

Narrated backstory of a young elf-maid

A short story by
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Young, sweet Lailimel was born in the Two-Thousand-Five-Hundred-And-Eighty-Sixth year of an age that would later be known in Lothinias as the Wild Times. Despite their odd name, the Wild Times were actually an epoch marked by numerous wars and conflicts between the different populations of Lothinias.

Lailimel was born into a good family of Niasoth, one of the beautiful tree-cities of the Forest of Light. Now, Niasoth is dangerously close to the Norther Gulf, and this is sadly relevant to us.

Young Lailimel was a joyous girl, curious and prone to laughter. Her parents soon realised that their child had both an interest and the predisposition for becoming a Cleric of Light, which pleased them very much. At the age of fifteen (which is roughly six in human years), she became an acolyte and began her studies in Niasoth.

Summers go by swiftly in the lives of elves, and so forty-five years passed, and Lailimel's parents hugged and kissed their child goodbye, struggling to hold back the tears. Their only child was now sixty, which is but two years from adulthood, and it was the appropriate age to join the Clerics in the Sanctuary of Light, a majestic temple built far in the north of Elvenlands.

This should have been a happy parting, for Lailimel was allowed to visit her parents once a year (which, as we said earlier, is close to once every two months for us) but, sadly, events turned awry for her and her party.

I don't know if it were planned or naively decided, but the group of acolytes, led by two Clerics, chose to travel to the Sanctuary via the Plains of Light. The Plains are a huge heath, spread like a bed-sheet from north to south, surrounded by the forest on the West side and the placid waters of the Northern Gulf on the East.

The Plains are highly valued by the Elves of Light, who are fond of open spaces where they can bathe in the warm light of the sun and revel in the eerie light of the stars. However, the Plains of Light were a dangerous place in the Wild Times. Ogres from Zhanalost tended to sail across the Gulf and storm the lands, pillaging, plundering and killing until stopped and driven back.

One of those unfortunate nights, the elves were caught unaware by a group of ogres who quickly surrounded them. The battle was furious, for elves are skilled in the physical arts, and elf-maids are as strong and agile as their men. The two clerics that were with them also had the holy powers of their Goddess by their side. It was mainly thanks to them that most of the group managed to escape the ogres' grip and find refuge in the nearby, beloved forest of theirs. I say most of them, as you probably guessed, because Lailimel and two other acolytes did not reach safety.

The young girl watched with fright as her two friends were surrounded and killed with clean cuts to their throats. She then stopped fighting and waited for her death sentence, unable to take her eyes off her fallen siblings.

Yet the blow did not come. The chief of the ogres' tribe, a massive green-skinned Gurshal, took a liking to her and shouted to his pack not to touch her. He lifted her up with ease and took her with him back to the rafts, with which the surviving ogres headed back to their lands across the Gulf.

The next few weeks were awfully hard and miserable for Lailimel, and more than once she considered committing suicide (which is seen as a blasphemy in the Elven society). Yet she endured, and she worked as a slave for her new master. In fact, had she known how most of the ogres' slaves were treated, she would have called herself lucky to be with the tribe chief.

A month passed, and it was the longest month of her entire life. She knew the elves would not send somebody to Zhanalost to save her, for these dark lands were under the influence of the Goddess of Darkness, and so many were the ogres and the goblins that a whole army would not be enough to find and rescue her.

No, it was not the elves that would go to save her, but maybe somebody would, albeit by pure chance and a pinch of luck.

It came to her advantage that ogres are so fond of fighting and plundering when they took her all the way through the wicked Forest of Wyneth, and they crossed the border with the Kingdom of Men. They were planning to reach the Cordon and maybe find a way into the wealthy human grasslands, but their luck went askew.

A pack of daring rangers led by a certain Captain Farnomir surprised them in their sleep and got rid of most of them by shooting arrows from behind the trees. A bloody but quick battle followed, and Lailimel very nearly died in the confusion.

When the ogres were all dead, and the men started piling up their corpses, the young elf-maid was found among them, crouched in a ball and shaking with fear. Nobody was as surprised as Farnomir by the discovery. The Captain offered his coat (for her ragged clothes did little to cover her), and he took her with him.

The rangers and the elf headed back to the Cordon. During the trip, Farnomir talked to Lailimel often, reassuring her at the beginning but then simply telling her about his life at the border of the Kingdom. Lailimel did not say a word throughout the whole journey and looked like she never would, but the Captain didn't mind.

When they reached the splendid Sohonir Tower of the Cordon, news about the elf spread very quickly. Elvenlands was so far from the Kingdom and the elves so reserved that nobody had ever seen one, although stories of the Fairy Folks had spread wide and far.

The General and the High Captains of the Tower took Lailimel away from Farnomir and tried to interrogate her, but with no success. She was put in a comfortable room and fed well but, in practice, she was back to being a prisoner.

In the next few months, Farnomir could not push her out of his mind, and he found every excuse to go and visit her. Slowly, Lailimel opened up to him, and the two grew steadily closer.

