

Speak, Friend, and Enter

Two stories in three parts



Part One- Elves

Our friends were not unearthly beautiful.

Erebor, Fourth Age, Year Three

The Elf leaned back in the chair, leather-shod feet crossed on the nearby desk. Long pale fingers idly twirled an exquisitely formed chalice, its contents mostly imbibed. Close to the Elf's shoes there was an equally intricate jug with more wine should the drinker care for more, but the immortal's interests were currently focused on a book cradled in his lap. Legolas focused on the runes, alternately staring, then turning pages, none of it making any sense whatsoever. He lifted the silver cup to his lips and drained the last of the wine, then placed it gently on the table, lowering his feet and the front two legs of the chair to the floor. His pale eyes lit on the jug, and he leaned in to pour himself a half-chalice full, resituating the ancient text on the wooden surface. After another swallow, he rested his elbows on the desk, index and middle fingers pressed against his temples, gazing incomprehensibly at the yellowed pages.

The combination of wine and warmth from the nearby fire had little effect on the Elf, and he turned to greet the visitor whose steps he had heard approaching for some time down the stone corridor.

"Gimli!" Legolas was warm in his welcome.

"Legolas?!" the Dwarf was less effusive in his exchange. "What are you doing? This is, this is -" He tripped over the words until he saw the book on the table. "Who showed you to my library? And where did you find that?" He jabbed a sturdy finger at the leatherbound tome. "That is the only surviving copy of Narvi's original writings. You had best be careful."

Legolas raised his eyebrows and then gazed at his arms and hands, which were not actually on the pages. "Though nothing like Lothlorien, we do have some ancient texts in Mirkwood, my friend, and I know how to read a book without abusing it."

Gimli's dark brown eyes looked at the book, currently untouched, then at his friend. A small smile caused small creases to form at the edges of his mouth, barely visible amid his thick auburn beard. "Yes, I am sure you are right. I apologize for assuming otherwise."

The Dwarf moved in closer to look over Legolas' shoulder, his eyes scanning the writings.

"What does it say?" Legolas asked, perplexed, waving his fingers above the ancient parchment. "These stick-like symbols are incomprehensible. Does each figure stand for a letter, or a-" he said a two-syllable word in Elvish that sounded like a sigh of wind, "or an entire word?"

Hearing the Elvish word, Gimli raised his eyes from the book. "A letter or a what?" he queried. "I did not understand your word. And those are runes, they are not like-sticks."

"Stick-like," Legolas corrected him, then found himself under the brunt of an accusatory glowering stare. He said the Sindarin word again, but its translation remained elusive. Leaning back into the chair, Legolas said, "*Techtar*. Vowel." Looking quickly around him but not finding what he wished for, he gazed back at Gimli. "Do you have paper and ink?"

"Of course I do," was the deep-voiced response. "Are you going to try and teach me Elvish? I thought you wished to be able to read the words in front of you. Though even if you master that, you still would not be able to understand all that is spoken around you here in the Mountain."

Legolas's normally taciturn face bore a thinly veiled haughty expression. "No, Gimli, the lessons in our language would take a lifetime. And all of the Dwarves with whom I have met during our time here have spoken the Common Tongue, or your Dwarf-speech. I have not heard any secret whisperings in a third language, and my hearing is far greater than that of mortals."

To his surprise, Gimli laughed, an unexpected throaty sound which filled the small room.

"Come, Legolas!" he chuckled, taking the Elf by the elbow. "We need not come to blows over words you could not begin to hear." Still smiling, he nodded his head toward the door. "There is a royal feast going on and your absence has been noted." After walking a few steps, he turned his head and said, "Bring that wine with you, should you care for it. We will be having ale."

Legolas took one last quizzical glance at the ink scratchings on the pages, sighed, then picked up his chalice and jug and followed the Dwarf up a stone passageway, leaving the merrily cracking fire behind him.

Khazad-dûm, Second Age

The Dwarf leaned back in the chair, leather-shod feet crossed on the nearby desk. Short stocky fingers idly twirled an exquisitely formed gold snifter, its contents mostly imbibed. Close to the Dwarf's shoes there was an equally intricate decanter with more cordial should the drinker care for more, but the engineer's interests were currently focused on a book cradled in her lap. Narvi focused on the runes, alternately reading, then turning pages, assessing the writings that had been penned by her own hand. She lifted the delicate cup to her lips and drained the last of the zhikomir, then placed it gently on the table, lowering her feet and the front two legs of the chair to the floor. Her peridot eyes lit on the decanter, and she leaned in to pour herself a half-goblet full, resituating the newly-bound text on the wooden surface. After another swallow, she rested her elbows on the desk, index and middle fingers pressed against her temples, gazing intently at the stark white pages.

The combination of liqueur and warmth from the nearby fire made her rather sleepy, and she turned in shock at the visitor whose silent steps she had not heard approaching down the stone corridor.

"Celebrimbor?!" Narvi was startled as she greeted the visitor.

"Narvi!" The Elf was warm in his exchange.

"What are you doing here?" The Dwarf exclaimed, almost knocking over the cordial. "The other engineers have gone to bed hours ago. Who showed you to my library?"

Bright teeth gleamed in the fireglow as Celebrimbor smiled, his hair neatly combed, intricately braided plaits falling over his shoulders. "I am here to find out why our chief Rockwright is not at the celebrations. There is but one who can appreciate both song and stone to such great depths, and his absence is missed keenly."

The Elf's eyes, a most disconcerting shade of amythest, looked fondly on the Dwarf, then to the book on the desk. "Though it is but short time to us, I know that these two years have been a challenge at time. You have kept writings?"

Narvi shut the book, blushing slightly, grateful for the relative dimness of the room. "Of course," she replied, gruffly. "I cannot speak for the Elves, though my Elvish has improved since our first meeting." The Dwarf stood at full height, hands defensively placed on hips. "This project has been one that comes along only once in many generations." A passing look of regret traversed her features, though none but another child of Mahal would have recognized it. "We Dwarves have a long history of writing, and the intricacies of these doors warranted the details being put down for those who come after me."

Celebrimbor walked silently toward her, his gaze still focused on the brown leather cover, its branded runes painted in with gold, an external indicator of the value of the contents within.

"May I look at it?" he asked, reverently.

