

The background of the cover is a rich, textured painting. It features a dark, swirling landscape with a prominent, winding path or stream that glows with a golden-yellow light. The path is flanked by dense, stylized foliage in shades of green, yellow, and brown. In the upper right, a bright, glowing light source, possibly a sun or moon, casts a shimmering path of light across the scene. The overall composition is dynamic and evocative, suggesting a magical or fantastical setting.

KARLEIGH
BON

Tales of

ELDELÓRIE

BOOK TWO

Tales of

ELDELÓRIE

Book Two of the High Fantasy Trilogy

Written by

KARLEIGH BON



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Limited Author Edition

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KDP

Dedicated to my beloved son and son-in-law,
Nathan and Jantzen

P R O L O G U E

TRENERI I SINNARN

Ilmari, the first; the formless. A thought, swirling in the ever-turbulent chaos. The Aru then appeared with their gift to wield a radiant tone. This ability alone set them apart from the Ilmari.

With their newfound powers of authority came the keepers of the Chaos-will. The story thereafter is so complex. It is strewn with incomprehensible hostility and disaster, for with the light came the darkness.

The shadows cool and protect while the light warms and gives life into the realm. The shining golden ones marched forward into our realm seeking order from the unpredictable taskmaster.

The goddess woke from her slumber and took the darkness and light to herself. Ilmatar's love held back chaos from the realms while her aspect as the Ithild — giving birth to the beginnings and the endings of creation as we know it.

The shining ones rejoice with great anthems that filled the goddess with power and the brilliance of song and light. And she was named Valeerathil in the forgotten tongue of the golden ones.

This realm was profoundly changed by struggle and death, that gave rise to true balance in the form of the Mor'annon, the *Great Black Gate*; the obelisk was created to separate the realms in peace. It also venerated the throne of light and held back the darkness...

If you do not understand these ancient ramblings, fear not. The meanings found herein this second story, the tome of Dream, will come to you soon enough.

YOUNG THENDIEL

Long-ago, in the year 1480 of the 3rd Age of Edhelath

Across a narrow hanging footbridge, the Illianheni gardens sprawled along the eastern cliffs of the Vodla River delta. Thendiel followed along behind her mother's billowing skirt to where others would be setting up banquet tables. These edhel had lived in the area for thousands of years.

The blessing of three days of clear skies was foretold. Edhelath from all three clan-nations would soon be arriving to join in many days of *Yavanni Elenea*.

Excitement swelled as all who lived in the neighboring village of Eldelórne worked hard to make everything perfect for the celebration. There would be music and dancing and all manner of foods to be shared under a glittering blanket of autumnal stars.

As she crossed the bridge, golden bits of sun burst through pillowy clouds. The light danced across the waking land of the delta, glistening off the sparkling water far below in the river basin. The breeze felt light and refreshing, and the trees had cloaks of ragged moss swaying in the mild breeze.

The drone of green tree frogs echoed their shrill songs as the fat armored beetles and zooming dragonflies raced across the water. The glint of iridescent wings flashed like jewels under the morning sun.

Thendiel wondered if any of the larger dragonflies carried faine-riders. Faine were the last thing you would see if *true death* found you, or so the hearth stories told. Young Thendiel shivered just thinking about it.

"It is always best to stay on the known paths," Esabel plainly said, as if reading her daughter's mind.

"Yes, mother," Thendiel dutifully answered, a cool blast from the river sending goosebumps up her arms.

She scowled, not sure if her mother could *in fact* hear inside her thoughts, as she did with the trees.

Although they carried supplies for the party, the main reason Thendiel and her mother were crossing into the garden was to alert the giant sentinel trees that stood watch at the borders of Illianheni. King Ellinduil himself and Queen Rhianna would be making a rare appearance on this day.

The royal couple had not been seen outside their palace for decades, so the news of the great king and his queen traveling beyond the safety of the Autumwood Palace walls was on everyone's lips and minds.

King Ellinduil was a mystery to most of his subjects. Especially to a shy elfling girl who spoke mostly to trees. Thendiel had heard stories spoken of sailing ships, Noeglath wars, and evil dragons. These tales were from as far back as the long memory of the Second Age. This meant the king was thousands of years old. Possibly even the oldest edhel alive.

“What will he look like, Mother, after so many seasons of life?”

“It is true, King Ellinduil and his queen are from a very old bloodline of Edhelath,” Esabel explained, as they stopped the last few steps at the end of the footbridge to catch their breath.

“Our king and his queen know ancient magics. There is a spell that hides a body’s imperfections. I believe it is called *glamour*. The king would only let you see what he wished for you to see, my dear.” Esabel’s eyes grew large, playfully emphasizing her words, as she ran her fingers through her daughter’s long golden-red hair. She brushed a twig away that threatened to become a tangled knot.

“Ah, I should have braided this,” Esabel said.

“I am older, Mother, not an elfling,” Thendiel indignantly protested as she pulled her hair out of her mother’s grip.

“The others no longer wear hair like that. Please, do not make me. They will laugh,” Thendiel pouted.

Esabel patted her rebellious daughter on the head.

“I see,” she said, the wisdom of ages placid on her face.

“Have you grown taller than the spring sapling then?” She asked that annoying parental question as she planted a motherly kiss on her daughter’s forehead.

Thendiel frowned. She had heard this one too many times lately and it didn’t help resolve her feelings of frustration.

“Tangles are not our way, Thendiel.” Esabel firmly shook her head.

“Now get busy,” her mother prodded. “Tell our friends to be on watch. We would not want anything terrible to happen in the garden tonight. Our king risks much to come to us.” Esabel’s voice was low with concern.

Thendiel silently handed her mother the supplies she’d been carrying before turning toward the forest.

“We will discuss braids later, when we get home,” her mother quietly assured her. “You cannot move through the trees if your wild locks get caught in the branches,” she called after her daughter.

Thendiel was almost out of earshot. Just before she ran into the dense wooded edge of the garden, she turned to her mother and waved. Her golden red hair flashed in the sunlight as she dove into the thicket.

Warm misty air filled Thendiel's nose with the scents of dark soil and green moss. The forest was alive with the buzzing hum of life. Stealthily leaning flat against the nearest tree, her hair tangled across her face, hiding her against the forest background. Thendiel froze in anticipation.

She loved her mother, but young ones of her age liked to play at hide-and-seek, *and* Thendiel would not be left out again because of elfling braids.

Through narrowed eyes, she peered through a twining cascade of hair for others who might be hiding. Not seeing any, she relaxed. Truth be told, she didn't really have any trusted friends in the village.

With a sigh, Thendiel tugged at another twig lodged in her long hair. Giving up on it, she tossed tangled hair and all back over her shoulder. She didn't have time to play right now anyway.

She could not help the sting in her nose as she realized the others had moved their game to the far side of the gardens and she was left out again.

"Fine, my friend, *Willow*, is coming from Ettenfalís tomorrow, and you will all be begging us both to play." Thendiel sadly stared into the distance, hoping she was somehow wrong and someone would appear, but she was not wrong.

"Trees make better friends than you anyway," she shouted into the empty woodland.

The tree she was leaning on tingled under the palms of her hands. Thendiel turned and pressed a wet cheek against its smooth bark, as disappointment turned into a flood of tears. Empathy from the tree gave comfort to her senses.

Thendiel sniffled, wiping her disappointed face on a sleeve. She thanked the young sapling. It was time she focused her mind on the important task she had been given.

The trees stood majestic, like a great tall clan that bordered the gardens. Their proud canopy of green shading and cooling the ground kept the forest inhabitants safe from the drying heat.

Their thick trunks wore mossy coats of green on the shady north side while lichen formed whitish gray lacy patterns all along the edges.

Thendiel busied sympathetic hands with the greeting her mother had taught her. Each had its own name that surged through cambium layers down to the deepest of hearts.

As Thendiel came to the first sentinel she felt the familiar glow enfold her as her palms touched its rough outer bark. A cloud of tiny white moths, hardly bigger than Thendiel's fingertips, swarmed past in the moist air seeking cover from the hot sun.

She shared the herald of joyful celebration and caution. The tree sent back a sleepy acknowledgment as it woke from a long slumber.

Thendiel sensed the elder trees whispering to one another through an underground tangled roots. All the trees would be prepared for Yavanni Elenea.

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In the current year, 3121 of the 4th Age of Man

After being possessed by the vengeful revenant of the mad god, Surmanos, Roevash, along with his brother Eijlam and his mate Naalin, finally found their way back home to the comforting embrace of Eldelórne.

He sat before the hearth in an old rocking chair, seeking solace in the familiar presence of this place, which had always been a source of healing comfort for him. He yearned desperately to recover from the traumatic ordeal he had endured.

Despite the comforting sensation of being within Eldelórne's protective embrace, Roevash felt uncertain about many things. His body felt different now. He studied his hand and scratched his face again, a habit he needed to shake.

Long ago, after his father, a Darjalian commander, was called to duty, his mother made her home in Eldelórne with him and his younger brother. Roevash was treated as an outsider, as a half-blood, among the elfling.

He had greater height, dark hair, and complexion. He had also inherited his father's crystalline blue eyes that glowed in low light like cat's eyes, which was unnerving to some.

Time and distance had dulled the sharp edge of his harried youth. Roevash pondered many times how his mother had no chance of understanding such a violent culture as the Darjalian.

He had to admit, like his father's people, he too was good at war, despite never having known the man.

Roevash didn't care anymore about the shiny adulescence of his irises or his pointed ears that made him somehow unacceptable. He didn't care what insults that might invoke.

His great height and agility served him well. He believed he was able to protect those he loved, and that was all that mattered.

"My son is, Elgelion, the name came slowly to his mind." Roevash sadly smiled. His son's name rolled off his tongue as he repeated it several times. He longed to see the little elfling.

"I was a danger to my own family." Roevash's eyes narrowed. The dire reason for capturing the mad god vaguely came back to mind.

"Thank the Arus, our little one escaped the hands of such insanity, *my hands*," Roevash huffed as he stared at them again, his heart seizing with rising anxiety.

This horrific sense of vulnerability didn't set easily on an old soldier. He thought about returning to his previous station at the Vehlevar training post, but anything related to fighting turned his stomach and sent the world into a hazy, incomprehensible cold sweat.

Staring back at the fire in the hearth, he understood the rebirth thing, and the lingering unease would pass. He took a deep breath, clearing his mind with the mesmerizing flames.

An evil he thought defeated in the Great War of the Third Age had been brought back to life by ignorant, selfish men. Roevash scowled at thoughts that would push any ordinary man over the edge.

“This must be what it feels like to be worn from the mortal coil.” Roevash took a deep breath, contemplating his large hands again.

Making a fist, he could barely believe he no longer felt the ever-present pain that had been part of his daily life since he first took up the two-handed longsword.

“This rebirth has in some small way served me well.” Roevash gave out a short chuckle.

Caaa-rack!

The sound exploded, triggering through Roevash’s body with a sudden forward jerk. The noise was only a log in the fireplace, but to his mind, it had become the sound of breaking bone.

Horror-filled memories crawled towards him across the floor. Twisted creatures on hands and knees reached out, begging dark favors. Surrounded in a veil of nightmare, scraps of dead flesh sank through his bloody fingers.

Roevash’s sneering mouth opened to consume the raw meat. A loud growl rattled painfully through his skull.

It was his own far-off voice pleading for control. The vision rolled away, and the dimmed room brightened back to normal through blank, staring eyes.

Roevash found himself, hands up, poised as if to eat...

"You must always remember," Roevash silently affirmed, glaring wildly at his empty, clawed fingers.

