

Thorin nodded eagerly. “A few more days.”

It was those words that played in his mind on a loop when Bilbo insisted Thorin sit back down in his chair. He did as ordered and watched in awe as his husband kneeled before him, splaying his knees apart. He let Bilbo undo his trousers and pulled out his girth, quick to swallow him down.

The sight of Bilbo between his legs was stunning. He was beautiful, his eyes shining bright with mischief and passion, his cheeks flushed, and his mouth stretched thin around Thorin's head while his hand stroked the rest. He bobbed his head in a steady rhythm, taking more of Thorin's length each time. Thorin groaned, his body trembling, his muscles tightening. He had seen many wondrous things in his lifetime, had experienced a great deal of pleasure, but nothing compared to the sight before him.

Thorin threw his head back when Bilbo licked up his slit. "Mahal," he hissed.

Bilbo hummed around him, and Thorin nearly came right then and there. He grabbed onto Bilbo's curls and pulled him closer, the tip of his cock hitting the back of Bilbo's throat for only a moment before he reeled his self control back in.

Bilbo kept sucking, his pace quickening.

"Bilbo," Thorin groaned. "Bilbo, I'm close."

His husband's answer was a muffled moan and a firm squeeze to his stones. Thorin's hips jerked forward, his release rushing out in powerful spurts that had him seeing stars. Bilbo swallowed every drop, the sight alone sending a fresh wave of desire through him.

Once they'd caught their breaths and cleaned themselves, Bilbo straddled Thorin's lap, warms weaving around Thorin's neck.

"Was it good?" Bilbo asked, his voice raspy from his ministrations.

"You are a wonder, my husband."

"So are you." Bilbo nuzzled his nose and kissed his lips.

"May I take care of you as well?" Thorin asked, though he hadn't caught his breath yet.

"Ah, well," Bilbo coughed and looked down at his open trousers. "Took care of itself, really."

Thorin followed his gaze and saw the stain on Bilbo's small clothes. "I see," Thorin said with a satisfied smile. He chuckled and hugged Bilbo to his chest, breathing him in. The scent of him, the feel of him, the taste of him, everything about him, was intoxicating.

"Are you hard again?" Bilbo asked as he shimmied in Thorin's lap.

Thorin hissed, still sensitive, but his husband was correct. He was hard as a rock again so soon. He groaned and rested his head against Bilbo's. "Just a few more days."

Bilbo whined in sympathy. "A few more days."

Thorin could hardly believe that the moment he had longed for had finally arrived. He was going to marry Bilbo properly, his One, and it felt like a dream.

Everything was in place. Dis, with her impeccable organizational skills, had ensured that every detail was attended to. The wedding venue, a grand hall within the Blue Mountains adorned with intricate dwarven winter decorations, looked resplendent.

As Thorin donned his wedding attire, traditional royal Durin Blue wedding clothes with intricate silver runes adorning the trimming, he felt a rush of anticipation. He meticulously styled his braids and adorned them with jewels, symbolizing his royal heritage. He looked every bit the crown prince he was.

The ceremony was a whirlwind of colors and faces. Thorin's memory was a mosaic of sounds, filled with the sweet melodies played by skilled dwarven musicians as Bilbo made his way down the aisle. And when he saw his hobbit in his wedding garments, his heart skipped a beat and all the air left his lungs. Bilbo was a vision of elegance, his hazel eyes shimmering with emotions, and Thorin found it nearly impossible to tear his gaze away from him.

Amidst the sea of attendees, Dwalin was the steady anchor who caught Thorin when he swayed. "Woah there," he hissed in Thorin's ear. "Ye gonna swoon, right in the middle o' yer own wedding?"

Thorin shook his head vigorously to dispel the sudden dizziness. "Don't be ridiculous. I've never swooned in my life."

His best friend released him with a quiet scoff and stepped back. Thorin's attention remained steadfast on his One, his heart pounding, and his body trembling from head to foot. Every breath felt shallow, as if he were running a race for his very life.

Finally, Bilbo stood before him, eyes wide and an endearing, nervous smile playing on his lips. "Hi," he sighed.

Thorin could hardly breathe. "Hi," he replied, his voice thick.

As they continued with the ceremony, they followed the cues they had rehearsed tirelessly. Despite the bond fever that had been driving them to near madness, they navigated the proceedings with enough grace.