Narvi was ambivalent. That she felt a deep respect for this Elf who had worked with her for day upon day, month after month, over two years, was unquestionable. But they did not - could not - see eye to eye, in any sense. The Dwarf wavered, Celebrimbor gracefully towering over her. For all of the famed farsight of the Elves, there was still a staggering amount to which this Noldo was blind.

Pride, however, won out.

"You may," Narvi replied. "Though I do not expect that you can read any of it. The drawings I am sure you will recognize." She chuckled, running her skilled, calloused fingers over the familiar etchings. "But perhaps you would care to pore over it tomorrow. You say that your errand was to come and find me. Here I am. I would be glad to join you and the masters of the moonlight-mithril."

The Elf bowed, then waved a long arm toward the door. "We artisans of the mountains need to raise our voices together. These seamless doors should be lauded by all craftsmen, whether Elf or Dwarf, who have brought them into being."

Narvi smiled as she reached out for the small snifter and tossed back the cordial. "To the craftsmen who brought them into being."

Celebrimbor was unsure why that statement was funny, but he placed an affectionate hand on the Dwarf's shoulder, which was shaking with mirth. The two walked up the stone corridor to the blazing bonfires outside under the stars.



Part Two- Dwarves

*I keep to myself such
measures as I care for,
daily the rocks
accumulate position.*

Eregion, Second Age, Two Years Prior

Narvi had never felt cold like this. Though wearing layers of linen, leather and wool, much less the self-insulation of warming body hair, the Dwarf was chilled to the bone. She was grumbling to herself every other step, teeth chattering in the frigid wind, sure that the King had sent her not because (as she knew) she was by far the best engineer in Khazad-dûm and, therefore, the most logical choice to send to look for an Elvish counterpart that could both be endured for months on end, and someone that the other masons would tolerate taking suggestions from. No, Durin had sent her because he felt that she would be charming.

"*Proxgróg!*" she swore, remembering her appearance with King Durin. His manners had been impeccable, to be sure, but deep within herself, Narvi knew that he was getting his vengeance because she had shown no interest in his son, and Durin had wished for exactly such a match. Pulling her cloak more tightly to her, the Dwarf contemplated other choices that she could have made. It wasn't that Thwalin was unattractive, nor was he unskilled. Truth be told, his bronzeworks seemed to be half-alive, his very breath somehow pounded into each cup and shield. It was more that he was a poorly cut gem. She knew that in the right hands he would be fiery indeed, but she was not interested in being the tools involved to hone him.

As she mulled this over, Narvi also acknowledged that she had been sent because her knowledge of Elf-speech was at least passable. But now, her bright orange braids full of ice and her eyebrows freezing even under her tawny hood which signified that she was a high-ranking member of the stonemasons, she wished she were back in her workroom, the feel of silver under her fingers. Her

ability to plan out large, carved structural projects was second almost to none, but when she could, her passion was to work with silver. Not as pure as mithril, but silver was more pliant, less resolute. It responded under her delicate hammers and incessant humming, almost as though the metal could hear her love for its substance. From time to time the Dwarf discovered that she was jealous of the Longbeards who wore hoods of dark green, the Silversmiths, but she had made her choice.

Looking up, Narvi could see the houses of Ost-in-Edhil not far in the distance, and was grateful. The Dwarf's glance journeyed briefly upward to the darkening sky, her gaze captured momentarily by a sickle-shape of stars newly blooming in the heavens, Durin's Crown. The evening hues seemed cold and brittle, like ill-tempered steel which would crack with the first resolute hammer-blow. She lowered her head again against the bitter wind and plodded forward until she reached the tall gates of the Elvish city.

Standing guard were four Noldo Elves, their hawkish gazes focused on her. Despite the cold, they wore the same garb as they did in summer, at least that was how it appeared to her. "*Unnatural*," she thought to herself, though on second glance, their capes did seem to reach further down than those she had seen on the few Elves passing through the Dwarvish kingdom when the weather was warmer.

Though a cursory look would deem the doorwards unarmed, Narvi knew much better. Relations between the Dwarves of the Misty Mountains and the Elves of Eregion went far beyond civil; it was positively accepting. And yet, the cultures of the two remained somewhat shrouded in mystery despite their goodwill, and no one worth the iron in their axe or the steel of their sword travelled defenseless between the two realms. Narvi shuddered against the nipping winds as she opened her cape to show that her hand rested on her axe, then bowed to the gatekeepers.

"I am Narvi, of the house of Oban, messenger of King Durin, here to attend the presence of the King Silverfist of Eregion," she said in stilted Sindarin, mostly to the frozen ground. As she stood upright, all four Elves strode forward two steps, and placed their hands to their left hips. Their capes, the color of moonshadow, fluttered in the chill breeze, making immediately visible the previously hidden sheathed knives at their waists and daggers buckled to their thighs.

"You are expected, Narvi Longbeard."

The Dwarf narrowed her eyes, but none of the guardsmen before her had opened their mouths. Then another Elf, clad more warmly against the cold in a thick brown cloak, stepped between the two gatekeepers to her right and walked toward her, then knelt.

Narvi blinked. Twice.

The Elf stood, his plaited silver hair tied behind his neck. "The chill is biting. Please follow me to Celebrimbor's study; our evening meal will soon be served." Looking at the Dwarf's axe, still resting under her hand, he said gently, "You may retain your weapon while we walk the streets, but once we reach the inner city I must ask that you entrust it to our keeping."

Narvi stared at him, her olive-colored eyes seeking subtle warning. Finding none on his calm face, she nodded, gathering her cloak around her again for warmth.

"My name is Hithuldîr," the respectably-clad Elf intoned.

"I am Narvi, though you know that," the Dwarf replied.

As they passed down the uncharacteristically quiet street in silence, Narvi absorbed the organic shapes of the buildings, the thwarted artisan within herself trying to commit every curve, every terrace, every serpentine turret to memory. While they walked toward the town center, the structural craftswoman within herself rioted, drawing her vision far beneath the exteriors of the houses and public buildings. Within her mind's eye she saw the living skeleton of the city as a whole, the unexposed rock thrumming with joyous life as blood in the vein. The carvings and curvature, so Elvish, were unfamiliar to her, but she could read the beauty of the underlying bases, so inherently

Dwarvish in the way that the rock had been treated; not as something dead, but a substance which could whisper hidden mysteries in the night.

Narvi found herself on the verge of tears. Embarrassed at such a show of emotion, she rationalized to herself that it was the knife-sharp wind which caused her eyes to water.