She told him of the beauties of her homeland, the songs of her kin, and the greatness of their tree-cities. In her tales, Farnomir read the nostalgia she felt and her deep desire to be back, and he slowly sympathised with her. In vain he tried to cheer her up by describing the beautiful things of the Kingdom of Men that she would see if she told the General what he wanted to hear.

What in the beginning was just a dream, gradually turned into a plea for help, and the Captain found it harder and harder to disappoint her. He knew better though. There was no direct route to the Forest of Light from the Cordon. The Wild Lands lay in between, and the fields around them were full of beasts and bands of brigands and murderers.

Yet Lailimel insisted, and by now Farnomir was in love with her and could no longer say no. He swore he would take her home, and so great was her happiness that she forgot her ways and hugged him. Their platonic feeling turned wild that night, and Farnomir found comfort in her arms, for he

knew the consequences of his choice but couldn't bring himself to tell her.

In the next two weeks, Farnomir planned their trip to Elvenlands. He knew well that two people, although they could hide easily, would not stand a chance against the dangers of the lands they had to cross. Thus, he convinced the General to let him off on a ranging mission west of the Cordon.

Three weeks later, Farnomir and thirty of his best riders left the Sohonir Tower and rode west. Nobody noticed the Captain's new squire, who rode right beside him and kept his face covered at all times.

The alarm was raised in the Tower just as the party of rangers was crossing the river, but Farnomir pressed his men to carry on.

They travelled south-west for many miles, following the Cordon as far as they could, and then crossing the empty lands just north of the Cracked Plains. Despite their efforts to keep away from the Wild Lands, they could not avoid all of the dangers. They met a party of goblins, and later a pack of ogres, and by the time they reached the Southern branch of the Sohonir, only twenty of the thirty men were still alive.

As they reached the river, Farnomir revealed the real goal of his mission to his brothers, for he knew they wouldn't follow him any further without questions.

The rangers were both shocked and mad. They loved him like a brother, and they began to think that the elf had poisoned his mind. When they failed to reason with him, the men tried to grab Lailimel and separate her from their Captain. Farnomir lost his mind and attacked his own men to try and free Lailimel, accidentally killing one of them.

In the shock that followed, Farnomir and Lailimel escaped, riding as hard as they could and wading through the river at a shallow stretch. The rangers rode after them, seeking revenge.

Despite the odds, Farnomir and Lailimel made it to the other side, where the mountains of Dwarvendur loomed dark and unknown to both of them. For weeks they travelled around those peaks, which will later be known as the Red Mountains. Their rides died of fatigue and injury, but they kept going. They managed to avoid most of the dangers and, exhausted but determined, they reached the San-Lonor, or Forest of Light.

Driven by Lailimel's excitement at seeing her homeland, they travelled north and quickly drew close to Niasoth, where they were stopped and surrounded by a party of Elves of Light. Lailimel explained to them what had happened, but they couldn't understand why she had willingly led a human into their forest.

She pleaded and begged, and she prevented them from killing Farnomir on the spot, but they wouldn't let him go any farther.

Accompanied by some of them, Lailimel was led back to her city, where her parents could not believe she was still alive. Niasoth saw days and nights of celebrations for her lucky escape, but no matter who she spoke to of Farnomir, nobody was inclined to meet or invite the man into their city.

For weeks, Farnomir dwelt at the borders of the forest, waiting patiently day after day for his lover to come and meet him at night, when she could leave the city without being noticed.

As no sign came that the situation might change, Farnomir grew angry and, one night, a serious argument erupted. In the heat of the discussion, Lailimel revealed to him that she was pregnant. Shocked by the blessing,

Farnomir dropped all arguments and kissed her dearly, his face stricken with tears of joy. Surprised by his reaction and scared for their future (few elves ever have children, and you need to consider she was barely an adult), she first made sure he would not abandon her and, then, she ran back to Niasoth to tell her parents.

Saying that her parents didn't take the news well would be an understatement. They cried and shouted and pulled their hair out. They did not know what to do about the child (for having a child was a great honour), but on one thing they agreed: she was never to see the man again.

For the first time in her life, she felt wiser and less helpless than the others around her. That night, she left a note for her parents and ran to Farnomir. Together, they left Elvenlands and took refuge in the Dumar Mountains.

They found a hidden valley, built a comfortable house, and together they raised their child, Aryanil.

Here should end the story of Lailimel, the elf who faced the darkness of the world and came out of it alive, albeit not unchanged. However, the 'happily ever afters' never last for as long as you'd want (which is usually forever), and neither does this one.

Lailimel was happy with her husband and her child, but she also sorely missed her forest and the other elves. Sometimes at night she would creep out of the house and climb a tall beech tree. From its top, she would look north and imagine the San-Lonor at the horizon, with its beautiful trees and golden leaves.

For thirty fleeting years Farnomir, Lailimel and Aryanil lived together, being glad of having each other and ignoring the evils that struck the world outside the mountains.

As the story of every man goes, Farnomir grew steadily older, and the white in his hair spread all over his face. At the age of sixty-five (an appropriately old age at the time), Farnomir passed away, leaving his beautiful and time-unchanged wife and his young boy on their own. They mourned his passing crouched around his bed, but he went with a smile on his face.