"What is past can no longer cause pain unless you keep letting it!"

No assault to a body was more intimate than possession.

What Roevash experienced in his mind’s eye wasn’t his own actions. They were shadows, echoes of what he’d done as a possessed vessel.

The mad god’s Dragonlord personae was horrifying, both to himself and those who were subjected to his twisted abuse in all its forms, carried out by *these hands*.

He looked down at shaking hands. All he saw were hands, strong and solid, but he could almost feel slick, warm blood drooling over clawed fingers, streaming to his elbows.

Dripping blood, always dripping, in his hair, on his face, over his lips...

“*IT IS OVER,*” Roevash’s voice burst from his mouth with certainty, sucking in a stiff breath.

He felt the elder tree's soothing murmur and almost smothering embrace. He was safe here with his family. He was safe in his mother's tree home. That evil thing has been locked away in chains for all eternity, and his dragon ended.

"We have seen to that," Roevash snarled.

He rubbed a clammy hand across his face to assure himself he was really sitting in his mother's old rocking chair and not caught up in some eerie dream in the realm of the Ilmatar Arus. He wondered if he would even know the difference.

He threw his hands down and pushed back in the old chair. It creaked under his heavy weight, his foot on the floor controlling its motion.

He had already resolved many times to stay alert. If another Shadow Cult or anything like it ever found him again. He would be prepared *next time*.

"Better to be braced than ignorant and lost," Roevash mumbled.

One long, deep breath brought back a much-needed feeling of balance. A scowl grew fierce and then melted off Roevash's face as he looked to find solace in the flames of the old, familiar hearth.

C H A P T E R T W O

BLUE WIZARD

Long Ago, continued...

Young Thendiel looked out over the crowd from behind one of the large, centrally located trees. By evening, colorful, sprawling shelters dotted the gardens of Illianheni. Everyone from dignitaries to common folk came with family and friends. Each one dressed in the tradition of their clan.

She liked the look of Caras Eldarhon, with their long, straight, minimally braided hair and light green and gold tunics. How she would have adored having one of those to wear. They looked shiny in the evening light in contrast to her plain, woven dress.

Suddenly, Thendiel spied a tall, bearded man. He had silvery-gray hair and wore dark blue robes.

“A wizard,” she locked her gaze onto him.

“They are the guardians of this realm,” Thendiel repeated what she had heard. That was all anybody ever knew about wizards.

Although painfully shy, curiosity got the best of her. Thendiel found herself stalking in the shadows. She followed him around the gardens, peeking at him from behind groups of partygoers.

Her eyes wide when the wizard nodded at her. Thendiel ducked behind a group of adults. It was only when the wizard spoke to her parents that she was bold enough to approach.

“I am Master Farghal,” the wizard nodded in greeting.

“I am a long-time friend of King Ellinduil,” Farghal assured anyone within earshot.

“I was sent to watch over the realm. There is, of course, no threat that I have found,” he announced at a group of curiously turned faces.

“I have not felt any sign of trouble,” he gulped.

“None at all, none at all,” he awkwardly laughed, not wanting to frighten or detract anymore from the festive party.

He had already said too much for such delicate company. Besides, he had invited himself to this gathering for a very different purpose.

“I hear you can speak to trees.” The wizard directed his full attention to the wispy young edhel who stood fidgeting behind her mother’s skirts.

Thendiel peered out at Farghal with huge golden brown eyes. Her mother had neatly braided her long hair over her ears. The braids and her shyness made Thendiel seem younger than her true age, but as with elves, Farghal could tell she was almost grown into adolescence.

"Would you like to learn a bit of magic," the wizard asked. Thendiel brightened up, nodding eagerly as she stepped forward. The wizard gently cupped her small hands together inside his.

"Now hold steady." Master Farghal took his hands away to concentrate as he waved his arms in a dramatic flourish.

"Now, open your hands." He smiled. Thendiel thrilled at the sight of a delicate yellow butterfly fluttering in her palms. She giggled at its tickling legs as it prepared to take flight. The adults that were watching murmured in amazement and clapped hands at the wondrous magic trick. Farghal smiled and nodded at all the delighted faces.

A bleating horn signaled the royal family had arrived. The gathering turned its attention to the road to the North. Cheering filled the air as Thendiel turned to see an ivory-colored carriage pulling to a halt. It was drawn by a team of white stags.

Humorless royal guards quickly dispersed themselves strategically throughout the celebrants. Once security was in place, an attendant jumped from the top of the carriage to open the door.

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Presently...

Roevash paused as bile rose in the back of his throat. He anxiously turned to face the light of the open window. He knew his Naalin was just beyond that narrow sill, sunning outside in the garden.

"It almost killed her." A suffocating weight grabbed at his chest. The room began to swim.

"What do I mean, almost? It did kill her!" Thoughts painfully ricocheted through his mind.

He cursed Arus Surmanos, the Dragonlord, the mad god! Roevash closed his eyes against the pain that threatened to ratchet his heart into pieces.

Roevash was raised knowing all the names of the Arus and which metier each one represented. This information had been passed down through Edhelath oral tradition, as told by village *Eldars*.

He had prayed to certain Arus for different reasons throughout his life.

He was only now beginning to make sense of it all because he walked to the shining city among a host of spirits. So far he only recalled glimpses of the experience, but it was as real as the hand he held up in front of his face.

The wooden rocker creaked under his weight.

Roevash pushed himself up and walked over to the neatly stacked wood on the other side of the hearth. He picked two pieces for the dying fire and tossed them into the fireplace.

Grabbing the metal poker, he jabbed at the smoldering pile to position the wood. Staring at the implement in his hand, a memory dug at him just beyond recollection.

Many of the things that happened to him while caught in that cult of Shadow eluded him. He thought in all likelihood that was a kindness. Roevash placed the fire poker back against the stone hearth and walked over to the window.

With his hands on either side of the frame, he leaned out and smiled at Naalin. She was lying asleep among the flowers. The golden glow in the room warmed Roe's back as the fire sprang to life again.

"Patience," the word rolled over Roevash's tongue several times.

He blew out a long breath as he leaned on the windowsill.

"This will all be just a faint memory someday."

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Long Ago, continued...

King Ellinduil stepped down from the royal carriage quickly, putting out a hand. Queen Rhianna stepped forward, her eyes shone greenish gold like a sunset through ocean waves. Her silken gown shimmered with the same dazzling color in the setting sun.

She wore a white collar on her delicate shoulders that hinted at sea foam in its feathery weave. Her straight, silvery hair was pulled back in a thick braid that cascaded down to her waistline.

The queen moved aside, and two young faces appeared in the carriage doorway. Delighted onlookers applauded this welcome surprise.

Of course, the great king and his queen would want their family with them at such an auspicious and sacred event as Yavanni Elenia.

Thendiel's eyes grew huge at the sight of long, silvery hair as the young ones moved to stand next to their mother.

The princess, who was close to Thendiel's same age, seemed to look right at her and smile. Her heart fluttered. She wondered if they had any friends in the Autumwood palace.

Thendiel had never been north or anywhere else for that matter. Her mind raced, wondering what their palace home was like.

"We could be friends," Thendiel murmured to herself, as the young royals followed their mother to a nearby table to wait.

The king's entourage moved towards the stage that was set near the great falls for the occasion. He smiled graciously at the thundering noise as it forced him to speak louder than his normal, reserved manner.

“You have nice braids,” Farghal broke into Thendiel’s thoughts, trying to say something cordial to gain back her attention. His statement was met with smoldering eyes.

Wizards were never known for their social finesse, but he didn’t know what he had just said that was so offensive.

Thendiel let out a long breath, knowing her mother would not allow bad manners. The braid comment was quickly set aside as she looked up at the confused wizard.

“Do wizard-kin not carry a magic staff?” she abruptly asked, not having seen one with him and trying to be polite in asking.

“Yes, of course we do,” Farghal said as he leaned forward and whispered, “it is invisible.”

He immediately put his arm out to the side and an ancient twisted staff appeared in his grasp as if he tugged it right out of thin air. Thendiel’s eyes grew huge!

“Can you teach me that trick?” she asked.

“Which bit of magics are you referring to,” the wizard asked, leaning forward on his staff in order to see her better.

“The one with the butterfly?” She couldn’t help her curiosity in reaching up to touch his long, hairy beard that was so long it reached halfway down the front of him.

“Now that I have your attention, I can teach you many such arts of magic. Would you like to learn?”

Thendiel nodded her head enthusiastically, noting that his beard hair was soft as any other kind of hair. It wasn’t braided either. She smirked.

“May I have my beard back?” Farghal’s eyes crinkled in a smile as he continued to slightly lean forward to accommodate her inspection. His lower back began to creak in the effort.

“Is that what it is called?” Thendiel had never seen hair grown on a face before. Thendiel let the strands of beard drop out of her fingers.

“What is it for,” she asked with such an intense seriousness that it made Farghal chuckle as he straightened up.

“It hides my lunch.” Farghal winked and Thendiel giggled, not quite sure if he was making a joke or not.

“One never knows about the minds of wizards,” Esabel told her daughter later that evening.

Thendiel wrote it all down in a small leather-bound book and then blew out her bedside candle. She soon fell fast asleep.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

LONG MEMORY

Presently...

The apodeictic of irony is the fact that it never occurred to Roevash to ask why his mother, Thendiel, had such an enormous wooden rocking chair, or where it had come from. He snorted at that odd bit of oversight that would have saved him a lot of strife as a youth.

He reached out and gave the old chair a push and watched the long shadow of its form move across the floor.

The fireplace was crackling back to life. Roevash grew suddenly weary again. He'd had enough pacing and moved to sit down.

"It is hard to believe I was ever that small." Roevash fondly remembered those quiet times as he eased back into the comfort of the old rocker.

As an elfling, Roevash nestled in his mother's arms here in this very chair, her soft melodic voice telling him tales of men and elves.

"Oh, *nîn hawn*," His brother, Eijlam, shook his head.

"Do you sit by the fire to rest your old bones or do you still think to lay blame on yourself for what is now in the past?" Eijlam had come into the room unnoticed and stretched himself on the cushions near the hearth.

He could see by his brother's furrowed brow that Roevash was *thinking* far too much again.

"I have to live every day with what has happened to me and the things I was made to do," Roevash's narrowed eyes shifted over to Eijlam.

"I sometimes wish the blissful effect of rebirth was permanent."

"The Arus must think, for some reason, we need to remember. Maybe it is for our own good," Eijlam remarked.

Roevash rolled his eyes at that.

"So, speak to me, brother. You must understand by now that the actions of evil men and gods are not your fault." Eijlam gently pressed.

Roevash rubbed his face with his hands as if to scrape away any lingering darkness he had let in. His chair slowly creaked to a halt beneath his weight.

He did not answer. He did not want to relive such raw memories in the retelling of them. Instead, he let his mind drift to the mesmerizing flames.

Likewise, Eijlam did not wish to share all the horrible details of his brother's possession. Surmanos was made even more powerful by the blood of dragons.

It took all Eijlam had to resist the *Dragonlord's* control. If it were not for his own father's divine blood, he might have been lost to the dragon's influence. Still, some of Eijlam's own memories were vague. He suspected he and Roe had a good, solid plan, and it worked out.

"No matter," Eijlam consoled himself. "It will all come clear in time."

It seemed like his big brother was ignoring him. Eijlam yawned and stretched. He chuckled with a crooked grin because soon Roevash was yawning and stretching.

Eijlam didn't tell Roevash that he'd punched him in the mouth. The blow was so forceful it almost broke his hand, but watching that monster bleed, even if it was his own brother's face, felt real good at the time. It was enough that Fionna knew about what happened, and she would never speak of it.