Soon they climbed several steps to the king's dwelling, and two more guards appeared. Their light eyes raked over the Dwarf, focusing on her axe hidden under her cape which was clutched under her chin. Coming to herself, she stood straight and withdrew Gormgloine, turning it until the blade was horizontal and parallel to the ground. "May he reside faithfully in your care," Narvi said stoically, then handed it to the Elf who walked forward, ensuring that the immortal had looked her in the eye before relinquishing her axe.

Then they were in a building more beautiful than any the Dwarf had seen, and Hithuldîr motioned Narvi toward a door with scripted markings above it.

"Celebrimbor is still at work, but he assured me that you were welcome in his study."

Narvi stood stock-still, horrified. "But that is *déandorkh!*"

The Elf didn't seem to understand.

"Makes dark. Unacceptable. We don't show such things to outsiders!"

Hithuldîr patiently shook his head. "Our lord awaits you." He turned and went down a side corridor, leaving Narvi no other choice than to enter the silversmith's private domain. She walked to the wooden door, then paused, her hand fisted, intending to strike it, but unable to do so.

Within Dwarvish custom, artisans were given the widest of berths. It was not out of lack of respect, but rather of awe. Only if one chose to take on an apprentice, or if one had a child, did a dwarf share his workspace with another. Tools, always handcrafted, and metalworks in progress, were held in highest esteem, not to be used or seen by anyone other than their creators. To walk into the sanctum of even a fellow smith, or forger, was unheard of.

Narvi hesitated, swallowed, then beat on the door.

"Enter, messenger of Durin!"

A melodious voice carried through the sturdy closure, and the Dwarf opened the door.

Narvi walked through, her eyes taking in every detail of the warm room. An Elf sat on a well-made bench, his upper body curled snail-like over his work, an apron draped appropriately over his blue tunic. Long braided auburn hair lay flat between his wide shoulders, his gaze fixed on an impossibly delicate silver brooch. As she heard the resonant tang of hammer on tracer, the silversmith in her knew that the pattern he imbedded came from within his mind's eye, and not from something previously drawn. The Dwarf sank to her knees and closed her eyes, her heart throbbing with the sound; repetitive, and yet each stroke of the hand unique.

She sat for awhile as the Elven-smith worked, then there was silence.

"You are Narvi, I take it?"

The Elf was arching backward, stretching tired back muscles, loosening his head, and wriggling his aching fingers.

The Dwarf scrambled to her feet, then bowed as low to the floor as possible. "Yes, Lord Silver-fist." Raising her bearded face only slightly, she added, "Your work sings, Elf of Eregion."

To her surprise, Celebrimbor began to laugh, husky and deep.

"So why has Durin sent you, if you know such of silverwork? In his letter he said I should expect an engineer, not a sycophant."

Narvi knew a lot of Sindarin, but she was unsure of exactly what this silver-singer had just uttered. She was sure only that it was uncomplimentary, based on the tone.

"I was sent to secure an overseer for the project of the Doors," she replied crossly. "I am not included in Guild of Silverworkers, but the material is not unfamiliar to me."

The Elf smiled, all intrigue fleeing from his features. "Then you shall not mind if I take just a few moments more to finish this? It begs for completion."

The Dwarf allowed a shimmer of a smile to cross her face. "One would be strong, indeed, to resist the song of an unfinished work."

Celebrimbor raised an eyebrow. "Do Dwarves truly sing, then?"

Narvi walked to a bench and sat down, mouth twitching. "Perhaps King Durin should be the one to answer such a diplomatic question as that."

She quickly memorized each of the Elf-lord's gestures, his furrowed brows, fingers cradling his tools, a lone tear of sweat making a long trail from his temple down to the hollow of his neck as he began to hum a tune of unspeakable melancholy.

The guest engineer from Khazad-dûm was held in high esteem and sat the the right hand of Celebrimbor at the rather light evening meal. She spoke as well as she could, and embarrassed no one of either race, at least not that she knew of. Afterwards, she was shown to a room with a bed of proportions appropriate to her kind. She bowed low to the chamber-servant, thankful that she could cleanse herself alone. Narvi soaked in the scented warm waters, clothed herself in her usual sturdy jerkin and trousers, and slept soundly.

During her morning appearance with the Lord Celebrimbor, she was astounded to learn that he had decided to take on the role of co-engineer with herself in fashioning and installing the Doors. She had made the original designs, and there had been no doubt that they would be followed, but Narvi was sure that all involved, Dwarf and Elf, had assumed that someone of lower rank would have been the actual representative from Eregion over what was sure to be a multi-year project.

But Curufin's son would entrust no one but himself to oversee the work. He knew the Dwarves of Dwarrowdelf to be extraordinary artisans; yet this had been his idea proposed to Durin; his symbolic open gate for such historically sundered peoples.

His responsibility.

His potential failure.

He could not bring himself to be the bearer of an unsuccessful message to the other ruling Elf who had been able to see the naugrim for the honorable race that they were.

Narvi the Dwarf returned triumphantly home, buoyant in her steps despite the midwinter cold. She met briefly with King Durin, who was as shocked as she had been that the Elf-Lord would oversee the project himself. Then she returned to her room, had a celebratory swig of zhîkomir, and sat at a small table carved by her father. Narvi unearthed some blank pieces of parchment found under a teetering pile of sketches, cursing as her fingers knocked over a small inkpot which she recovered before its contents ruined the unblemished pages. Finally, with quill in hand, she dipped it in, letting it rest for a

moment as she remembered the sounds of Celebrimbor's fine hammer hitting against the tracer, and hearing again the quiet melody which seemed to flow more from his fingers than through his lips. With weight of exquisite memory, the quill touched the paper, deftly marking short lines and cross-hatchings, giving angular voice to such liquid song.

Erebor, Fourth Age

With weight of exquisite memory, the quill touched the paper, deftly marking long curves and short flourishes, giving rounded voice to such fluttering song. Then the quill was set down to rest for a moment, as the Elf remembered sounds of leaves shimmering in autumn's breath, delicate whispers of deer tracks seen when he was only a child. Suddenly inspired, Legolas leaned in, then cursed as his elbow knocked over the inkpot which he recovered before its contents ruined the embellished pages. Once he reestablished order to parchment, ink, and wine-filled chalice, he continued to write, humming faintly to himself.