When they sealed their vows through the weaving of braids, matching beads, and a kiss, the cheers and applause from their friends and family were deafening. Dwalin and Dis actually had to separate them discreetly when their kiss passed the point of decorum–to the amusement of all.

Oh, but it was difficult. They'd been separated since early morning! And Thorin could only be grateful for all the layers of dwarfish clothes that hid his constant problem in his pants. It seemed Bilbo found himself in a similar state, Thorin could tell by the way he walked down the aisle.

The aisle, Thorin thought with a stupidly in love grin. It was official—Thorin and Bilbo were now married, bound by both dwarf and hobbit laws. As they stood hand in hand, looking out at the smiling faces of those who had gathered to celebrate their love, Thorin felt a profound sense of contentment. He was no longer alone in this world, no longer burdened by the weight of duty without love. He had Bilbo, his One, by his side, and that was all that truly mattered. And everyone was glad for them.

The ceremony ended, and the aroma of roasting meat and freshly baked bread filled the air, signaling the start of the feast. Thorin couldn't deny his own eagerness to retire early with Bilbo, to finally bury himself deep in his hobbit or the other way around–why not both? But the feast was a tradition they couldn't skip, and Bilbo deserved to enjoy every moment of their celebration.

As they made their way to the feast together, Bilbo appeared shy at first, perhaps overwhelmed by the attention and congratulations. But as he indulged in a drink or four and the merriment began, his spirits lifted, and he became more lively. Thorin smiled at the sight of his husband, his laughter and joy infectious.

Then, amid the laughter and camaraderie, Kili began a tale. He slurred about a time when he and Bilbo got thrown into a cell in Bree for being rowdy after drinking too much.

Thorin felt Bilbo's panic through the bond before his husband's face drained of color, and he whipped his head to Thorin with wide, fearful eyes. Then he suddenly grabbed a bread roll from the table and threw it, hitting Kili square in the eye with his remarkable accuracy, despite being quite drunk.

"Ow!" cried Kili as everyone laughed at him.

Bilbo fumed as he stood and pointed an angry finger at his new nephew. "You ssswore to me you wouldn' tell 'nyone! Betrayer! Look a' wha' ya made me do! I threw f-food! Food!"

Thorin wrapped his arms around Bilbo's middle, gently pulling him onto his lap. He chuckled, his warm breath brushing against Bilbo's curls. "My love, a drunken night in Bree should not warrant such embarrassment."

Bilbo's voice carried a hint of a whine as he replied, "I didn' wan' ya ta know." He crossed his arms with a scowl. "B-better not… reach my mother's… ears, Kili, or I swear I'll dye your hair pink whilssssst you sleep!"

Thorin laughed heartily, the sound echoing through the joyous, raucous atmosphere of the feast. He felt compelled to send a cryptic threat to Kíli, reminding him not to involve his One in such compromising situations again. His nephew blanched and hid behind his brother.

Absentmindedly, Thorin deposited Bilbo on his lap, his husband's pert little ass landed right on his groin. The wave of lust that surged through him took Thorin's breath away. He buried his face into his husband's neck and growled. Bilbo let out a soft whimper and shifted in Thorin's lap, very on purpose.

It was blinding pleasure. Thorin turned his hobbit around to face him and planted a deep, and lewd kiss on Bilbo's lips right in front of everyone. Bilbo nearly melted before hurriedly grabbing onto his face and moaning wantonly.

Things quickly got out of hand after that, but neither of them cared.

Someone ripped Bilbo out of Thorin's embrace abruptly and forcefully. He scowled and searched for his husband, only to find he was being dragged away by Balin and Bofur while Dwalin and Dori held Thorin down in his seat.

"No!" Bilbo cried out and reached for him, grasping at empty air with wide, fearful eyes. "I need him!"

His One sounded so pained, and the bond sent such a wave of desperation through him that Thorin's battle instincts kicked in, violently. He snarled and head butted his best friend, but Dori proved more difficult to dislodge himself from.

"Let me go!" Thorin roared.

"Now, now, your majesty," Dori tried to reason with him, "he's alright. It's just the fever. Best to do all that in private, eh?"

"Yeah," slurred Kili, "no one wanna see that!"