"You have always felt responsible for those you hold dear. It is because you are the eldest," Eijlam said in a reassuring voice.

"How many times had I drowned myself in the ocean, and you were always there to find me," Eijlam said, changing the subject.

"I am surprised you did not grow a full head of silver hair from my odd behavior." Eijlam tried to distract Roevash with a bit of his own brand of strained humor.

"You are just lucky one of us knew how to swim," Roevash's low voice rumbled from the rocking chair, a smile barely perceptible on his lips.

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Long Ago, continued...

Thendiel was looking forward to the Festival and all the events and activities that would have taken place there, but she found herself moving quickly over the footbridge to find Master Farghal.

Not knowing what to expect from this first meeting, she was pleasantly surprised when he held out a glittering pendant.

An oval gemstone hung on a thin gold chain, captive in an intricate swirl of gold. It was delicately crafted by long-forgotten artisans.

Thendiel was transfixed by its swirling center as she touched it.

"I want you to have this, but you must then promise to do one thing for me," the wizard ominously said.

Thendiel's brow furrowed as she gazed up at him with typical Edhel wariness. Seeing the expression on her face, Farghal chuckled.

"Do not look so worried, Thendiel. I just want you to promise me you will always wear it and always keep it safe."

Young Thendiel nodded as she held the amulet and watched the small stone come to life again in her hand. It swirled slowly as the wizard clasped the chain around her neck. It quieted into place once nestled against her skin.

“Soon enough, you will be grown, and the creation will need you to have this. Take good care of it, and it will take care of you. Promise me you will not give it away for any reason,” Farghal cryptically said, smiling down at her through his bearded face.

“Yes, I do promise.” Thendiel smiled reassuringly as she thanked the wizard.

“It is the kind of thing that might cause envy among village Edhel or even your own clan should any see it in your possession, so try to keep it hidden.” He gave her a concerned look, and she nodded in understanding.

And then, as if on cue, Thendiel excitedly cupped her fingers tightly together, her eyes clamped shut in concentration. When she opened them, a host of golden yellow butterflies poured from her hands.

Farghal laughed at Thendiel’s dazzling smile and intuitive ability to enhance the magic he’d shown her. The air around them filled with unfurling wings until he quietly said, “The butterflies will have a hard time finding their way back home.”

Thendiel frantically shook out her fingers desperately trying to stop what she had started. It had never occurred to her that the poor creatures were summoned from some other natural place that was their home.

Hundreds of butterflies would die because of her mistake!

“It is a bit more complex than that,” the wizard explained as he abruptly put a stop to the magic.

“You certainly have the talent,” he briskly mumbled, watching yellow wings flit around every which way into the surrounding gardens.

Thendiel fidgeted, looking at the ground. She realized how much damage she had caused.

“Do not shy away from knowledge,” the wizard encouraged. “Learn from your mistakes.”

She looked up at Farghal, clearly distressed.

“What a magic wielder feels and what one understands are two very different and distinct paths. You must learn to tell the difference. It is true, you take the energy from somewhere. That is only one part of the magics. Where you take it from, that is the knowledge you must seek,” he instructed as they walked along a sunny pathway.

They came to a thin fountain of water that splattered out of the rock face of the cliff. The wizard put out his hand and took a drink of the cold stream.

“Rock, water, wind, and fire are all powerful allies. See how the water cuts stone,” he pointed out. “Time is the only barrier that keeps such a power from flooding the whole garden and ripping a chasm all the way to the ocean.” Farghal

grimaced at that thought as he gazed upward at the old cliffside, his hand patting the stone.

“You must remain diligent in order not to break anything,” he added.

“That is why you will not see a wizard using serious magics except in dire need,” he explained, as master and student continued their walk through the gardens of Illianheni.

+++

Presently...

“What did the Arus mean by us living, *unnoticed until the fullness of our days*,” Roevash blurted out, still lying sprawled in the rocking chair.

“Hmmm, What?” Eijlam woke with a start from warm cushions. He had nodded off in the middle of an earlier non-conversation.

“Do you not remember the Arus’s final words to us as they sent us back?” Roevash strained to look into his brother’s eyes from his reclined position.

“They said, you will live unnoticed throughout time until you return to us as do all Edhel *in the fullness of their days*. It has a strange tone to it.”

“Oh, now I, um, you remember all that?” Eijlam tried to shake off nap fatigue and seem interested.

“Yes, it has come back to my mind. What do you think it means?”

Eijlam narrowed his eyes in thought.

“I think it means we would not be bothered by the songs of the Under-Arus until we wish to leave this mortal realm.” He yawned and stretched.

“Since when have the, *Under-Arus*, decided our time here?” Roevash scowled.

“Maybe it is my scrambled mind,” Roevash kept going. “Those words do not sound right to me.”

“We have no allotted span of life forced upon us if that is your meaning,” Eijlam replied, not yet registering Roevash’s line of thought.

“Then why would all the Edhelath just uproot themselves and migrate away in the third age? That does not make any sense.”

“My brother, always the thinker,” Eijlam made a dramatic flourish with a tired hand.

“Maybe the days of the original Edhelath were always numbered,” he said, grasping. Roevash looked over at him with his, “*You do not believe that nonsense*, look on his face.”

Eijlam pursed his lips. It did seem odd once he voiced the thought.

“Well, maybe you are right to be suspicious Roe. I was not in this realm, so I do not know what the land was like in the third age. I do remember how it was being

surrounded by Edhelath in our mother's village." Eijlam sighed, feeling left out of so much of his brother's long memory. "Did *you* hear the call Roe?"

"No, I was living among men at the time. I was learning about my humanity from my Uncle Calan." Roevasch leaned forward in the rocker, combing his fingers through his hair.

"If ever I did feel something, it was dulled. My mind was on other things."

"Finding me," Eijlam quietly filled in the blanks.

"Yes, finding you," Roevasch mumbled as he slumped back, lower in the chair.

"I am glad to have found you alive." Roevasch looked up at the ceiling with his hands clasped behind his head in another yawn and luxurious stretch.

"I am glad I am here with you as well." Eijlam frowned.

+++

Long Ago, continued...

Thendiel was painfully aware of how those youth who said they were her friends always forgot to tell her about their gatherings. She had guessed correctly about them wanting to play with her friend, Willow. That attention wore off the moment Willow went home to Ettenfalis.

Although it was fun to pretend she had friends, Thendiel decided she didn't like the way her hair got tangled with twigs anyway.

"Stupid game," Thendiel scowled.

She had more important things to think about. She fingered the amulet the Master Wizard had given her. Its stone swirled like rushing water trying to escape its cage. Thendiel calmed her mind like the wizard had shown her. She watched as the stone slowed to a lazy glitter.

"Yes, I like this much better." She sadly smirked.

With a deep breath, Thendiel reached for her studies. Knowledge is what the wizard said she needed, so knowledge is what she sought.

Today she was learning how to identify the herbs and roots that made up the medicines her clan provided for the village.

"You have to be able to do more than talk to trees. That is why we work as healers," her mother had told her. Thendiel was happy to learn to be part of that.

The master wizard showed Thendiel how to use her mind's dimension of inner sight to look into the trees themselves. She adapted the same technique to understand more in depth the sicknesses found in her mother's patients.

Thendiel's mind opened to things she would never have thought of on her own.

+++

Presently...

“I am glad you two are feeling well,” Fiona said, interrupting Roevash and Eijlam’s conversation.

She briskly set a tray carrying hot soup and fresh bread on a side table. She handed out food into grateful hands. Fiona tenderly slung her arms around Roevash’s big shoulders and hugged him soundly.

“I hope you know how much I love you,” she said in his ear with a warm, whispery voice.

Roevash smiled, her breath tickling. He took a small bite of bread.

“Your care is very much appreciated, Fi,” Roevash quietly replied, stirring his soup with a spoon to cool it.

“I, for one, am looking forward to a life of quiet boredom for a while,” Fiona announced as she turned and hugged Eijlam, also kissing him on the ear.

“And look where we are.” She stood up tall, arms out.

“We are living inside the gracious trees that are bigger and smarter than any dwelling I had ever been in.” Fiona made one dramatic twirl around the room.

Eijlam and Roevash glanced at each other and had to smile in agreement. They were all very happy to be home.

“I am glad that island curse is gone so we could return,” Fiona added as an afterthought and to remind them *again* of that fact.

“There is more bread on the tray. Help yourselves,” she said as she picked up the last two mugs of broth and walked out the door to find her sister.

C H A P T E R F O U R

OLD GUARD

Naalin sat among the orange and yellow flowers, listening to buzzing bees, enjoying their low humming sounds. White streaks of cloud slowly trailed across a bright, pale blue sky.

"I always thought this place was a kind of paradise," Naalin softly said. "I am glad to be here with you." She sat up to take the cup held out for her.

Fionna sat down among the branches with her own soup and looked up at the clouds.

"Do you want to visit the island," asked Fionna.

"Yes, but let us not sail today. I am happy in knowing our kin finds rest in the arms of our Arus and are not forever turned to stone in that cold tomb."

"I agree," Fionna lazily replied. She was going to ask if Naalin wanted her hair braided, but she could see it was already done.

"Are you and Roe well," asked Fionna, knowing it was his hands that fixed her hair.

Naalin thought reflectively for a moment and then confided. "He suffers so when he thinks too much on what happened to us." Naalin frowned into her cup and then took another sip.

Fionna felt real fear rising in her gut. She remembered the anger Eijlam experienced the first time he was unexpectedly brought back into the mortal realm.

The wizard, Farghal, who was her guardian at the time, had said it was normal to feel such unreasonable emotions as the forgotten past resurfaced.

Eijlam had gone raving mad and tried to end himself right in front of her. That was not something she ever wanted to experience again.

"Thank the gods for wizard magics." Fionna shook herself back from such vivid memories.

Wizard magics had saved Eijlam's life. Fionna stared down into her cup, having lost her appetite.

"I think we need to hug Roe a lot and make it known how much we love him." Fionna frowned uncomfortably, not knowing what else they could do to avoid such mental anguish or possible self-harm.

"I am sure he knows how much we care," Fionna mumbled, her voice shaky.

"He knows, right?" she anxiously looked at Naalin, who was staring at her with her big sister. Of course, he knows her face. Fionna took a deep breath and flopped back into the flowers. Naalin's voice broke into her worries.

"He told me he *could not command*. The training post was his whole life before the mad god's assault. The men of the fort are going to be disappointed." Naalin sipped her broth and leaned back, gazing up again to watch the clouds. She was being graciously oblivious to her sister's angsty outburst.

"He says it is too much power to have over human lives. What he recalls of the cult is not good." Naalin turned to face Fionna.

"Maybe you can comfort him by listening as you have to my story. It makes it easier to bear." Naalin reached out and squeezed Fionna's hand.

"I think it must be unspeakable," Fionna quietly said. "I have been Roevash's friend for a long time. I have listened to *all* his past stories, but he has not said one word to me about this one."

Fionna had been watching a fat bee that plopped off the edge of a flower and was struggling with tiny wings to lift off the ground. She thought to help, but the bee gained momentum on its own, buzzing heavily away.

"If he speaks, I will listen," Fionna assured her sister.

"Roe has seen more violence than I can even imagine. Retirement is his due," Fionna said in retrospect.

"You both should be allowed to enjoy a quiet life with your family." She turned to Naalin. Her sister's expression broke into a rare smile.

"The little one will keep us busy for a long time to come. We want to stay here to raise him among the family trees." Naalin was beaming as she thought about her newborn.