After a while he stopped, taking a moment to glance at the phrases on the page. Feeling rather pleased, Legolas took a congratulatory swig of the wine, then gathered up his pieces of parchment, tucking them into the front page of Narvi's book. He pushed back from the writing-desk and paused before leaving the room, still amazed by the number of tomes organized neatly on the shelves. He had made the mistake of saying so out loud, soon finding himself on the accusatory end of a rather long lecture by Gimli, given enthusiastically, but with indignant tone and zealous gesticulations.

Moments later Legolas was striding purposefully toward the Great Hall. He entered and quickly scanned the room for Gimli, who was not there. Flames smouldered in a large fireplace at the wall opposite the entryway, and there a few Dwarves stood, drinking a steaming beverage of something that Legolas had not quite been able to determine. They stopped speaking as he approached, not that Legolas would have understood what they were saying. Even Gimli did not speak Khuzdul around him, aside from his battle cry, which Legolas knew well.

"I am looking for Gimli, my friends," Legolas said, smiling.

There was a silence as the Dwarves looked at him, then to each other and back again.

"He is working," one replied, gazing thoughtfully at Legolas as he ran his fingers through his russet-colored beard.

"Where should I find him?"

Legolas endured another round of meaningful glances among the Dwarves before receiving an answer.

"He is in his workroom. Does he expect you?"

The question seemed to be asked more to the book in the Elf's arms than to Legolas, as the Dwarf who had just spoken was staring hard at it.

Legolas shifted, holding Narvi's book protectively to his chest. "No," he replied, "but I do not believe that he finds my company an intrusion."

More unspoken messages passed among the trio as the fire popped and crackled cheerfully behind them. Finally the Dwarf with the reddish beard gave Legolas a steely, disapproving look, and Legolas was a bit surprised to realize how well he now could read the Dwarves' expressions. "He is on the corridor with the silversmiths. It is up to him to decide whether or not to let you into his chamber, but the request is most unheard of."

The conversation appeared to be over. Legolas bowed slightly, then turned and left the room, trying to remember the locations of the different paths that Gimli had indicated to him when they had first arrived. Having been raised in Mirkwood, Legolas was familiar enough with caverns, but the

dimensions of things in Erebor were, not surprisingly, Dwarf-centric, and he found himself stooping even when there was a comfortable distance between the top of his head and the ceiling.

The corridors were hushed, though not silent. Following instinct and memory, Legolas eventually found himself in front of a wooden door with a rune on it that he recognized as a "G," and rapped soundly on it. There was no reply, although Legolas could hear noises within.

He knocked again, vigorously.

No answer.

Seized by impulse, with a cheeky grin he called to the door, "*Mellon!*," then stepped back a few paces.

He heard pounding steps, then Gimli threw open the door.

"What?" the Dwarf roared. "Haven't I taught you anything about Dwarvish manners? You don't simply barge in..." Gimli's rant trailed off as he stared at Legolas, who was beaming and clutching Narvi's book in one arm.

Gimli shook his head in resignation, then looked up at his friend and nodded, backing against the door and gesturing for Legolas to enter. "You look like Meriadoc or Peregrin after finding an unexpected barrel of pipeweed," he said suspiciously, closing the door behind Legolas. "What have you been up to?"

The Elf made a quick tour of the room, his long fingers about to trace a pattern on a helmet when he heard Gimli speak in a quiet, authoritative way he had never heard before.

"Please don't touch that."

Legolas whirled around, placing his errant hand back on the cover of the book, then looked for a place to sit. "I have been writing, and thinking," he replied as he leaned against a mostly-empty counter. "I would like to invite you to join me in Greenwood in a few week's time for a feast of cleansing and renewal."

Gimli pattered around another counter, hanging up some tools and wrapping others that were more delicate in small pieces of cloth before placing them gently in an unornamented box.

"Well?" Legolas queried as he watched Gimli take off his work apron and hang it on a hook on the door.

The Dwarf huffed and sat down, playing at one of the plaits in his beard. "Yes, alright," he agreed, then raising his gaze, he asked, "Are you still trying to read that book of Narvi's?"

Legolas could see the smirk under Gimli's thick moustache. "Perhaps," he replied, smug. "Once again you have underestimated me, my friend. I am making progress. It is, after all, rather easy to read once you learn the runes."

Gimli raised a bushy eyebrow. "But the content! I thought Elves cared only about trees, and song, and stars." Glancing at Legolas' ever-present knives, he quickly added, "And killing orcs. Not how to carve giant doors out of stone and the intricacies of working with mithril."

The Elf's pale blue eyes gleamed like polished agates. "Narvi also wrote much about Celebrimbor, the greatest of the Elven-smiths. It is rather interesting."

Gimli's mouth opened, then shut.

"I must say that I was surprised as well," Legolas continued, amused at his comrade's reaction.

"I think you had best leave that book with me," Gimli growled, extending his arm.

"But I have not fin--"

"Give it here," Gimli said. "It belongs to the Dwarves. Apparently I did not read it thoroughly before."

Reluctantly, Legolas handed the book to Gimli, who now looked at it with apprehension. The Dwarf opened the cover and Legolas' sheets of parchment slid into his lap. "What's this?" he asked, gathering the pages. He recognized the writing as Elvish script, but nothing more. He held them out for Legolas to retrieve.

Legolas quickly crossed the room and took the proffered parchments. With a slight flourish and nod of his head, he said, "You will find out in Greenwood, my friend." He smiled so widely that his teeth showed. "Mid-summer's Eve. Do not be late."

"So you are leaving, then?" Gimli stood, scowling. "I thought that you were enjoying your time here."

"I am," Legolas replied. "But my father has summoned me, and I wish to return the favor of hospitality to you that you have so generously bequeathed to me."

Gimli nodded. "Good. So Dwarvish manners have made an impression on you after all."

Legolas tipped his head slightly, rolled up his parchments, and walked to the door. "Thank you for allowing me into your workroom," he said quietly, his hand on the metal knob. "I had not realized how uncommon that was."

Gimli shifted from one foot to the other. "We are both uncommon," he gruffly replied. "Mid-summer's Eve it is. Be sure they know to expect me," he continued. "I would not care to repeat my father's experience in King Thranduil's home."

Legolas stared, appalled, as Gimli burst into a throaty laugh. "Go on, Legolas. Dwarvish humor. Maybe someday you will understand."

Legolas shook his head as he opened the heavy door and walked into the corridor.