"Speak fer yerself!" Bofur cried out with a wicked smirk.

Shaking his head did not dispel Thorin's fit of madness, nor did his One's next wailed plea for him. "Thorin!"

The fear and pain throbbing in the bond was also not helpful. Not at all. Bilbo was not in his right mind, and neither was Thorin. But Thorin was more practiced in restraint than his poor husband–years of self denial and putting his duty first gave him the ironclad will to–

"Thorin! Please! Don't leave me!"

*Nope. No. Absolutely not.* Thorin's mind went blank, his body driven by pure and primal impulse. He raged and snapped his teeth at Dori. The unsuspecting dwarf yelped and escaped the bite just in time, which gave Thorin his chance to bolt for his screaming husband. He dodged, he punched, he head-butted, and pushed until he could finally see his One was within reach.

Thorin smiled in victory.

Then his sister's head crashed into his skull so hard that Thorin stumbled back. She snatched him by the ear before he could fall. "Obviously, it's time the newlyweds retire for the evening," she laughed forcefully for the audience, who stood stunned at the spectacle.

The spectators finally chuckled when they saw nothing was truly amiss and dispersed. Dis cursed under her breath and pulled Thorin along like he was an errant child. He growled, but allowed himself to be led out of the feast.

“Let me go,” Thorin muttered through clenched teeth. “Bilbo is in pain.”

“Aye, and whose fault is that?” Dis released him and pushed him toward his chambers. “They took Bilbo to your rooms. Now complete the bond or I swear I’ll have you both locked in there until the deed is done!”

Thorin didn’t need telling twice.

Chapter End Notes

I've written some filth in my day.... but the next chapter... goes beyond the pale. It's going to take... time. So, sorry!

# Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

***EXCPLICIT***

Chapter Notes

This is just straight smut and leaning sort of towards a/b/o as the trope of the chapter.
***VERY EXPLICIT***

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Thorin burst through the door, Balin was taking care of Bilbo with soothing words and tea.

“Out.”

Despite Balin's scoffing and muttering as he slammed the door, Thorin didn't react. His gaze remained fixed on his One.

The cup of tea was knocked over on the tray in Bilbo’s haste. He leaped into Thorin's embrace, wrapping his arms and legs around him, trembling. Though the feeling of his husband back in his arms was instantly calming, it wasn't enough to extinguish the passion that had finally erupted. “I’m sorry! I don’t know why I acted like that–”

“Shh. The fever has gone unchecked for too long.”

“It felt like my soul was tearing apart!”

*Yes,* thought Thorin with a grunt. That was exactly what it had felt like. “Enough.” He marched them to their bed and deposited his husband on it. “We’re satisfying the bond. Now.”

He took off Bilbo's upper garments, tearing the fabric which would later upset his husband, and unfastened the laces on Bilbo's pants. Thorin yanked them down along with his underpants. The smell of arousal wafted out, causing his already hard cock to thicken further and his vision to spot. When Thorin finally spread Bilbo's cheeks, what he saw gave him pause.

“Thorin!” Bilbo squealed, embarrassment coloring the back of his neck and the tips of his ears. “What are you doing?!”

Many things had been done on that bed, but Thorin had never looked directly at Bilbo's most intimate area. Instead of a circular shape with tight ridges, he was met with an oval shape that had pink and puffy flesh, which oozed a sweet-smelling liquid.

“Bilbo,” Thorin murmured, riveted by what he saw, “is this a Hobbit peculiarity?”

“What?” Bilbo looked over his shoulder, eyes wild with lust and face red as a beet. “What are you on about?!”

“Is this a normal shape?”

Bilbo blinked twice and spluttered. “Excuse me?! How many... *hobbit holes* do you think I’ve seen, Thorin? Is yours so different? Is something wrong with me?!”

“No, no, of course not, beloved,” Thorin soothed and stroked a plump cheek reassuringly but also not entirely certain he was telling the truth. How would he know?! He’d only seen one... *hobbit hole* himself! “Must be a difference between our races. Certainly. That must be it.” He cleared his throat and tried to think. The scent... Mahal, the sight! “Um, yes, different. A little. Mine certainly doesn’t, um, lubricate itself.”

“Lucky you,” Bilbo snapped, eyes fierce. “Now will you fuck me already?!”