"We are going to have to send for our son, *Elgelion*, soon." Naalin looked anxiously at Fionna.

Fionna suddenly felt a little relief as she realized Elgelion might be the only hope of keeping Roevash stable through this final transition time.

"I think you both are well enough to handle an elfling, and you will have Cael and the rest of us to help," Fionna's voice trailed off as she saw the confusion on her sister's face.

"Remember, Cael? He cannot speak because the cultists cut out his tongue," Fionna explained.

Naalin sat scowling down at the ground. She had witnessed the cult followers and the twisted behavior of their priests during one such tongue-cutting ritual. Her fists clenched at the thought of one of those crazies around her son.

"No, Naalin, Cael is our friend." Fionna put a hand on Naalin's arm to bring her back from such thoughts.

"Cael was one of the queen's guard," Fionna quickly reminded.

“They allowed themselves to be captured so they might have the chance to save their princess. *Princess Elanoreth*, you remember her? Young Cael saved you from that place.”

Naalin’s eyes teared up. She silently nodded. Fionna reached forward, holding her sister in a consoling embrace.

“For such a young man, he is so passionate about keeping little Elgelion safe from harm.” Fionna softly spoke. Quiet sobs fell against Fionna’s neck as they hugged.

“I wish I had told Dakein to retrieve them for us, but I only had an idea about how long this rebirth would take.” Fionna looked deep into Naalin’s eyes.

“Please forgive me,” she begged.

“You both deserve to know the joy of your own newborn before he turns into an elfling toddler. Elgelion is a beaming light beyond all this darkness.”

Naalin’s eyes softened again at the thought of her little one. She solemnly nodded in agreement, leaning back into her resting place among the flowers. She trusted that they would all go to Drustnlach as soon as Fionna was sure they were all well enough to make the journey.

+++

Long Ago, cont...

Thendiel was waiting by the garden fountain when Master Farghal suddenly appeared out of nowhere. She didn’t react, having experienced this kind of thing many times before.

Farghal had a small creature tucked up in his sleeve. Thendiel could not say what it was. A gray spot adorned the top of its head.

The tiny creature was peering through bulgy eyes at her, its limbs covered with soft leafy scales.

A paw wrapped its clear claws around her fingertip.

The sharp nails didn’t hurt as the creature scooted forward to the edge of the sleeve near her hand.

Branchy sensors moved on its head like a rabbit’s ears. Thendiel had seen this kind of fringy growths before, on ocean creatures. Sea horse comes to mind as she stares, blank in thought.

The little thing shimmered in the dim light, giving off an almost ghostly air.

Thendiel gently touched the creature on the top of its head and marveled at its gentle nature.

"This is Master Sibelast," Master Farghal startled her out of the transfixed gaze she had fallen into.

“He is, at the moment, in our natural form. When we are in this form, we are Ilmari. Sibelast is also a wizard.”

Thendiel was sorry she'd pet a master wizard on the head like an animal.

"Yes, and that is why I introduced you in this way," Farghal said, as if reading her mind.

"You must realize by now the realm of Ilmatar is not always as it seems." It was a question that need not be answered. Thendiel nodded wide-eyed.

"Master Sibelast is my friend and closest ally. You can always trust him," Farghal said. The word always seemed emphasized in her mind.

Thendiel bowed in proper greeting to Master Sibelast as he jumped to the ground and transformed into a wizard right in front of her, robes and all. He was not as tall as Master Farghal. His robe was a dusty grey color.

He shook out a billowing cloud of dust. He had long silvery hair, only Sibelast did not seem as well kept. As with all wizards, a whiskery beard flowed halfway down the front of him.

Sibelast wordlessly leaned over and patted Thendiel on the head in greeting. She blushed, knowing he meant no harm in getting his point across.

"Just always remember one important fact, we leap. We do not hop," he explained with a dignified air. Thendiel giggled, agreeing vigorously. She already liked Farghal's companion, Sibelast.

"You have learned many things, Thendiel, and you have grown to adolescence. So, today we will show you the Ilmari's place in creation. We will be escorting you to the other realm," Farghal announced.

"It is our true home, you might say," Sibelast said, holding out a hand to her. Thendiel grasped the wizard's hand and stepped forward on the common garden path as she had always done.

The light grew bright as they passed by the tiny water spout where Master Farghal usually stopped for a sip. This time he did not stop. The sound of the water grew loud as it tore into the rock below. It was as if time itself became tangible in its release.

Time was a key in the wizard's hand. He stretched forward. With one thump of a boot heel on the stone path, Thendiel felt the air thicken with a loud ripping pop inside her ears.

It did not hurt, but she did have the sudden sensation of being underneath vast depths of water. The air, though breathable, had turned grey and heavy. She struggled to move through an abrasive pressure. The firm grip on her hand guided her where eyes and other senses could not.

With another step forward, Thendiel and the wizard were in a heavily misted garden that was no longer the gardens of Illianheni. Thendiel tried not to panic. She wondered how she was breathing at all.

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Presently...

“Naalin!” Fionna’s eyes were as wide as her smile as she remembered her own condition.

“I am,” she paused, not knowing how to break the news.

“Eijlam and I are having a daughter,” she finally said.

Naalin gasped, tears of joy coming to her eyes while hugging her younger sister.

“Eijlam discovered her some time ago now,” Fionna said.

“How did this happen? I mean, *I know how it happened*, but you are both *too young* for this.” Naalin was confused. It was her turn to worry.

“We think this early maturing has something to do with this mortal realm. We are the last of the Edhelath, and Eijlam thinks we might be changing,” Fionna just threw that out there.

“You do not think we are becoming mortal, *like humans*?” The distaste of such a thought clearly stained across Naalin’s face; distressed at the thought of being like *them*.

“I do not think I would go *there*.” Fionna’s brow furrowed, clearly on her own path of thinking.

“Eijlam and I have spoken on it more than a few times. We will certainly remember to ask King Ellinduil when we next see him, if he continues to live.” Fionna looked tense.

She laid her hand instinctively on her belly.

“Ellinduil has many good answers.” Naalin sweetly smiled as she laid a reassuring kiss on Fionna’s cheek.

“Maybe this is all just the new natural way, and there is nothing to be concerned about.” Fionna smiled at her sister and tried not to seem worried for her sake.

The whole clan was in a state of convalescence after all, and Fionna could just feel the undertone of woke insanity starting to bubble below the surface.

Patting Naalin on the shoulder, Fionna gave her sister the biggest, most disarming smile she could muster. Suddenly, she desperately yearned to be near Eijlam.

+++

Long Ago, cont...

Ghostly figures milled around among the flowers and down the many paths as Thendiel and the two wizards strolled past. She could see the inhabitants here were made up mostly of edhel, but there were, strangely, a few human spirits among them.

In the middle of the place, a great stone well dominated the center of the lovely garden. Thirsty spirits lingered and drank its clear, silvery water from a shared cup which hung under the inside edge when not in use.

“It is the stuff of creation and dreams,” Farghal’s voice whispered inside Thendiel’s head. There were so many new sensations that she began to feel queasy.

Farghal reached down into the well and scooped a portion which appeared as an ornate cup in his hand. He touched it to her lips, and she drank.

It was a cool, fresh breath in an evening when the air was damp and the sunset darkened beyond a flaming lake. Thendiel felt peaceful in her reverie. She did not know how long she had lingered in that dreamlike state.

The tug of Sibelast’s hand woke her mind to his presence. The shared cup came into focus as Thendiel was gently moved away. It shimmered with a silvery light that almost seemed crystalline from its hook inside the rim of the well.

She yearned to stay and drink again.

“Odd,” Thendiel thought, as the further she moved away from the well, the sound of it pealed through her body like a low tolling bell.

The wizards kept her safely between them now as they moved through the garden into woodlands beyond.

“Are you going to change into your Ilmari shape?” Thendiel drifted as she tried to set her mind on something comprehensible.

She got no immediate answer. A clearing in the forest suddenly opened before them. It was a lovely green, grassy hillock. Thendiel found solid footing beneath her feet and sank to her knees in exhaustion.

Master Farghal quickly shifted into a tall, blue-gray creature with a black nose. Master Sibelast was mostly white but with light gray spots all over his body, not just on his head.

Farghal sat up tall on strong haunches, trying to look as dignified as possible.

Thendiel had to take a deep breath and withstand the need to both giggle and throw up.

The taste of vomit rose up her throat, and her stomach heaved violently to the side; it was all she could do to resist the urge to continue to vomit.

“Your body must grow accustomed to Ilmatar,” Sibelast pulled on one of his long, branchy antlers as he thoughtfully stared at her.

“You walk in the place of the Arus.” The sound of Farghal’s voice seemed to be way too close to her face and was so loud she cringed as if slapped by mere words. Thendiel wanted to go home and never feel like this again.

“It will be easier with each visit. You will see,” Farghal assured her. He could see the strain on Thendiel’s face at the thought of a second visit.

Thendiel knew of the Arus. She had no idea the wizards were somehow connected to them and could bring her here. She should have known they were not simply teasing her when they announced their intentions.

She grasped her amulet and felt its familiar pulse. It was as if it spoke to her through her fingertips, but she could not understand the language.

It did, however, have a calming effect, and her heart slowed, and her gut stopped clenching in her throat.

Farghal glanced over at Sibelast, who nodded.

In a wild charge, the Ilmari leapt into the air. The two danced and cavorted in circles until Thendiel was thoroughly distracted from her sickness.

She tried to stand up to join in, but her legs were still weak. She managed to whistle along; a tune they did in the dance.

“You certainly do find joy in this place,” Thendiel exclaimed, happily clapping her hands as the Ilmari came to a halt in front of her. Farghal and Sibelast collapsed lazily together in clean grass.

“We only wish for you to feel the same. This is home after all,” Sibelast said. Farghal shot him a hushing glance.

“If you say so,” Thendiel agreed, not catching the exchange.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DREAM

Presently...

The sounds of laughter and squeals of delight followed two figures as the couple ran hand in hand past gulls scattering into squalling flight. The sun shone hot through a cloudless blue sky on the sandy shore.

“Did you like the one over there?” Fionna pointed up at the tree homes off in the distance but still visible from where they’d stopped on the beach.

“I like that one,” Eijlam gently caressed Fionna’s face in his hands and kissed her.

“You are not even looking,” Fionna mildly protested under his smiling gaze, her nose touching the end of his.

“I will love anywhere my Fionna decides to be,” he kissed her again.

He wrapped himself around her in a full-body hug. Fionna melted into his arms as they spun around. Eijlam picked Fionna up and carried her toward the water. With his eyes fixated on hers, he stepped on something sharp and yelped.

Eijlam twisted around, held on tight, and Fionna landed right on top of him in a splashing heap.

“You should have seen your face,” Fionna giggled as they both sat up out of shallow water. “Such a surprise.”

“Ouch, what did I step on?” Eijlam pulled his foot up to take a closer look. He found only his pride had been damaged. But that didn’t last long as Fionna distracted him with what she’d found under the sand.

“What is it?” She held up the large shell. It was polished iridescent on its surface and curled around like a ram’s horn with a smooth pink interior.

“It was once home to a mollusk,” Eijlam explained. “They do not easily give up their shells.”

“Where did it come from,” Fionna asked.

“There are many such creatures in the waters under the footbridge. I mean, where the footbridge once was.” He pointed toward the river estuary.

“This one is large. It must have been an elder mollusk.” Eijlam added as he peered at the polished glint of colors shining off its exterior.

“Then we will take its wisdom to our new home.” Fionna handed the huge shell to Eijlam. He showed her how to hear the ocean in it by holding the opening to her ear. They headed back toward Eldelórne.