Part Three - Companions

*The Soul selects her own Society--
Then-- shuts the Door--*

Khazad-dûm, Second Age

Within a month of Narvi's return, Celebrimbor and a few Elves from Ost-in-Edhil had made a small camp not far from the western entrance to Khazad-dûm. A few days after their arrival, King Durin escorted the tall Noldo and his companions to the Great Hall where feasts were held, and led them to a banquet held to commemorate the beginning of the West Doors project. Aside from Durin and Celebrimbor, however, there was little mingling between the Elves and Dwarves during the feast.

Narvi intently watched the dark-haired Elves as they picked at the hearty fare before them, seeing them glance surreptitiously upward several times as though they wished to be back above ground as soon as possible. The Dwarves seated around them, mostly lapidaries and swordsmiths, ignored their company. In contrast, Celebrimbor seemed to be completely at ease, enjoying several tankards of ale and engaging in animated conversations with the King and stonemasons at his end of the table. As the evening went on, instruments appeared almost like magic and there was music and song. The fire blazed in its huge hearth, and the flames from dozens of torches lining the walls chased away the flickering shadows.

Narvi was comfortably full, sitting off to the side of the Hall with her feet on a small stool, smoking her pipe with her eyes mostly shut when a voice above her head startled her out of drowsiness.

"May I join you?" Celebrimbor's voice was husky, and Narvi wondered if he had been adversely affected by the smoke drifting through the air. Now that she thought about it, she was struck that she had never seen any of the Elves that passed through the Dwarf city carry a pipe.

"Of course," Narvi replied, straightening up and moving over on the bench.

After sinking next to her and resting one boot-clad foot on his knee, Celebrimbor turned and gave her a grave look. "One of the questions that has been burning in my mind since your visit has now been answered." The Elf stopped for dramatic pause, putting a strand of his burnished hair behind his ear. "Durin's folk sing quite well indeed, it appears."

Narvi closed her lips around her pipe for a moment, eyeing Celebrimbor for signs of a smile, which soon blossomed across his expressive face. After releasing a smoke ring, she grinned, her fingers playing with one of the leather thongs in her plaited beard. "Indeed," she said, then surprised herself by affectionately patting the Elven lord twice on his thigh, which she discovered was well-muscled. "We Dwarves are not the most forthcoming about our talents to others."

Celebrimbor laughed. Narvi was surprised that such a hearty, amused noise came from such a seemingly refined being.

"Yet you have honed the art of the understatement, master mason!" He, in turn, patted Narvi on the thigh. "We shall get along like moon and star, my good Narvi. I am sure of that."

Narvi nodded her head. "Yes, Lord Silver-fist," she agreed. "We shall."

The days that followed were a flurry of activity. Busy days turned into weeks, and then months: the quarry was selected; the stones cut to precise specifications and carefully brought to their future standing-place; the Elves embarked on a rather secretive and complicated process to modify the qualities of mithril. It was only at this point that tempers flared and Narvi found herself almost coming to blows with the Lord of Eregion. It was October, and the seasons were changing. Several of the Dwarvish silversmiths had come down with a similar illness, and within the engineer's camp, rumors raged that they had been poisoned by one of the Elves to keep them from learning how to make the *ithildin* to be used on the doors.

Narvi had been suffering from a foul temper and a three-day's fever when she stormed into Celebrimbor's dwelling. "What is the meaning of this drawing?" she exclaimed, shoving a parchment on his already untidy table as the Elf stared at her in stunned quiet. "Surely King Durin has not seen this. He would never approve of such on doors which mark the entrance to the greatest city of the Dwarves." She took another breath and steadied herself before continuing to yell. "Elvish symbols! Elvish trees! Elvish script! Not a rune to be seen! This belongs outside your city, not Khazad-dûm!"

Celebrimbor started to stand and had opened his mouth when Narvi growled, "And do not point out Durin's crown. Even it is under an Elvish arch. I was foolish to believe that you had begun to see us as your equals."

Narvi turned on her heel and stalked away. Soon she had returned to the doorway and stood atop a ladder, chiseling the upper corner where the junction of stone to its niche required intense attention. Her head throbbed, and she found she frequently had to wipe her forehead and under her eyes where she was sweating due to the fever. "Arrogant. Presumptuous," she muttered in Khudzul. "And they say Dwarves are secretive! Pah!" Suddenly dizzy, she leaned her head onto the cool stone, then everything went black.

As Narvi regained consciousness, her body registered a throbbing pain above her left ear. Cautiously she raised her hand to her head as she opened her eyes.

"Narvi! You awoken."

Celebrimbor was looking worriedly down at her, his aquamarine eyes focused on her face.

Narvi experienced a shock of pure terror as she grasped for her tunic, adrenaline rushing through her until she patted herself and discovered she was still fully clothed. *Bliss of Mahal's beard!* she sighed, only slightly relieved.

Celebrimbor smiled. "I have been given quite the hasty lesson in Dwarvish medicine, which seems to be to keep Elves as far away as possible from the one who is injured. Your fellows brought you to your room and established you had not broken anything in your fall, and cleaned up what is a rather deep gash on your head."

Narvi closed her eyes. "That would explain the pain, then," she muttered.

"Thank goodness for the hard heads of the Dwarves!"

Narvi winced as she scowled at the Elf's comment. "We are a sturdy race," she said, gritting her teeth as she sat up, slowly. "Do not forget that we are the true First-born."

Celebrimbor diplomatically ignored the slur. "You are sturdy and hard-headed in more ways than one. You should have told me you have been ill; your skin felt as though you were on fire. I cannot allow my most trustworthy and articulate rockwright to continue falling from ladders because he is stubborn."

Narvi's fingers traced the bandages around her head. "The fever will pass."

She began to feel uncomfortably exposed as Celebrimbor gazed kindly at her.

"I wish to explain the door markings."

Narvi growled, and Celebrimbor raised his hands in a gesture of peace.

"We have both been guilty of focusing more on the mechanics of this project, instead of the meaning. That is how it should be, for without such attentions, the great West Doors would not now exist."

Narvi crossed her arms across her chest, wishing that the Elf would leave her to investigate her aching head wound in peace.

"I will not trouble you much longer, only state that while the doors are indeed an entrance to Khazad-dûm, and a symbol of friendship between our kinds, they also represent the edge of our lands. Dwarves will usually approach the doors from the inside, while Elves will approach from the outside. My great hope, and that of Galadriel, our far-sighted sovereign, is that those doors will remain ever open."

He paused for a moment, and Narvi was surprised to see a wistful look lit across his face.