Thorin’s restraint snapped. He tore at his clothes but gave up halfway through to bury his face into his hobbit’s slick heat, mouth full and nose, inhaling a stronger aroma of arousal than the previous days combined. The taste exploded on his tongue, potent, tasting of sweet butter, and it shot through his blood like molten gold. He didn’t think or pause when Bilbo writhed and clutched onto the sheets, screaming.

The loose rim fluttered against his tongue and he pushed it against the center, sinking it inside.

Bilbo’s answering wail made Thorin moan into his heat. He plunged deeper, encouraged by Bilbo’s cries and thrusts, licking into his silky warmth, his mind fogged with lust. The scent filled him with each labored breath, thick and viscous, and the taste was all that mattered to Thorin’s burning need.

But Bilbo had other plans. When he tried to roll over and shove a trembling hand between his legs, Thorin growled and held his hand down, pinning him with ease. Bilbo fought for a moment, kicking, squirming and howling obscenities Thorin wasn’t even aware he knew.

Thorin’s trousers were incredibly tight, and he clawed at them and shoved them down to his knees. His cock hung heavy between his legs, throbbing with need and leaking. Thorin grabbed the base with one hand and stroked, grunting into Bilbo’s sex. His tongue slid and swirled inside his husband and lapped at the escaping fluid, each flutter and clench spurring him on. Thorin drove his tongue faster, fucking his hobbit and laving Bilbo’s weeping hole with unmitigated desire.

Bilbo bucked and yelled, pushing against his tongue with jerks and shivers, each muscle quivering under Thorin’s pinning hold. Thorin rutted against the bed and sucked on his hole,

eating Bilbo's rim, flicking his tongue around the now looser opening, teasing the soft pucker. His lips sucked and his tongue lapped, curling up into that tightness, rubbing his husband's channel with quick flicks. Thorin savored the sensation of the hot walls squeezing around his tongue, and he licked them from top to bottom with a throaty purr of delight. He couldn't get enough, and soon began thrusting his tongue back and forth, pushing his husband open with the tip and taking him, tasting him, filling Bilbo over and over.

Suddenly, Bilbo thrashed wildly and spilled beneath Thorin's touch. His channel pulsed and sucked on Thorin's tongue as though seeking his seed, so he thrust against the bed, humping it desperately, until his cock shot his hot spend across the mattress.

Thorin eased his tired tongue out and felt the rim tense and twitch against the action. Thorin felt proud, immensely so.

Panting and wheezing, Bilbo laid limp, head to one side, knees under him and splayed, back bowed and ass up that was still gushing sweet slick.

He was instantly hard again. "Bilbo," it came out in a huff of breath. Thorin tried again, struggling to get off his knees. "Bilbo," it came out hoarse but still understandable, "I'm going to put my fingers inside you," he said as he gently placed his thumb next to Bilbo's clenching, leaking hole.

Twitching under his touch, Bilbo merely whimpered. He tried looking at Thorin, but gave up. "M'kay."

Now with permission, Thorin dragged the pad of his thumb to the reddened, winking flesh.Bilbo jerked at the contact, crying out.

Thorin soothed him and pressed again, slowly, the tip of his thumb slipping past the puffy edges and sank into the hot passage. His fingers appeared thicker than the opening, but it slid right in with little effort. Bilbo gasped and shivered.

Thorin swallowed. His cock twitched eagerly.

Thorin moved his thumb up and down, in and out, the wet channel clinging to him and sucking him back in. As Bilbo moaned, Thorin removed it and stroked his backside lovingly. "Did you prepare yourself for me already?"

Bilbo groaned with need and frustration, wiggling his rear most seductively. "I don't know..." he took a moment to breathe, "what you mean? But... please... do it again?"

The loose grip of Thorin's self-control slipped once more. Without warning, Thorin thrust two fingers into his hobbit.

Bilbo shrieked and tried to jerk away, but Thorin's hold on his hips kept him in place. His husband moaned and rocked his hips. "I... can't help it," he panted and pushed against Thorin's hand. "It feels... amazing."

Thorin grinned, delighted, and pumped his fingers in and out, relishing in the hot, slippery clutch of his husband's hole. Thoughts of how or why Bilbo was so prepared for him flew from his mind. It didn't matter.

His One was ready for him.