As much as they loved Thendiel's grand home, they wanted a place of their own. Eijlam and Fionna had spent days searching through the empty homes in the village.

Fionna reverently placed the large elder mollusk shell on their chosen doorstep. She heard the great tree sigh with joy as she ran her hand along the smooth brown wall of the entryway.

Eijlam smiled at Fionna's wonder at everything that he'd taken for granted. Eldelórne was a new experience for her. She had been raised by a wizard in a small cottage near a city.

Fionna didn't even realize *what* she was until Eijlam showed up and told her about the lives of Edhelath.

"I am sorry I frightened you," Eijlam said out loud from thinking about the old memory. Fionna put a hand on his shoulder and snapped him back to the present time.

"You were in your first rebirth and had no control over such things," she assured him.

"I thought I had lost you," he looked anguished. The separation that followed such a mindless blunder was almost more than he could handle at the time.

"This is a wound that must heal," Fionna instinctively knew.

"Come, we will make our bed and you can tell me all that you feel and I will listen." Fionna softly smiled and Eijlam nodded as he let her pull him away to their new home.

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Long Ago, cont...

Every meeting with the wizard Farghal ended up in Ilmatar after that first time. They would quickly move beyond the well into the woodlands. Sometimes without stopping for a drink of the magical water.

Thendiel's nausea stopped bothering her after several journeys. She started to like the sensations of this realm. Once the place accepted her, Thendiel thought Ilmatar felt similar to elder trees.

She now understood why the Ilmari called it home.

"Seven days now, I have had the same strange dream," Thendiel confided one day, as she sat down on the familiar green hillock.

"What kind of dream," Ilmari Farghal asked.

"Please, do tell us," Sibelast urged, nibbling on a blade of grass. She had not noticed before how Sibelast's spots formed into what looked like a gray vest and flat hat as he sat up tall on his haunches.

“My dream is disturbing.” Thendiel poked at the soft sandy loam beneath her.

“I see a bed that is covered in gemstones and carved symbols that seem familiar, but I cannot read them.”

The Ilmari soberly glanced at each other as her story unfolded.

“The surrounding room is open to lands that sparkle with colors and textures I could never have imagined. This part of my dream may change, but one thing always remains the same. Two youths come to me and lay down, one on each side.”

Thendiel rolled onto her back, basking in the sensation of their embrace in her mind.

“The one to my right is as dark as the new moon with eyes that shine like stars, and the other to my left is as pale as the brightest sun. They are both equally pleasing to the senses and love me dearly. I would be loath to choose which is my favorite. I know they are both of equal importance.”

Thendiel’s eyes suddenly filled with tears.

“I would give my own life before choosing one over the other. The dream made me feel so unhappy. My heart broke for the loss of them upon waking. Surely I would not have rejected either one.” Thendiel felt a piercing agony in her heart.

Thendiel grasped her medallion. Its violent swirling calmed as she willed it to stop.

Thendiel slowly pulled herself up to a sitting position and searched their faces, expecting an answer. The Ilmari’s silence was revealing.

“What could this mean?” She prodded her friends.

“Is this dream the illicit ramblings of my adolescent mind or is there something I must learn?”

The Ilmari looked at each other. The silence was revealing, and she sensed there was something the wizards understood and could not reveal to her yet.

“We are not exactly sure. We hoped bringing you to Ilmatar would delay any such dreams,” Farghal finally confessed.

“You knew I would have dreams?” Thendiel demanded.

“Yes, you are coming of age and...” Farghal started to say.

“You are an oracle, of sorts,” Sibelast chimed in.

“Oracle?” Thendiel scowled.

“Did YOU do this to me?” She questioned.

“No,” Master Farghal said, which was slightly less than half the truth.

“You are a natural,” He added, with a flourish of a paw for effect.

“There is so much that can be interpreted incorrectly in dream visions. We could lead you astray by even trying to make sense of them when the proper time is not near,” Sibelast quickly explained.

“I suppose you are right. I will just have to continue to trust in your wise council,” Thendiel grumped.

“I am a natural, what,” she directed at Farghal.

“Seer, you are a natural seer,” he said.

“Visions,” Thendiel curiously thought to herself.

She did trust the wizards. How could she not after all this time? Thendiel’s mind reeled with so many questions. She was determined to find out all the answers.

“Time will tell,” she said with narrowed eyes.

The Ilmari nervously agreed with a formal bow. After a short rest, Thendiel followed them down a path that she knew would take her home.

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Presently...

Maybe it was that they had each other. Maybe it was from the gentler way of coming home out of the ocean waves, but the anticipated emotional pain Fionna feared from the rebirth experience never surfaced in any of Thendiel’s clan.

Fionna, instead, listened to memories of the cult experience and of Ilmatar. With each telling, it was easier to set it aside and move on.

The small family found happiness. Even Roevash caught himself smiling for the first time in ages.

Weapons and armor that had been a daily part of their lives were carefully cleaned and stored away. They were replaced by tunics and tools used for crafting and fixing.

Eldelórne woke from its long slumber as the couples scoured the once-abandoned village for things that would help start their new lives together.

Naalin wanted to pay respects to the island they had named, Tol Haudh. The place would always be considered a tomb because of the kinslaying that occurred there.

Roevash and Naalin decided to start rebuilding the wharf and find out what ships were salvageable.

Soon, Naalin identified one ship that would be sail-worthy, and then another thought crossed her mind.

“If we can make this work, we all could sail to the capital city and save ourselves the long walk across the hot desert of the Lunto Plains,” Naalin announced.

Roevash sat at her side, looking agreeable.

“It would be a faster way to travel,” Eijlam could see the sense in it. He was relieved to spare Fiona such a long journey on foot.

C H A P T E R S I X

CLAN DESTINED

Fionna was excited to find the doorstep on the tree across the way laid open. Naalin and Roevash had moved from the elder tree to the tree across from Fionna and Eijlam's new home.

Fionna couldn't believe Roevash would choose to move out of the elder tree, but her sister just laughed it off. She had been busy organizing a new kitchen. Naalin grinned as she placed a ladle near the hearth area.

Fionna sat down at the huge counter-like table that dominated the first room. She thought the place seemed more like the cozy feel of a tavern than a home.

They had arranged a sitting area near a hearth. The large wooden rocking chair and many cushions already waited there for evening gatherings. Fionna smiled at that.

"We could not stand being so far away from you. This old village is very large." Naalin finally admitted, brandishing a thick cloth in her hand.

"Especially now as Eldelórne stands so empty." She pulled a pan of honey bread, hot from the oven, and set it to cool on the large counter between them.

"I knew something was baking!" Fionna took a deep, satisfying breath. "I certainly have missed the smell of my sister's baking." She could feel her mouth water.

"There are too many memories in the elder tree of his youth. Roevash thought it a better idea to break from the past. I did agree," Naalin confided. "If trouble should find us, it is better to be close."

Fionna agreed. Horrors of the recent past were not lost on her.

"How are the repairs going down at the docks? Do you need more help?" Fionna suddenly realized Eijlam had been hovering and keeping her away from the heavy lifting.

"My ship will be a worthy sailing vessel again," Naalin excitedly said.

"Your ship," Fionna asked.

"Yes, *my ship*," Naalin said, grinning from ear to ear.

"You do not believe the big guy could sail," Naalin looked bemused at her sister.

"I was its captain long ago. So many seasons have come and gone since that time. The ship was in such disrepair that I did not recognize the old derelict at first." Naalin looked sideways at her sister.

“It was a rare thing that could ever pry me away from my ship. Thankfully, he has decided to help me rebuild it,” she giggled.

Naalin sat down and cut the steamy bread and handed a portion to Fiona on a delicate plate that was carved out of a clear flat stone.

“Oh, I forgot the drink.” Naalin motioned across the countertop. Fiona obediently reached over and carefully slid a jug of freshly prepared juice closer to herself.

Picking up one of the matching stone cups, she poured it half-full. She passed it to Naalin, who had just finished laying out a couple of three-pronged forks to eat with.

“You love sailing that much?” Fiona marveled. Naalin shoved some honey-butter at her to slather over the hot treat.

“Yes, I do. It is in our blood,” Naalin proudly said.

“I never thought of *myself* sailing on oceans,” Fiona admitted, chewing a large bite of hot honey bread.

“It is in our blood, yours and mine,” Naalin repeated. “You may surprise yourself.”

“Did you know Roe has a dense fear of deep water?” Fiona added as she took in a big, satisfying bite of the honey bread. Naalin stopped her munching and stared.

“He did not tell me he was earthbound, though I should have suspected as much.” She frowned. “I can see his unease on the deck,” she sighed.

“No matter,” Naalin took a sip of her juice. “Roe and I are bound in this life together, and I would not have it any other way.”

“His fear has something to do with Eijlam and deep water. I think EJ almost drowned once.” Fiona reminded herself to ask him about that.

“All this time, and neither one of them has come forward to explain it to me.” Fiona shook her head, surprised by that revelation.

“This type of ship is built for trade along shorelines. It is not made for deep water.” Naalin explained, ignoring Fiona’s puzzled face.

“That should be some consolation then,” Fiona said.

“We should be able to sail to Drustnlach soon. Roe must sail with me at least that much,” Naalin decided. “That will be enough. He can bring our son home.”

“Yes,” Fiona and all of Eldelórne agreed in a silent whisper.

Eijlam pensively gazed toward the sparkling sea inlet over the branch railing that wove around the front deck of their new home. The rush of glittering light and sound of sleepy waves put him at ease. The view was breathtaking as the evening breeze dominated the water’s edge.

“I dreamt of watching many young elflings play in the sand below,” Eijlam said, hearing Fionna’s footsteps behind him. She smiled, leaning in next to him, her arm brushing softly against his. He turned his head to find her glistening eyes looking at him.

Fionna leaned in, her sweet breath so enticing. He could not resist tasting the pouty lips she offered. He pulled back, turning his eyes back to the horizon. He was trying to keep some kind of self-imposed restraint.

Cranky gulls fighting over an unlucky mollusk, stranded in the tide, could be heard squawking in the distance, filling in an awkward silence. Fionna let out a long sigh and a sideways glance at Eijlam.

“Eldelórne should always be a place of peace for all edhel no matter how few we might be,” Eijlam tried distraction—by envisioning village life.

Fionna touched her belly, a thoughtful scowl on her face as she pretended not to notice the palpable tension.

Eijlam heard her sigh and chanced a glance her way. Fionna’s expression was both heart-wrenching and worrisome.

A slight breeze moved her hair back from her shoulder. She felt an arm melt around her as Eijlam hugged her to his side. She tilted her head against his shoulder. Together they silently looked out over the sandy beach for one fragile moment, enjoying the calm.

“I miss you, my beloved,” Fionna whispered, breaking the silence. A numb shiver crawled up Eijlam’s spine. Every fiber of his body yearned for her, but he restrained himself, fearing he’d cause harm in her condition.

“You cannot hurt me,” Fionna said, as if reading his thoughts, also staring out at the horizon.

“I, I do not know,” Eijlam said nervously in a low whisper. Familiar nausea rose in his gut, and his lips blanched.

Fionna turned toward Eijlam and ran her small hands down over his shoulders and around to his back. She tried to soothe the fitfulness roiling throughout his body.

“Naalin tells me it is okay,” Fionna assured him, her eyes finding his. Eijlam gazed longingly, not sure, but then Fionna’s words came tumbling out...

“Naalin lived when normal village life was abundant and she helped our mother with many who were expecting. She told me it will be all right, EJ, are you listening to me,” Fionna tenderly petitioned against his hesitation.