"That is why I wish for you to design the figures and messages to be carved on the inside of the doors. It will be those which face the lands to the west; those which will catch the rays of sun and starlight to grace the sight of all Elves before they begin the underground journey through Dwarrowdelf. Will you accept this request?"

Narvi sat, blinking in surprise and shock.

"Does King Durin also wish this?" she asked tentatively.

“With every hair in my beard, I believe how he phrased it,” Celebrimbor replied, resting his hand briefly on Narvi’s shoulder. “You should rest.”

Then Celebrimbor left the room, his unbound hair flowing over his shoulders like liquid jasper.

Overwhelmed to the point of nausea with pride and pulsing waves of pain, Narvi drank some water which had been placed by her bed. After a few moments her stomach ceased roiling, and she fell into a dream-filled sleep.

Eryn Lasgalen, Fourth Age

Gimli tramped down the path under the trees, his gloved hands clutching the leather straps of his pack to his chest. A bird trilled a lengthy call and he stopped, looking up into the nearby branches. He couldn’t see the creature that had made the sound, but as he gazed around, off in the distance he saw that the trees became more orderly, and there, further off, a tall hill.

“Well,” he said under his breath, “Legolas did describe the route accurately. Not long now, and a good thing. I could use a hearty meal!”

He stood for a moment to readjust his trappings: leather pack, waterskin, axes. Before leaving the Lonely Mountain, he had paid a visit to the relatively new King, Thorin Stonehelm, who had requested that he visit Esgaroth on his way to King Thranduil. Thorin sent Gimli off with a beautifully wrought jewel-encrusted box to be given to Bard II, along with his continued gratitude for all of the Men of Dale who had fought and died with the Dwarves at the end of the War of the Ring.

There was another birdcall and Gimli looked up once more, and saw a finch fly above the path from one tree to another. Returning his gaze to the ground, he continued walking.

Within an hour, he was at the entrance to the caverns of the Elven-king, and to his surprise, there were several wood-Elves standing there in welcome, Legolas included.

“How did you know when I would arrive?” Gimli asked, suspicious.

Legolas laughed as he walked up to the Dwarf and clasped his hand. “And a very pleasant day to you as well, Gimli! I have missed your forthrightness.”

Gimli muttered something about having bird spies in the forest and Legolas stood, looking earnestly at him.

“While the great War is over, we do feel it is not inappropriate to have guards. Since you entered Greenwood I have known of your whereabouts.”

“So you have been spying on me!” Gimli spluttered, then glancing around at the other Elves, simply shook his head.

“Come, my friend,” Legolas said. “Now is not the time for arguments. I would like to escort you around my father’s halls and show you to your lodging in case you would care to rest before our early evening meal, which promises to be a merry one.”

Gimli agreed, and the small entourage walked through the gates, following the path up to King Thranduil’s caverns. “In regards to bird spies,” Legolas said, leaning down to speak more directly to Gimli, “as far as I know, it is the Dwarves who are known for communicating with birds, and ravens in particular, not the Elves.”

Gimli snorted appreciatively. “You learned much at the Mountain. I suspect that your kinsmen find you rather odd for your interest in Dwarvish lore!”

Legolas laughed. "You should have seen the expression on my brother's face when I told him I had thought of taking up pipe smoking!"

Gimli stopped in his tracks. "You had thought of what? After your experience in Fangorn?" He looked incredulous. "I assumed that your one attempt at smoking mine was quite enough."

Legolas tipped his head toward the open doors. "Come on, Gimli. Elvish humor." He smiled as they continued through into the inviting entrance. "Maybe someday you will understand."

After the evening meal, Legolas accompanied Gimli through the many corridors to his room, explaining that the Elves of the recently-renamed realm of Eryn Lasgalen would gather in the forest at twilight and sing songs of renewal as the stars came out. "It is in celebration and gratitude for Galadriel ridding Mirkwood and Dol Guldur of the evil forces which plagued these woods for centuries."

Gimli made a slight sighing sound.

"Gimli?" Legolas asked worriedly, and in a rare show of affection, placed his hand on his shoulder.

The Dwarf looked back at him. "Galadriel. I wish I had been able to see her once more before she sailed to the West." He patted Legolas' hand, then noticing that they were in front of his door, he said, "Do you have a moment to visit? I..." He looked down at his boots for a moment, then raised his face, which was slightly flushed. "I brought a gift for you."

Legolas looked surprised, but nodded. "There is still some time before the sun will set."

Gimli opened the door and the two went inside. Legolas stood just inside the wooden door while Gimli rummaged through some small bags which lay on his bed, near his leather pack. From a dark green bag he pulled out a carved wooden box, and after running a stocky finger over the top, he straightened and held it out in his hand, offering it to the Elf.

"You have been as true to me as any of my kinsmen. You stood at my side in battle, and for that and your unexpected friendship, I am most grateful."

Legolas stepped over to him and took the box, holding it carefully in his hands. "I did not know that the Dwarves took to - Oh!" he exclaimed, bringing it closer to his face. "But this is Elvish work!" He looked perplexedly at Gimli.

"Just open it," Gimli huffed, though there was an amused tone in his voice. "I will explain in a moment."

With his long, pale fingers, Legolas pulled open the lid. Resting on a square of pine green felt was a wrought silver band; a cuff, with an intricate pattern of leaves and twining stars around the edges. Inside the border were etched symbols, Elvish script. It was heavy and wide, obviously meant to be worn by a man. Legolas stared at it, the expression on his face growing more confused by the moment.

"Tengwar?" he asked, dazed. "Gimli, it is beautiful. Is this what you were making in your workroom?"

"What I was making?" Gimli stammered, almost choking. "Mahal's beard! First I am able to find Peregrin on the battlefield when you were unable to see him and now this. Perhaps it was wrong of Aragorn to count so much on your Elvish sight."

Legolas gave him an affronted look. "It seems that only a Dwarf can give a gift while at the same time insulting the recipient."

At that comment, Gimli grew serious. "My apologies. It was your interest in that book that Narvi had written about the making of the Western Doors to Khazad-dûm that made me look for this particular piece of craftwork." He motioned for Legolas to sit on a nearby chair, and he did, holding the box in one hand and the silver cuff in the other.

"That band has been handed down through my family for many generations, though it was unclear why such a thing, despite it being very well crafted, was held in such reverence when it was clearly Elvish work. After your comment about Narvi and Celebrimbor in my workroom, I reread some of his tale. I believe that it was this 'Lord Silver-fist' who made it for Narvi, in appreciation for his work."