"Turn over," Thorin prompted gently. He helped Bilbo roll onto his back and helped get him comfortable with his head on a soft pillow. He crawled over his husband and spread his legs, then leaned back on his knees so Bilbo could see what he was planning. Bilbo stared into his eyes before they dropped to watch Thorin as he wrapped his large hand around his own cock. He paused and waited for Bilbo's reaction.

Bilbo finally seemed to connect the dots as his eyes widened and shifted from Thorin's pointed gaze to his girth. "Oh," he breathed, nostrils flaring just as it twitched. "You mean to," he gasped, "put your... in my... oh. Oh, good gracious, yes! YES! Please, Thorin!" His voice was a reedy, high-pitched whine that filled Thorin's veins with something hot and urgent.

Thorin smirked. "So impatient."

"Please, I need it!" Bilbo whined. "It aches, Thorin! Please!"

Thorin shushed him, and moved his cock to slide it between his legs, letting the tip nudge at Bilbo's wet, loose opening.

"Oh!"

"Are you certain?"

"YES!" Bilbo screamed.

"Alright, alright," Thorin murmured soothingly. He gripped the base of his cock, rubbing the bulbous head over the opening, and pressed forward. He was slow, gentle, careful, but the tip slid right in. The sight alone threatened to undo him.

Bilbo's eyes bulged, and his mouth hung open, gasping.

Thorin froze. "Did I hurt you?"

Bilbo shook his head, but he was panting.

"Should I stop?"

Bilbo scowled. "Don't. You. Dare."

Thorin nodded.

Bilbo took several deep breaths, relaxing as he did. "Ok, you can keep going."

Thorin didn't want to rush or hurt his husband, so he pressed forward in small, incremental thrusts. He watched as the head slipped past the first ring of muscle and pushed deeper.

"Mahal," the heat enveloping him was sublime torture. And then suddenly, he'd slid all the way in with a loud groan. A hobbit hole really wasn't *'a nasty, dirty, hole,'* but quite comfortable indeed.

Bilbo's back arched and his hands reached for the sheets, twisting them tightly as he moaned beneath him.

Thorin panted, trying not to come at the feel of being surrounded by such tight, velvety heat. "Are you alright?"

Bilbo whimpered but nodded, eyes half-lidded, pupils swallowing his irises. "Yes, yes, just... move. Please move"

The pressure around him was immense, almost painfully so, and the urge to move was overwhelming. He pulled out slowly, almost entirely, before sliding back in. They both groaned and moaned, eyes fixed on where they were joined. Thorin's eyes were drawn to Bilbo's flat, quivering belly and wondered if he could see himself moving inside the smaller man.

But all thoughts fell from his mind completely. All he could now was feel.

Bilbo clenched around him, urging him on, and the pace increased with a few more thrusts, both of them groaning, moaning and gasping, writhing and gripping the sheets.

Then Bilbo was clutching at his back and shoulders, and his legs wrapped around Thorin's waist.

"Please, more, please, please," he babbled and Thorin obliged, snapping his hips back and forth, fucking his husband, pounding his cock into Bilbo's tight channel, each thrust dragging along a wall of silken, wet heat.

The sounds their bodies made were positively filthy, and it spurred Thorin on.

Thorin felt a building and pulsing wave of pleasure, and when it was finally too much, his hips stuttered. He shoved himself as far inside his hobbit as he could and let the pressure release.

Bilbo threw his head back and came untouched, screaming Thorin's name.

Each spurt of Thorin's release caused him to groan and thrust his hips, filling his husband with it. The pleasure was so intense. His eyes rolled back, and his body shuddered as he filled Bilbo's eager hole.

In that sacred moment, which felt like the joining of a thousand eternities, Thorin sensed their souls interweaving, connecting at long last. All the walls Bilbo had ever raised came crashing down, mirroring Thorin's own surrender just moments before.

Their souls melded. A blinding white light filled Thorin’s vision, and it brought forth a torrent of memories, cascading like a waterfall, pouring from him into Bilbo’s awaiting consciousness. Bilbo’s life unfolded before his eyes in a breathtaking display of colors, emotions, and experiences.

A fleeting moment of fear cut through Bilbo's euphoria, coming from his end of their bond. It was a whisper that got lost in the symphony of emotions they were feeling. Joy, love, longing, and fulfillment surged through their connection, drowning out any lingering doubts.