Whimpering softly, Eijlam sinks down to his knees in front of Fionna, gently holding the side of his face to her firm belly.

“Our little one must never know pain like we have endured, Fionna. We have to keep her safe.” Tears betrayed his worried mind.

“Her own papa cannot harm her. I am certain of that, my love. All the evil of the past is gone.” Fionna said.

Eijlam’s mouth formed into another protest, but he did not get to say another word. Fionna’s lips found his as she took him up in a full embrace.

He could not deny the burning inside that would only be sated by their body and soul bond.

Fionna’s hand gently lifted a stray strand of hair away from Eijlam’s face. In one glance, her love pierced him to his very core.

Breath caught in his throat at the feel of Fionna’s body quivering at the pleasure of his touch.

Unable to restrain himself any longer, he rose up, his lips tracing hungrily across the curve of her neck. In that same motion, Fionna found herself, the most precious thing in his world, as Eijlam cradled her in his arms and carried her over the threshold to their private chambers.

The door latch clunked down solidly behind them, assuring privacy from prying eyes.

PRINCESS

Princess Elanoreth rocked Elgelion in her arms. The little one giggled as the momentum pulled at his tiny body. She smiled and laughed at the happy faces El made.

“You are going to be such a handful when you start crawling. I can see it in your eyes. You will be into *everything!*”

Elgelion squirmed out of her lap down to the floor where she turned him over.

“You cannot get away, hahaha.” She tickled his tummy and listened to his wide-eyed screeching.

Cael came in through the door with purchases from the grocer. He smiled at seeing their antics as he put away the foods into the cupboards. He was happy to be living near the capital again. His whole life was here. He looked over at Elanoreth. She was the most beautiful girl he ever knew. Cael shook his head trying to get the idea of hugging her passionately out of his mind.

He loved the princess dearly but she was, *the princess*. Cael was glad his tongue was removed so he would not say anything stupid. He felt his cheeks turn red. So many deliciously disastrous things kept popping into his mind. Cael felt idiotic these days, and oddly numb around the princess. It never used to be this way when they were younger.

“Gods save me,” Cael scolded himself as he watched Elanoreth play with the elfling.

At first, he innocently pretended the three of them were a real family. The house seemed brighter when she came to visit. It seemed so real and natural.

The casual comfort of her friendship gave him thoughts of touching her and even kissing her. Cael tried to shake those thoughts out of his skull.

“Without the benefits of true spoken devotion, it cannot be as such between us even if I had a tongue in my mouth,” Cael struggled to keep his ridiculous thoughts in check.

He meekly smiled as he watched Elanoreth roll around on the floor with the baby elfling clinging to her front.

“Lucky Elgelion,” he thought with a sigh.

Cael turned sadly away to make them some boiled something-or-other for breakfast.

It had been about six weeks since the courier from Fort Vehlevar brought him news that the elves were all safe in Eldelórne. Cael thought he would have heard from them by now.

He didn't worry. He was unusually distracted as of late. He could not imagine a day without his best friend, Elanoreth.

While he was deep in thought, Elanoreth snuck up behind him and tickled him. He turned and laughed as he reached out and tickled her giggling bodice in return. Realizing what he had done, he quickly pulled his hand back and blushed.

Elgelion squealed in delight at all the fun.

"You are too serious," Elanoreth said as she marched around a smiling Cael.

"I love you," he said boldly, but she could not understand his tongueless words. He smiled to himself, knowing he could say anything.

"I want to kiss your sweet lips," he blurted.

Elanoreth just laughed at his funny sounds and smiled, twirling around with the giggling Elgelion. The fun continued unhindered by his secret desire.

Elanoreth's long hair flowed like a veil in the momentum of her dance. Cael thought the moment seemed to slow as his eyes took it all in.

"I am sorry, Cael. I will have to leave you fine gents alone for breakfast."

Cael snapped back to reality.

Elanoreth sat the elfling down, reached out, and quickly hugged Cael cheek to cheek to say goodbye and whisked out the door.

Cael sighed at the solid latch clicking behind her.

"You need to learn to sing," Cael said to the little one who was lying on his back, busily investigating his own toes.

His suggestion sounded like noise in the room, but Elgelion didn't care.

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"You *are the light*, Eijlam," Fionna said with a smile and a gentle hip-check. He was hovering while she scrambled the eggs for breakfast. Fionna leaned into his shoulder, and he put his arms around her.

"So, if you can lead them away from the silence of the *Taur*," Roevash repeated what he thought he understood.

"And if the damage is not too severe, your light can heal?" Roevash nodded, a puzzled look on his face.

He had never thought much about the Arus and Ilmatar in the past, but now that they had been there and returned, he found it fascinating.

"The Undome Taur is a great twilight forest," Eijlam motioned to clunk his brother on the head with his fork. He thought better of it and instead bolted past to find a place to sit down at the table.

“The lion attack you suffered when *I first found you* is a good example,” Eijlam went on. “It was your own decision to come back that made it possible for your survival.”

“But *I first found you*,” Roevash corrected Eijlam as he passed a basket of fruit to him.

“No, I *found you*,” Eijlam countered, taking a bite out of an apple as he set the basket down in front of Fionna.

“No, I knew of you *before* you knew of me, little brother.”

They bantered back and forth until Fionna cleared her throat, and they both quietly surrendered their silliness into silence.

“Fionna’s tattoos from the Shadow Cult are removed. I took her into the threshold,” Eijlam triumphantly said, changing the subject.

“Now, Eijlam, you just told me you cannot *take someone* into the threshold for healing.” Roevash was confused.

“Fionna and I are heart-bonded,” Eijlam reminded his brother.

“That is why *her spirit* can follow me. Like when we *found you*,” Eijlam grinned, knowing his brother would start arguing that frivolous point again. Roevash just gave him a narrow-eyed smirk.

Fionna pulled up her sleeve to show Roevash the rune marks were gone.

“The marks separated from me like droplets of oil. They floated away to the dark edges beyond the light.”

Fionna was glad to be rid of the reminders of the torture that she had endured at the hands of the cult priests.

“It was like being healed, in a way,” she said as she reached for a cup.

“It is good you could do that, EJ,” Roevash said.

“The markings, they must have had a magical effect. I could feel it,” he confessed.

“I am glad they are gone.” Roevash stuffed some bread in his mouth and silently chewed.

Seeing his brother’s discomfort, Eijlam changed the subject again to something more pleasant.

“We will soon travel to Autumwood Kingdom and thank King Ellinduil after we bring Elgelion and Cael back,” Eijlam reminded everyone.

“Is there anything, a gift of some kind, we could bring the king,” asked Naalin.

An overripe plum exploded its juice down the front of Fionna. Eijlam lost track of what they were talking about as his eyes followed the juice drip in wet rivulets down Fionna’s neck. He absently licked his lips.

Fionna quickly put the plum down with a scowl. Eijlam's face blushed beet-red as he handed her a clean, dry cloth. He couldn't help staring like a starved wolf.

Fionna playfully leaned forward and wiped the juice from her neck with the cloth, eyeing Eijlam with a hint of amusement.

"Our king has seen at least fourteen thousand years in long memory, if not more. I imagine there is not much else he could desire," Roevash said with a scowl. He did not like the Autumwood forest land or the odd king.

"You seem distracted, Eijlam. Is there something you'd like to say?" Fionna whispered with a sultry tone in mind-speak.

Eijlam's face reddened further, his Adam's apple bobbing as he gulped nervously. He mouthed a reply, his words turning into a wicked grin. Fionna winked, her teeth sinking into her lower lip.

With their eyes full of playful enjoyment, they joined the ongoing discussion as if nothing had happened.

"What can you give to a king who has already had everything this realm could offer?" Fionna loudly threw that out there.

"Being part of our clan might be a kind gesture." Eijlam leaned in and cleaned a drop of plum juice off Fionna's face with a quick kiss.

Naalin felt sorry for Ellinduil. "His kingdom, which spreads all this way to Eldelórne, continues to shield us from prying eyes because of his strong magics. It must feel desolate being in Autumwood all alone," her voice trickled away.

"Then we will *bring noise* to his palace. That might be the best gift of all," Eijlam smiled.

Everyone happily nodded in agreement as they finished the last bits of breakfast.

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Long Ago, continued...

The normally hot delta weather still blew cold as the grasp of winter loosened its grip. Thendiel walked with the mature dignity of adolescence across the Illianheni footbridge.

She kept her hair braided in several long strands that hung down past her waist. A colorful shawl clung tightly around her shoulders for warmth in the chilling breeze.

Mornings sparkled with ice crystals that formed in the night only to quickly melt away at the arrival of the morning sun. Master Farghal solemnly nodded as she met him on the path.

With one hand on her amulet, Thendiel easily followed him into the landscape of Ilmatar.

Arus Lourien's gardens were so peaceful that Thendiel did not want to leave it, but this was to be her final lesson. She would miss watching the transparent souls of humans and the spirits of edhel as they mingled like wispy clouds in the garden.

"I had brought you to this place so you would not be afraid if you should ever find yourself here on your own. Exposure to Ilmatar has also strengthened the fiber of your being," Master Farghal said.

"There may come a time when you will have to persist here for a short time without my help or guidance," he frowned.

Thendiel felt melancholy knowing that soon, Master Farghal was going to bring her home, and she was going to have to live a life in the mundane mortal realm.

"For your final lesson, Thendiel, you will be allowed to witness the Heart of Ilmatar and learn of its long memory," Farghal solemnly smiled through his bearded face and took her by the hand.

With a blink of an eye, he brought her into the presence of a large round disc the size of a drawn coach or carriage.

Thendiel sensed that they were still in the middle of the garden, but it had subtly changed somehow. She knew they had traveled a great distance somewhere and at the same time, they stood in the exact same place as they were seconds ago.

As Thendiel looked on, she could see the layers that surrounded them like a protective shield and wondered, "Why all the secrecy?"

"That is exactly what we are here to find out," Farghal answered her thoughts.

The stone before them was chiseled perfectly smooth. Thendiel had the urge to run her hands on it, but she forced herself to respectfully stand back.

Master Sibelast smiled at Thendiel in greeting as he sparkled into existence nearby and came to join the lesson.

The stone was pure iridescent white on one side, spinning slowly on its edge in perfect balance. As they watched it come around to the other side, it was as polished obsidian.

"Our High King has named this, *Mor'annon*. Some have called it the *Black Gate*, but you can see it is equally light as well as dark. It is the one thing in our realm that many fear," Farghal said with a touch of sadness in his voice.

"The *Mor'annon* moves and stands on its own accord. You will find it at the heart of all you see and feel in creation."

"Can I touch it?" Thendiel put her hand out.

"It would not be wise to disturb her for she is at rest right now," Farghal whispered reverently and respectfully bowed towards the Heart of Ilmatar.

Not touching the stone filled Thendiel with such overwhelming remorse. She didn't understand, but she obediently withdrew her hand. She felt her heart breaking and didn't know why.

“The queen was sleeping,” Thendiel said in a quiet voice, “That is why we are in the winter season.”

“Yes, Thendiel, the Ithild rests, but her mind is always on many things too numerous to speak in any tongue.” Farghal smiled at Thendiel’s quickness to understand the depth of such things.

He felt hope for the future and more confidence than he had in a long time. He nodded at Sibelast, who took the opportunity to say his goodbyes and disappear.

“With that, it is time for you to go.” Farghal took Thendiel’s hand and affectionately wrapped it around his arm and patted it there.

He led her forward out of Ilmatar back to the gardens of Illianheni.

“Know this, Thendiel,” he looked directly into her eyes as he spoke.