Legolas gazed wide-eyed at the silver bracelet in his hand, then back at Gimli, who was looking fondly at him. "You and I are unlikely allies, it is true," he said, one hand playing idly with a thick plait in his beard. "But it seems that in a different age, friendship between Elf and Dwarf was not so rare." He briefly bowed his head, then continued, "I only hope that it is not too wide for your arm. We Dwarves are of a more stocky nature."

Legolas sat, temporarily overwhelmed by the generosity of Gimli's gesture, given with typical straightforwardness which continually caught him off-guard.

"Well, put it on!"

Legolas placed the carved box on a nearby table and then slipped the cuff around his right wrist. It was indeed fashioned to Dwarvish proportions and was too big to wear below his hand, so he slid it back a bit further on his forearm where it rested securely. He ran his finger along the Elvish script, rendered mute in the realization that he was wearing something made by the greatest craftsman of the Noldo, and it had been given to him by a Dwarf. He shook his head at the irony.

"Thank you, Gimli," he murmured, continuing to stroke the metal.

"After all this time, it seemed fitting that it should go back to the Elves," Gimli replied. "Now go on and let me rest my feet for a bit. I shouldn't admit this to you of all people, but it has been awhile since I have done so much walking and I, well," he made shooing motions to Legolas, "I wish to have some time alone."

Legolas stood and walked to the door, his long tunic flowing around his knees. "I will return when it is time to go to the ceremony."

Gimli had already begun unlacing his sturdy boots when he heard Legolas' voice float in from the nearby corridor.

"Should I wake you if you are asleep?"

"I only said my feet were tired, wretched El...." Gimli roared back, then censored himself. "Yes."

Legolas grinned as he walked to his rooms, his left hand tracing the ancient Elvish letters on the silver band.

There was already a large cluster of Elves speaking in subdued voices in the appointed clearing when Legolas and Gimli arrived. Above the lush and verdant canopy of Greenwood, a deepening richness of velvet twilight settled across the sky. Soon the first stars would appear and the Elves of the Woodland Realm and one lone Dwarf would sing praises and thanks to Varda.

"You don't really expect me to sing, do you?" Gimli asked once they made their way to an area in which others of Thranduil's house were standing together. "Not that I have an ugly voice, mind you, but unless Galadriel herself were here to ask it, I do not..."

"They were not inspired by his commentary on the making of the West Doors," Legolas retorted. "I was intrigued by Narvi's writings in general. He had an almost Elvish eye to detail."

Gimli made an indignant sound. "We did not blunder into becoming master craftsmen, my friend. You have nothing on Dwarves when it comes to the finer points of observation."

Legolas sighed. "Fine," he acquiesced, turning his head to look again at the silver armband.

Chastened, Gimli quickly added, "But it is true that you are better poets."

Legolas looked down at him, and smiled. "This is a translation, but you will understand the meaning." His expression grew thoughtful as he spoke quietly.

*What stood will stand, though all be fallen,
The good return that time has stolen.
Though creatures groan in misery,
Their flesh prefigures liberty
To end travail and bring to birth
Their new perfection in new earth.*

*At word of that enlivening
Let the trees of the woods all sing
And every field rejoice, let praise
Rise up out of the ground like grass.*

They walked in silence for a ways, then Gimli spoke. "I have no doubt that Galadriel would have appreciated your words." His voice was wistful. "I should finish my poem. It is not nearly as well written as yours, of course." He focused his eyes on their path, fingers again clutching at the phantom space where his axe was normally found.

"Do not be so sure of that," Legolas replied quietly. "I surmise that anything you gave to her in love she would have accepted readily."

Gimli choked. "In love?" he reiterated. After a couple of deep breaths, he gazed up at Legolas, and found the Elf's blue eyes were staring intensely at him. "Well, I don't know what to call it." He made a malcontented grumbling sound. "Doesn't matter. She is gone. I could write poetry until I go blind and my hands can no longer hold a quill and she will never read them. I am no Elf. It's not as though I will ever get on a boat that could take me to her."

Legolas glanced up at a bright sickle shape of stars, then down at the silver band clasped on his forearm, a contemplative expression on his face.

"Do not be so sure of that either."

Epilogue

Eregion, Second Age

The scarlet sun hung just above the horizon as Vrain approached Ost-in-Edhil. He had been well-coached by Narvi and managed to hide any expressions of being nonplussed when confronted by the supercilious gaze of the four Elves standing guard outside of the gates. Vrain tore his eyes away from their flickering emerald capes billowing slightly in the breeze and spoke in halting Sindarin while looking at the marble stairs.

"I am Vrain, of the house of Oban, son of Narvi, here to request the presence of the King Silverfist of Eregion."

As he rose to resume a standing position, he saw the guards staring at the silver cuff on his wrist, made by their lord Celebrimbor for Narvi, whose death he had been bade to convey to the Elf-king. The guards did not step forward, but they did move their arms ever so slightly to reveal knives and daggers otherwise hidden. It had been so warm at mid-summer that Vrain had put his hood in his pack for the journey, and merely clutched his left hand around the head of his axe to acknowledge that he, too, was armed.

Dwarf and Elves stared at one another until at last one of the guards walked toward him. "Please follow me," he said in the Common Speech.

Vrain nodded his head, and followed.

They had gone several paces down the busy causeway when another Elf in similar garb passed them, seemingly to take the place of the guard who was escorting Vrain into the city. Several of the inhabitants let their gaze linger on him in a way that left the Dwarf feeling rather unsettled, despite the fact that he had met several of the immortals as they made their way from west to east or back again through Khazad-dûm. In respect to his mother's wishes, he tried to absorb as much of the architecture of the Elvish city as he could, but much of the subtlety of it was lost to him. Gems were his great love, and his bright chrysoprasic eyes lit on the jewels that he could glimpse on the Elves of Eregion: a necklace dripping with garnets; aquamarine stones set in a gossamer belt of silver; a brazen cape-clasp of onyx, unexpectedly enclosed in sanguine copper.

Before he knew how far they had gone, Vrain was at the entrance to the city center, his mouth gaping. Two more guards appeared, staring pointedly at his axe. Vrain closed his mouth as he took the axe from its usual place hanging at his side.

"May Gormgloine reside faithfully in your care," he recited, giving up the blade rather reluctantly.