As their souls fused, Thorin felt himself stitching, seamlessly, into the very fabric of Bilbo’s existence, and Bilbo into his. Their souls danced in perfect harmony, entwined forever as it was meant to be.

Finally, One.

Chapter End Notes

I blame liselle for urging me to lean on my hobbit hole joke more lol. I couldn't resist bringing it back where I knew it would hurt most! XD lol

# Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

HOLY SHIT, I'TS DONE!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Thorin and Bilbo's bond was finally complete as they lay in each other's arms that first night. After several rounds, that is. They were left speechless and in awe after the intense experience that brought their hearts and souls together. As the weeks passed by, their connection blossomed into a profound, soulful bond that only true soulmates could comprehend.

The next day, Thorin found himself able to focus on his duties once more, to his sister's and advisors' relief. With their help, he began passing on his remaining responsibilities to his capable family members and Company. The Blue Mountains were thriving, and Thorin knew he could leave them in their capable hands.

As for Bilbo, he continued to immerse himself in dwarven culture and traditions, learning Khuzdul properly now that he and Thorin were officially married. He spent hours with Balin and Ori, learning about dwarven history, and soon he felt as much a part of Thorin's world as he did of the Shire.

But to Thorin, this perfection felt too good to be true. Life had taught him that such moments of bliss often came before a storm. It was a hard-earned lesson from a life filled with loss and struggle. Thorin couldn't help but be on edge, waiting for the other boot to drop.

Then, one seemingly ordinary morning, everything changed.

Bilbo awoke with a start, a look of discomfort etched across his usually serene features. He leaned over the side of their bed and retched, his body convulsing as he emptied his stomach. They both brushed it off as something Bilbo had eaten that hadn't agreed with him. Bilbo assured Thorin he was fine, that there was no need to bother Oin with such a minor ailment. Tea was brewed, and Thorin massaged his husband's pressure points and helped him relax. And that was that.

But the next morning, it happened again. Bilbo woke up, rushed to the washroom, and vomited. Thorin's concern grew, and he insisted Bilbo see Oin. Bilbo, again, decided on some old Hobbit remedy for the stomach instead, which seemed to do the trick.

Until Bilbo threw up again the following morning, afternoon, and evening.

The illness remained a mystery. They checked Bilbo's food and drinks for signs of poison, fearing someone might be trying to assassinate him. Thorin had his guards doubled to ensure

Bilbo's safety.

On the fifth morning of this distressing pattern, Thorin was beside himself with worry. He could detect nothing wrong with their bond, which only fueled his anxiety. He had people examine Bilbo's food with the utmost scrutiny, going over every detail in search of answers.

Finally, he convinced Bilbo to have a thorough check by Oin. As they waited for the healer, Thorin couldn't help but feel the weight of foreboding that had settled over his heart. Something was amiss, and he feared the storm he had always dreaded might be on the horizon. His worst fear was coming to pass–he was going to lose his One!

Oin arrived at their chambers with an air of stern professionalism. He was one of the most skilled healers in the Blue Mountains, known for his expertise in diagnosing even the most mysterious of ailments. He greeted Bilbo with a nod and a warm smile before turning his attention to the task at hand.

Bilbo sat on the edge of their bed, looking pale but trying to maintain a brave face. He'd been feeling increasingly queasy and weak, and it was wearing on his usually indomitable spirit. Thorin, however, couldn't bear to leave his husband's side, hovering nearby with a worried expression.

Oin began his physical, asking Bilbo a series of questions about his symptoms and any recent changes in his life. Before Bilbo could respond, Thorin jumped in, eager to help.

"He's been retching for days," Thorin interjected, his tone filled with concern. "And he's been having trouble sleeping. His appetite has waned too."

Oin raised an eyebrow, his patience already wearing thin. "Thorin, I appreciate your input, lad, but I need to hear from Bilbo himself. Now, Bilbo, have you experienced any changes in your diet or routine recently?"

Bilbo cleared his throat, casting an apologetic glance at Thorin. "Well, we tried some new dishes at the feast last week, but other than that, nothing out of the ordinary. And as for my routine, everything has been quite normal."