“Ilmari always stand together, guarding the realms from chaos.” With those few last words, Master Farghal turned and disappeared into the mist beyond her sight.

It had been many years since Thendiel had secretly started schooling with the wizards, and she had a sense of hollowness at its end. She felt she was truly alone for the first time in her whole life.

Thendiel slowly turned to walk down the long path that led back to her home in Eldelórne. She shivered in the coolness of the misty morning. As she did, the air surrounding her warmed.

Flowers bloomed where her feet touched winter’s cold ground. Springtime was born early that season in Eldelórne...

C H A P T E R E I G H T

RESISTANCE

Do you know her name?” Eijlam gazed with besotted eyes at Fionna. She gently bumped him aside as she picked up the dirty clothes basket and headed out to the beach.

“No, she has not yet awoken, my love,” Fionna smiled at him.

“You and I, we could slip into Ilmatar and visit her spirit, see what she looks like.” Eijlam tried to suggest, his hands all over her in a warm hug.

“No, really, EJ, we should let this happen naturally,” Fionna glanced coyly at him, gently pushing him away, not wanting to give up her power as a traditional elf mother.

“She will speak to me when she is ready,” she reached over and poked Eijlam in the rib under his arm to make him jump.

EJ liked the way Fionna’s eyes sparkled at him.

“We made up for lost time in the night.” He grinned from ear to ear.

“Now there is my Eijlam,” Fionna kissed him. It made him feel content to see her so lighthearted. Her happiness also made his mind heal faster, but he found he did feel oddly queasy sometimes.

“Maybe you are having nesting sickness,” Fionna had told him.

He smiled at the thought and wondered if that was really a thing.

Fionna could sense a slight stretchy heaviness, even though elfling were so tiny when they were born, you could hold one in the palm of your hand.

Carrying a little one certainly did not slow her down. Fionna felt more energy than she had in her whole life, and she did like all the attention. Especially from her Eijlam.

Fionna tried not to be alarmed thinking about how there were no experienced elderhis to help her with the birth.

Naalin was her only source of information. Fionna had to trust that when the time came, Eijlam would not let her or their daughter come to any harm.

“If he does not faint first,” she chuckled to herself.

Fionna looked over at Eijlam. He was gleefully rolling around on the beach, scratching his back. She shook her head as she pulled the wash out of the water. She draped them over nearby branches to dry.

A fistful of sand hit her square between her shoulders. Fionna growled, swinging around to scold Eijlam, finding herself bouncing off his taut chest. He was covered from head to toe in wet sand.

“You will do the, um, cleaning,” she started to say.

“*I will* do the cleaning,” he repeated her words in his most silvery voice, his breath tickling her lips. Fionna closed her eyes and inhaled deeply as he continued to deliciously rub handfuls of wet sand across her body.

“Hmmm?” he wordlessly asked as she softened in his grip.

“I should have known we were not done,” Fionna whispered as her sleepy gaze studied his sand-covered face.

“In a thousand years, I will never be *done* with my Fionna.” Eijlam’s eyes begged, his hands dropping to his sides.

“Do not stop, Ej,” she half-heartedly whined when he stopped massaging her skin.

“*Why do you tease me so?*” her voice purred, her breath tickling his ear.

“Fionna,” Eijlam spoke the only word his mind could focus on as she slid fingers down across his bare chest.

She brought up his sand-covered hands in her own, guiding them over glistening wet curves, their bodies swaying as kisses grew deeper.

The waves were warm in the Eldelórne inlet as the golden sun slid lazily into the ocean. Eijlam gracefully lifted Fionna into his arms and carried her through the warm waves, their bodies molding together perfectly in the soothing embrace of the ocean.

Their movements were deliberate, slow, and sensuous, a dance guided by the gentle rhythm of the water. They flowed away, their connection burning brighter with each passing moment. Breath mingled in desperate gasps between passionate kisses.

As the waves gently coaxed them back to the shore, Eijlam and Fionna collapsed boneless and breathless at the water’s edge. Cuddling to his chest, Fionna’s hand on his heart, Eijlam’s face buried in Fionna’s hair, they fell sound asleep as the tide moved out.

Fionna woke to the sound of splashing waves, sea birds, and Eijlam humming next to her where they lay on the beach. She pressed herself tightly against his warm side, nestling closer, slowly opening her eyes. She noticed he was concentrating on weaving something out of long strands of sedge grass.

“It is a hat,” Eijlam quietly said with his cute, crooked smile. His pale hair slid across his shoulders as he leaned over to try it on Fionna’s head.

“This shades your eyes from the bright sun.”

Sure enough, it was the perfect shape for her head with a wide brim ending in a woven spray of the dried grass.

“When did you learn how to make a hat?”

“I just remembered. My mother taught me. I had not woven one since, hmm,” His expression clouded with sadness, he paused.

“It was a long time ago,” was all he could say. Eijlam instantly brightened up in seeing Fionna wearing her new hat.

“I love it, EJ,” she kissed him and giggled. A light breeze lifted it off her head. Fionna grabbed to catch it as it slid tickling down her back. Eijlam slid the hat up, putting it back into her hands.

“Everyone is going to want one of these,” she said.

Eijlam rolled over and hugged Fionna around the belly. She plopped the hat on his head and smiled.

“Roe knows how to make them as well. He has just forgotten. I cannot wait to see the look on his face when he sees you wearing one.”

“So, you will do the cleaning then?” Fionna looked at him sternly.

“You will be a great mother, Fionna.” Eijlam grinned. “You have that look in your eyes down perfectly.” Fionna playfully grabbed the hat and lightly knuckle-rapped him on the top of his head.

“Ow, you have all the moves. Our little one had better be born good,” Eijlam teased, dodging another swipe that just missed him by a hair as he rolled away to standing. Fionna was right up after him. Eijlam slowly ran, stumbling, hoping she would tackle him.

“What is that?” Fionna stopped and squinted toward the ocean’s edge.

“Looks like a body,” Eijlam wondered, as they took off jogging toward the lump on the beach. Whomever or whatever it was, it was inching its way out of the water.

HERE ENDS THE EXCERPT.

TALES OF ELDELORNE IS 73 CHAPTERS LONG AND OVER 158K WORDS.

THANK YOU FOR AUDITING MY WORK. ~K

EDHELLEN TERMS

Loosely based on Tolkien's formal Sindarin and Quenya languages.

Treneri i sinnarn - “to find truth in the heart” —dream within the dream...

Aran’eliad - roughly translated as, king’s rescuer. Thendiel’s given name/title from King Ellinduil.

Algurth - literally: death storm, a corrupted piece of the Undome Taur.

Undome Taur - the twilight forest. In these stories it is the place of rest for edhel spirits tended by the appointed Arus.

Thîl gwanûn - in our story means, “Two born as one” Literally: conjoined as one.

Yavanni Elenea - September Stars (an autumn celebration)

Glinaur means, shining gold, the name of Cael’s flaxen maned chestnut horse

Mê g’ovannen gi suilon - Well met, I greet you

Nîn hawn - means literally “my brother” meant affectionately between male siblings.

Bah or Baw, means, “Don't do that.” It is a warning sound.

Nan hiûr. A curse “By the gods”

Dhe Talar - The Beast

Dîheno - please forgive me, I am dirt

Gail sila erin lû e-govaned 'wîn - A star shines over this time of our meeting

Tîro nin - Look at me. (do not try to avoid me)

Man agorer angin? - what have you done?

Man i theled cared? - what was your purpose for doing that?

Isto mi dîn angin, elderhis - learn your own heart, grown female. (meaning: you are getting too old for this, grow up.)

Davo nestad anech edanoss, Edhel iôn gi nestad - Allow healing for yourself human in the house of Edhelath, son be healed. (Literally: I grant you healing half-elven son of my kind, be healed)

Echuir’nim - Stirring of the pure one, the true birth of the, **valaethil** (light bringer)

Chyth vîn ring - Shield of cold

Amin hiraetha - I am sorry

Baradhroc - Brown Horse, what Fionna called her horse friend

A’maelamin - my beloved

Anthon ûr nîn anden - You are my heart

GLOSSARY

THERE WILL BE *SPOILERS* AHEAD.

Joyed is the elven dialect describing happiness or in being overjoyed.

Long Memory is just another way to say, “History,” in edhel dialect.

Truth - The truth in elven dialect. Truth has a meaning beyond the word itself as a solemn vow when spoken.

Magics - pluralized Magic is the dialect of our characters.

Ainghaille - The world as we know it so far. Pronounced; “Aing hale” by most dialects and Common Tongue speakers.

Ilmatar - Readers might just substitute the word heaven in their minds as they read this term but it is way more complex. Like the fluids of creation as it flows into and around all layers of existence and brings into being all things through waves of articulation that are ethereal light that sound. Ilmatar is also another name for the spiritual home of the immortal Arus, Ilmari and a resting place for the Edhelath.

Arus - known in mortal tongue as, “a Lord” or “a Lorde” —A being who lives in Ilmatar. They are created by Ilmatar itself and in turn are creators of the Edhelath and everything of the mortal realm. Humans might call them Gods and angels for that is how they would seem to the mortal senses.

Gyr’aru - a successor like children of royalty. gyr’aru is a young lord or lordling.

Chaos - This is the raw substance of all things before creation takes form. It is wild, unpredictable and primordial in its nature. Ilmatar heard the first voices crying out for order and separated from Chaos to form a balance that becomes the creation.

Undome Taur - This is the twilight nature of Ilmatar when it is at rest away from the chaos. It is a peaceful existence and a place of for the immortal spirits of the Edhelath to regain their strength after the eroding exposure to the mortal realms.

Glamour - **Galmion**, The ability to use magics to cover up defects to their bodies such as scars or damage from injury. It can also hide the effects of advanced aging.

Thendiel - meaning: Daughter of Truth. She grew up with the Edhelath of Eldelórne. Being so sensitive she was painfully shy at a young age until she learned to control her abilities through the tutelage of a wizard.

Empathic (Liriathin) is a common word for the ability to have empathy but being ‘empathic’ takes the word to the next level. It means to use empathy to feel into another ones thoughts thus sympathetically hearing the world around you.

Arus Surmanos - known as the fallen one, dark Aru, mad god and the Dragonlord. He is always plotting a way to overthrow Ilmatar or to takeover the mortal realm. He is the embodiment of dissonance as found in music and an agent of the dark chaos.

Dragonlord - Aru Surmanos gained this title when he possessed Røevash and became the terrifying aspect of the Shadow Cult’s god-incarnate. He is thought to be defeated and has been imprisoned beyond the Mor’annon.

The Mor'annon - Literally: Black Gate. The dark side of chaos is separated away behind this barrier to await the final battle that is portended to be the destruction of all creation when the gate is finally opened.

Corporeal means having a physical body made up of some kind of visual substance.

Adar - Like the all father, he conducts order by relaying the plan of creation and passing judgment when necessary. He is the voice between the will of the Ithild and the Arus of Ilmatar. Last known as King Uxukko the valaethil, he is also known as: Eldar, High King and Ukko.

Valaethil - Light Bringer. Only Eijlam rightfully owns this title.

Valeerathil - The high queen and body of creation. Thendiel's mother, she is the power of order. She is also known as: Ithild, Akka, Madder, Mother Nature, the corporeal manifestation of Ilmatar, the womb of life.

Ithild - What Thendiel becomes after her mother, Valeerathil dies.

Humankind - Mankind, human race, the main population of Ainghaille. Humans have a short life span of up to 100 years most times that is shortened even further by wars. They are easily unbalanced by good and evil. This is why religion was developed to influence them into lives of goodness. It backfires when bad people take control of religion and make it a cult.