A silver-haired Elf approached, and with only a glance, the escort from the front gates left the room.

"I am Hithuldîr, messenger to our Lord. You are?" he looked pointedly at Vrain's wrist.

"I am Vrain, son of Narvi, though I suspect that you have known this since I approached," the Dwarf replied, smiling.

The Elf raised an eyebrow. "Does Celebrimbor expect you?"

"No. I am here to bring tidings of Narvi's death. It was thought that your lord Silver-singer would wish to know."

Hithuldîr's expression, while still impassive, seemed slightly more sombre at the news.

"Please wait here." He gestured to an elaborately carved bench which Vrain walked to and gratefully sat down, content to rest his feet.

Elves walked across the mosaic-tiled floor, and everywhere there was a scent of flowers in bloom. Vrain wrinkled his nose, and after a few moments went by, he found that he was idly making a new plait in his beard as he tried not to stare at the jewellery worn by the Elves who traversed in and out of the room.

Suddenly he noticed a shadow crossing his left boot, and he looked up.

"Vrain Longbeard, son of Narvi the Rockwright, of the House of Oban."

As his mother had said, the co-engineer for the West Doors and Lord of Eregion was an Elf both to fear and to admire. *Numinous*, she had stated. *Otherworldly*. *Sunset*.

Vrain stood.

"Lord Celebrimbor."

"So Narvi has died."

Vrain nodded, subconsciously stroking the silver cuff on his wrist.

"I had hoped to be asked to attend the ceremony for such a renowned rockwright whose spirit had left to meet Aulë. No," he paused for a moment, "to meet Mahal. But I dared not presume that I would be welcome."

The Elf-lord's lilac-colored eyes conveyed compassion, but demanded a response.

"I have brought a message to you from Narvi." The Dwarf extricated a piece of carefully-folded parchment, its wax seal the color of glistening sand. An "N" rune was thrust into the midst of the congealed circle.

Celebrimbor reached out an arm and took the paper, then looked Vrain from foot to head. "You resemble him very much, Vrain, son of Narvi. Though your eyes are far brighter. The color of apples."

Vrain looked at him, puzzled, then shook his head. "Son I am, but Narvi was my mother, not my father."

The Elf held the parchment, his long fingers stroking the paper, eyes unfocused.

"You will excuse me?" he murmured, and with a quick nod of his head, an attendant came to Vrain, showing him to a room, and encouraging him to take a bath and a rest, if he so desired it. He would be summoned for the evening meal, and he should expect to spend the night.

"But," Vrain stammered, gentle hands on his elbow.

"Ale will be brought to you. For now, enjoy the hospitality of the Elves. You will be called upon for supper."

The Dwarf found that he could not resist the summons, whether he liked it or not. So he chose to be led. The bath was sumptuous, the ale delicious, the meal courteous, his sleep sound.

In the morning, after dressing and munching on the freshly-baked bread provided with a hot beverage he didn't recognize, Narvi jumped to his feet when he heard a second authoritative knock on the door.

"Enter!" Vrain exclaimed, startled.

Celebrimbor stood in the doorway, his unbound auburn hair flowing over his shoulders, wearing a pendant with a green stone that seemed to give off its own light.

Moments passed. Dwarf gaped at Elf, and the Elven lord waited, a smile blooming across his stern features like rainbows illuminated in a diamond facet.

"This is for Narvi's tomb," Celebrimbor said softly, handing a silver birch branch to Vrain. "It should never wither, if I am worth my name."

Vrain looked dubiously at the branch, though he held out his hand to grasp it. "Is it magic?" His voice sounded skeptical.

"Not in any way to give the Dwarves pause," Celebrimbor answered. "It is the least I can do to keep her memory."

Vrain bowed, then stuttered as he took a closer look at the branch. "But there are, there are..."

Celebrimbor's glance was enough to silence the young Dwarf. "Yes. Put the branch at Narvi's marker. And please," he put a warm hand on Vrain's shoulder, "let not the next time I hear of you or your kin be at your death. The distance from the West Gates to Ost-in-Edhil is not so far nor the path so rocky that it cannot be traversed more than once in a lifetime, Dwarvish stubbornness or no."

Vrain was unsure whether to feel complimented or insulted, but stood to his full height regardless. "It shall not, Lord Celebrimbor."

As Celebrimbor watched Vrain walk across the tiled floor out to the city, he thought of the message which even Narvi's son had not known he had carried: his mother's most secret, Dwarvish name. She had written it in bold Tengwar script, and though it had been a translation, he knew it for what it was.

fiery rainbow

he read, and though not sentimental by nature, he mourned her loss. Though her gender mattered not a whit in regards to her skill, it still goaded him that he had been so blind as not to know, and this gift was an attempt to compensate for that loss. He had been working on the more sophisticated chants and energies that he would soon be channeling into the Rings of Power, and he knew that the branch he gave to Vrain should last, unchanging, for centuries: a silver birch, to honor Narvi's love of the metal, one which he shared, and for which he was named. The additions to the branch were for the translation of what was the most intimate thing she could have shared, one which he had felt was not his position even to reveal to her son.

Opal.

Author's Notes

Gormgloine- "blue-glass" My vision is that Narvi's axe handle has two sapphires embedded in it, and I love that it has the word "Gloin" in it. Tolkien's characters always name their weapons, though I'm not sure that Gimli does. Perhaps he's being coy.

déandorkh- déan (make, making) dorcha- dark. Yes, it looks like something-dork. I thought that a 'k' instead of a 'c' would look more Dwarvish. Ultimately I wanted the word to have the sensibility of "sacrilegious," something that just Would Not Be Done.

The quotations at the beginning of the three sections were all found in *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, © 1973

Our friends were not unearthly beautiful.- from "Ideal Landscape" by Adrienne Rich

I keep to myself such measures as I care for, daily the rocks accumulate position.- from "I Keep to Myself Such Measures. . ." by Robert Creeley

The Soul selects her own Society-- from "The Soul selects her own Society" by Emily Dickinson

"What stood will stand" by Wendell Berry, Words Copyright © 1998. There is one final stanza to it which could not fit within the Ardaverse (such a shame!):

*What stood, whole in every piecemeal
Thing that stood, will stand though all
Fall-field and woods and all in them
Rejoin the primal Sabbath's hymn.*

While this story is all my own, I must thank the fanfiction writer Adina Atl, whose magnificent story "Opening Doors" features a female Narvi, and from whom I gained much inspiration.