Thorin tried to hold back his urge to comment, but he couldn't help himself. "He's been working too hard. Still sparring. Reading at all hours of the day. Maybe stress? A virus? Too much sex? Could that be a factor?"

"Thorin!" Bilbo squeaked, his cheeks coloring.

Oin shot Thorin an exasperated look. "Stress alone doesn't cause these symptoms. It's essential that I get a complete picture from Bilbo without interruptions."

Bilbo nodded and continued, "I don't feel stressed. This is the happiest I've been in all my life."

Thorin had to smile fondly at him at that, his heart overflowing with love.

Oin's examination continued, "It might be a stomach bug or a passing illness, but it's unusual for it to persist like this–"

Thorin couldn't contain himself. "Should we consider seeking a second opinion? Perhaps Lord Elrond?"

Oin's patience finally snapped. "Get out! I can't properly diagnose and treat him with you hovering and interrupting."

Thorin looked like he wanted to argue but ultimately conceded, his worry for Bilbo trumping his desire to stay. "Very well. I'll be just outside if you need anything," he said, casting one last concerned glance at Bilbo before reluctantly exiting the room.

His worry for his husband gnawed at him like a persistent hunger, making it difficult to stand still and do nothing. He longed to know what was happening, to hear the healer's words and assure himself that Bilbo would be all right.

The massive stone wall of their chambers loomed before him, and he took a step forward, his impatience getting the best of him. Thorin raised a hand to the door and listened intently, pressing his ear against the cool, unyielding surface. He knew, deep down, that it was a foolish notion. The stone walls were impenetrable to sound, designed to provide privacy and security for a Crown Prince. With a frustrated exhale, he withdrew his ear from the stone. His gaze returned to the closed door of their chamber, longing for any word from Oin about Bilbo's condition. Thorin knew he had to be patient and trust in the healer's expertise, even if it was one of the most challenging things he'd ever done.

A sudden rush of emotions coursed through their bond, and the fear that had paralyzed him was replaced with confusion. Bursting into the room, Thorin's heart raced with concern for Bilbo. But Bilbo's tearful, beaming face left him even more perplexed.

"We're going to be parents! I'm pregnant!" Bilbo's voice rang with joy and excitement, his words hitting Thorin like a hammer.

Blinking in disbelief, Thorin took a deep breath to steady himself. He had forgotten, once again, to explain to Bilbo the biological impossibility of such a thing. His heart ached as he realized that Bilbo had misunderstood something, and now he believed they were expecting a child.

Gently, Thorin placed his hands on Bilbo's shoulders, trying to find the right words to explain. "That's... impossible, my love," he began, his voice laced with regret. He needed to make Bilbo understand the truth. "We can't have children of our own. It's just not something that two males can do."

Bilbo simply laughed, shaking his head. "No, Thorin, you're wrong," he insisted, his joy undiminished. "My mother always said I could have faunts because I've got the Took trait! Oh, now all those 'planting seeds in fertile soil' metaphors make sense!" Bilbo continued to chatter happily, his excitement overflowing.

Thorin watched in bewilderment as Bilbo rambled on about names and traditions. He couldn't comprehend how Bilbo could believe such a thing, and he couldn't bear to see his One so deluded. He leaned over to Oin, speaking in a hushed tone. "You must tell him the truth, Oin," he urged, his eyes pleading with the healer to help set things right.

Oin shrugged, his gaze fixed on Bilbo. "Uh, well, he is with child, your highness. Quite incredible, but true," he replied, his voice a mix of astonishment and confusion.

He glanced from Oin to Bilbo, his mind unable to process the impossible notion his hobbit and most trusted healer seemed to believe in. Thorin's world tilted on its axis. As Bilbo mused about the number of dwobbits they might have, Thorin's legs gave way, and he crumpled to the ground, his consciousness slipping away as he fainted.

Thorin's consciousness slowly returned to him, like a distant echo emerging from the depths of a well. His head throbbed as he struggled to open his eyes, the world swimming into focus. He found himself on the floor, surrounded by worried faces, and he immediately feared the worst.

"Thorin!" Bilbo's voice reached his ears, filled with concern. "Are you all right, darling?"

Thorin tried to sit up, and the room spun around him. His heart raced, and panic clawed at his chest. What had happened? Why was he on the floor?