Elvenkin - Elf and elven are used as human terms. The Edhelath have delicate beauty and nearly immortal life span. Both words for elf and elves is edhel. Elderhis are female elves who have the wisdom of birthing. Their language is Edhellen. Edhelath is edhel as a race.

Fade or faded - The thing that happens to edhel as centuries pass and the trauma of living in a mortal world catches up to their sensibilities. This is why they, "Fade," as they are mortally dying and need renewal.

Ilmari - They are nine creation spirits that inhabit the gardens of Ilmatar. They sometimes take the form of wizards or of small fantastical creatures.

Arus Lourien - He tends the gardens and guards the sacred well of dreams in Ilmatar. He created a path into the mortal world so the dreaming human soul could visit his garden and drink of the well. His generosity enhanced creativity and brought the arts to the human realm. The pathway was found to be a threshold to his son Eijlam who learned to use it for healing and secretly traveling into Ilmatar. Lourien, aka Aru of Justice, is High King Uxukko's closest advisor.

Wizard kind - In total nine wizards were created. They were the spirit of Ilmari who volunteered and then were morphed into a form that could watch over creation on the mortal plain after the escape and fall of Surmanos into the lower realm. They had limited access to magics through the ethereal layers of their existence.

Eijlam - (Eij-Lum) 5' 6" tall, born in the spring of 2453, of the third age. His right eye is blue and his left eye is golden brown. He is ambidextrous. He loves apples. He is born into this world but he is also possibly a demigod as his father Arus Lourien is a trusted Arus of Ilmatar. Eijlam's whole being is goodness to a fault. It hurts him to be involved in anything bad and he would prefer to avoid evil except that sometimes circumstances force him to action.

Fionna - (Fy-o-na) 5' 4" tall, born in the springtime of 2510, of the third age. She has green eyes, red hair and is right handed. An Edhel who was never born. She was pulled from her dead mother's womb by the wizards and grew up fostered by the wizard, Master Farghal, in the lands of men.

Heart bonded or **Yri**, the sacred bonding of the soul as one. The rare occurrence of devoted couples. They are so connected through heart and soul that when one dies so will go the other.

Lundirithil; Mind-speak - used in the story, a kind of telepathic ability between specific individuals. Not many have this ability. In most cases heart bonding gave you this gift. "lundirithil" literally means: "to touch with the mind", and "nesnevoris" literally means: "to listen with the mind." Not all can send and receive.

Quella - A talent only one edhel in a thousand years is born with. It is the invisible use of lundirithil to hear all others thoughts and into their hearts. The use of this talent is highly trained as a Listener. If not the barrage of voices and feelings to one's senses will be damaging.

Listener - It is a calling; an eldar that has the trained gift of quella.

Roevash - 6' 6" tall, (and not fully grown yet) born Early springtime, 2402, of the third age. He is left handed and has crystalline blue eyes. He loves avocados. He is the older brother of Eijlam. His father is a Darjalian, Marin of House of Alahiar.

Roevash can be bossy, stubborn and/or grumpy when you first meet him but he ultimately has a good heart and is willing to defend the innocent. He is dedicated to his family clan.

Marin of house Alahiar - Born of the Darjalia people. He is the beloved husband of Thendiel and father of Roevash.

Calan of House Alahiar - The younger brother of Marin and uncle of Roevash. He was an elderly man during the final days of the Great War of the third age.

Dakein of House Dacasyati - (pronounced: Da-keen Da-kei-city) First name meaning: "ghostly" last name means: "shows honor and grace" He might be the last darjal'n. He was a young man in the third age during the Great War against the fallen one. He has taken up the job as commander at the Vehlevar training outpost while Roevash recovers.

Darjal'n - people of **Darjalia**. They have an affinity with Edhelath. They were granted longer lives by the Arus of Ilmatar up to 1000 years from their birth.

Darjalian Ranger Base - An outpost settlement of darjal'n folks who by their ruler's request stationed themselves in the Illianheni foothills to keep watch on the Ajattara Fells. This is where the last known evil was put to rest in the Great War at the end of the third age.

Naalin - 4' 11" tall, born in autumn, 2360, of the third age. She has sea green eyes, golden brown hair and is ambidextrous. She is edhel who had become Roevash's beloved. They have a son named Elgelion. She was discovered to be Fionna's older sister. She was born and raised in Vehlevar. She would prefer to be kind but she is skeptical when it comes to humans

Elgelion - (El-gil-e-en) meaning: Son of pale glimmering stars. I think as Naalin stared up at the multitude of stars as her son was being born she remembered her beloved Roevash's pale blue eyes and named him for these things she loved most.

Cael of House Ravenscar - 5' 7" tall, right handed. Cael was raised in the upper tier district of the capitol city. He was the son of the late Duke of Ravenscar. He grew up in the family estate alone with never a want from a very young age. He was partially fostered by the royal family and treated as their own kin.

Dhruhindel - 5' 5" tall, He is the crown prince of the dragon kingdom.

King Ellinduil - (El-in-du-el) An imposing 6' tall. This sovereign rules the Autumnwood kingdom. He owes a debt to Thendiel so he endures to assist Eijlam and his brother Roevash in realizing their destiny.

Merlath - Underwater creatures with elven torsos and serpent tails.

Merlathians - What some edhel bloodlines once were before the Great Purge.

Queen Galbraeth - (Gal-bray-th) The ruler of Caras Eldarhon and half sister to Eijlam as a daughter of Arus Lourien. She was an Eldar seer of her kingdom and a known healer until she departed to Ilmatar at the end of the 3rd age.

Edanoss - The name for this pronounced "e-dan-ahs" literally means "human family" and is never meant as an insult. These edhel are some part human blood in their family tree. They may or may not have traits and the grace of long life. More diluted blood may not show any physical signs or benefits at all except that they are allowed to migrate when it is their time and join their clans in Ilmatar if they understand their heritage.

Dragnean - A race of long lived creatures, living deep under the oceans of the world. A group of them is called a pride. The pride is run by the Great Father/king. They have an edhel-like torso that is attached to a four legged dragon body. They can breath air and sometimes climb onto land. They are usually very peaceful and shy away from land-walkers.

Dragnea - a single Dragnean

Land-walker - Anyone who does not live under the ocean.

Cut ears - Edhel who have mutilated their ears to blend in and try to seem more human.

Second Names - The Darjalian race has always had a second name designated by their estate property. Humans adopted the practice for when they own land and titles. Common humans never thought second names were necessary so they have not all evolved into using them as of the writing of this tale.

The Moirai - the fates are known as nightmare hags, succubus, daemon but mostly they are that which drives men into the future.

Atropos, Queen of Darkness, and Lovisa and Untuoni's mother. Once one of the beautiful Arus of light, she elevated in power so far as to transform herself into a Fate. At the hands of King Uxukko she was split into conjoined beings when banished into the feral darkness.

Algurth - (Al-Gurth) another word for, death storm. It is a torn piece of the Undome Taur, manipulated by the moirai. It seems alive but it is just a well aimed tool of destruction.

The Long War - Unlike the "Great War" that was in the third era of the mortal realm, the "Long War" has been going on in the realm of Ilmatar since the beginning of creation.

The Great War - at the end of the third age the Fallen One, Arus Surmanos, posing as a dark sorcerer waged war upon all of Ainghaille in a bid for domination over men and elves.

Dragons, dragon-kin, Drathen- The dragon kingdom encompasses the, Tovah Mountains, on the southern tip of the Ajattara Plains. Dragons regard, "Nogs," as vermin and sworn enemies.

Slow-tongue - It is what dragons call speaking with only your mouth.

Noeglath - noeg is the Elvish name for dwarf or Dwarven-kin. Their main kingdoms failed in the 2nd era because of infighting. They cannot stop themselves from burrowing under mountains for riches and causing strife with the dragons.

Nog - the dragon dialect for dwarf and dwarven-kin.

Arus Untuoni - (Un-too-oni) is the beautiful ruling Arus of the underworld of spirits called, the underland. It is where the forest of the undome taur is kept.

Undome Taur - It is said to be a forested paradise where an edhel can slumber in peace, away from the stresses of the mortal world. It is said the Edhelath freely walk together among the long memory of their lives.

Arus Lovisa - Untuoni's identical twin sister. She has rarely been seen among the Arus. She rarely speaks. She spends all her time creeping in the shadow of her sister and haunting the one who blinded her.

Arus Ahto - He travels to in the mortal realm, posing as a ships captain to bring elvenkin home when their will to stay in Ainghaille fades.

Clan - In this tradition clan is close family not necessarily including the village neighbors. Clan can include individuals who are fostered or adopted, siblings and parents, uncles and cousins who all live in the same area.

League - A measure of distance that is about 3 miles or 4.82 km

Length - The measure that is about 10 inches or 25.5 cm depending on whose king you ask.

Hand - The height of a horse as told in 4 inch (10.16 cm) increments. Most horses average 10 to 14 hands tall. The terrifying war horses of Darjalía tower to an imposing 17 to 21 hands befitting their darjal'n riders.

Elfanovela - (elf + telenovela) A term coined by son, Christopher in 2016 when trying to describe this writing style. Sometimes cheeky, sometimes serious, these Eldelórne fairytales are decidedly an entanglement of emotion and adventure in the form of epic high fantasy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Karleigh Bon is an author, artist, storyteller, voice actor, armchair philosopher, gamer-geek, award-winning songwriter, singer, survivor, friend of puppies, high fantasy fan-girl, and author of the “Tales of Eldelórne,” trilogy and current producer of the informative satire, “Aidan and Faith: Relationships with Technology.”

My Finnish and Irish heritage gives me an affinity with both cultures that often shows in my writing. My desire for a long while has been to write the kind of stories that would touch human hearts and maybe help someone find a kinder path; one of peace and acceptance.

I have been a singer-songwriter throughout my life, having performed and entertained on many small stages across this great planet. I can't help but believe the heavens are filled with musical strains and that the influence of the singing voice has a mystical power that can heal mind and body, and so it is throughout the elven kingdom of Ilmatar. It is a place of rest and renewal for the spirit.

I started writing seriously in 2012 after a life-changing automobile accident took its toll. In the silence, if we choose to listen, that's when creativity has a chance to bloom the brightest.

The Eldelórne trilogy is my debut into fantasy world building, and novel writing. I word-craft, not only for entertainment, but to inspire and give readers something worth taking away from their experience; an opportunity to listen in on the elves, and then come to your own conclusions about life's little complexities.

Books written by Karleigh Bon:

Tales of Eldelórne: Book One ~SONG

Karleigh Bon's Kitchen, a simple life cookbook

Faith in Code, a technothriller romance.

Tales of Eldelórne: Book Two ~DREAM

COMING SOON

“TALES OF ELDELÓRNE: BOOK THREE ~HEART”

The last book in the “Tales of Eldelórne” series brings back many familiar faces, not all of whom are looking for a happily ever after. Naalin has some secrets she needs to face, while Fionna's anger might just cause them to fall apart. Cael is chasing his love, but a proposal could tear them apart. Roevash is torn between his duty and his desires. Eijlam has some tough choices to make, risking everything he holds dear. Will love win out, or will hearts break in the bittersweet ending of the Tales of Eldelórne trilogy?

FIND MORE

Live reader and writer discussions including artworks, insights and tons of unbridled spoilers can be found on Discord: Karleigh Bon's Kitchen. The invite link can be found at the top of the author's blog at karleighbon.com

Karleigh Bon's books can be found in libraries and quality bookstores world wide. Please do not hesitate to request one *everywhere* you go.