Oin, the ever-practical healer, stepped forward. "Easy there, your highness," he said, helping Thorin into a sitting position. "You fainted when Bilbo shared the wonderful news."

News? Thorin furrowed his brow, struggling to remember. Then it hit him like a lightning bolt. Bilbo's announcement about being with child—it had all come rushing back.

"No, it can't be. Can it? Is it true?" Thorin asked, his voice trembling with a mixture of hope and disbelief.

Bilbo nodded, his eyes shining with tears of joy. "Yes, Thorin. Oin confirmed it. We're going to be parents. I wonder how many we'll have this first round," he giggled excitedly. "Momma says that males with the Took trait can have up to four faunts at a time!"

With another flip of his world, Thorin let out a strange gurgling sound before losing consciousness for the second time.

He awoke and stayed awake the second time, though the news of impending fatherhood was enormous. And despite raising his sister-sons, he had never imagined himself as a father. It wasn't a dream; it was real. It wasn't a misunderstanding or a delusion. They were going to have a child! No… maybe several children!

Thorin's eyes glistened with tears as the truth slowly dawned on him. He had never sobbed so much in his life, but these were tears of pure and utter joy. He felt like he was floating on air, his heart soaring to new heights. He couldn't contain his excitement, and he practically leaped to his feet, picked Bilbo up and spun him around, racing around the room in a frenzy of happiness.

They were left alone, and he sank to his knees, his forehead resting against Bilbo's belly, feeling the rise and fall of each breath. He held Bilbo close and whispered sweet promises to both his unborn child and his beloved.

Thorin then spent the entire day darting all over the mountain to share the incredible news with everyone they knew. Thorin Oakenshield, who had never once in his life thought he would be a father, was going to be a father! As the day wore on, Thorin got spectacularly drunk, much to Bilbo’s mix of annoyance and delight. He couldn’t help himself; the joy of impending fatherhood was something he wanted to celebrate with everyone and anyone who would listen.

The news of Bilbo’s pregnancy sent shockwaves of joy throughout the entire mountain. Dwarves, hobbits, and elves alike joined in the celebration, and what was meant to be a day of announcement turned into a week-long festival of merriment and revelry. The halls of Ered Luin echoed with music and laughter, and even the stone seemed to come alive with the collective happiness of its inhabitants.

The majestic mountain became Thorin and Bilbo's temporary home as they awaited the birth of their child and its readiness for travel. And when their dwobbit daughter was born and welcomed into the world, it cemented their decision to return to The Shire.

To Bag End.

Bilbo’s parents, who had recovered completely during their stay in Rivendell, had returned whole and hale and were very excited to have their grandchildren underfoot.

Thorin took up his duties as a blacksmith, crafting magnificent works of art and practical tools alike. It was a role that fulfilled him.

Bilbo's published romance book about the impossible love between a dwarf King and a simple Hobbit of the Shire was a hit with readers. Many believed the story to be a work of fiction because of its fantastical elements, including the notion of male hobbits carrying babies and the dwarf king's ignorance of his own engagement. Surely, no one was that thick-headed.

Their life was idyllic, filled with laughter, love, and the pitter-patter of many little feet over many lovely years. And so, they lived happily ever after, their love story a testament to the enduring power of love, the strength of bonds forged in adversity, and the beauty of finding one’s true home in the heart of another.

Chapter End Notes

I have no idea if it's the medical menopause or what, but I haven't written anything this quickly and FINISHED it... in a very long, long time. So... idk what is going to happen next. Should I take a break? Should I try injecting this juice into another unfinished

work like... The Kitchen Thief? Start a new WIP? lol SO MANY CHOICES!!!! Man, I'm so damn happy this one is complete AH!!!!!

THANK YOU FOR READING!
You can find me on tublr, youtube (@mordellestories), insta and discord (@mordelle)!
I also do write OW's, if you were curious. ;D

End Notes

This is a very easy story to tell so I might finish this one before anything else but don't trust me. I don't trust me so neither should you. However, I will try my best to end every chapter on a light note despite this tiny cliffhanger. Technically you can ignore the last sentence and take this chapter as a small oneshot! See? I'm trying here!

BTW, I've been slowly turning my fanfics into podfics so go to my youtube channel if you'd like to check it out: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA-CzaJwT1N-P0JnsqFd7JQ

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!