

Title: Bigger

Fandom: LotR/Tolkien

Characters: Lorien Elves: Featuring Rúmil with guest appearances by Celeborn, Galadriel, Haldir, and Elladan and Elrohir.

50 Passages Prompt: 013. The dark water boiled, and there was a hideous stench.

Fanfic 100 Prompt: 036. Smell.

Word Count: 1669

Rating: G

Summary: Rúmil decides he's not a baby anymore.

Author's Notes: Playing fast and loose with ages here. I figure the twins, Haldir, and Orophin are all in or near 50 or 60. Rúmil is in around 25-30. (I subscribe to the 2.5 elf years = 1 human year formula, so they are 20-24 and 10-12 in equivalent human ages). I'm also assuming that the brothers' parents have left already, so Galadriel and Celeborn are raising them. I further realize that all of the young elves aren't acting like humans of those equivalent ages would. I like to think that elves have the luxury of allowing their children to be children longer, so they act like children until they are much older than their human counterparts.

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Rúmil was mad. The twins were here. Lady Galadriel and Lord Celeborn were thrilled to have their grandsons visiting. They were only a few decades older than Rúmil, but Haldir and Orophin both said he was too young to play with all of them. He wasn't a baby! When he complained to Lord Celeborn about it, he just patted his head and told him to be patient and he would grow fast enough and not to rush it. Then he sent Rúmil to the nursery! That's where all the ladies and the real babies had to stay!

He couldn't outright disobey Lord Celeborn, so he started up the stairs and paths toward the nursery. He was walking as slowly as he could though, he was hoping for a reprieve. Maybe Haldir would see him and take pity on him. Or Orophin might. Orophin usually tried to include Rúmil when Haldir didn't want to.

As he made his way up the various stairs, he caught snatches of conversation from the talans he passed. He stopped in front of the talan where one of the council advisors lived. He'd heard the occupants talking about the twins.

"...and did you notice how tall the twins have gotten? They certainly have grown a lot. They look much older than any elflings of that age that live here."

He had to sneak closer to the window to hear the rest of the conversation as a group of warriors on the ground below were talking and laughing as they walked past. Even then, he could only get bits and pieces.

"...from their father...bigger...dark hair...taller too."

Rúmil scowled as he concentrated on that last sentence. Of course! That's why they were bigger! They had dark hair, not light like all of the elves in Lorien. If that's what was needed to be bigger, then Rúmil would just have to make his hair dark, and he'd look bigger too. And then he wouldn't have to be with the babies.

He rushed up to where the ladies and babies were and yelled into the room.

"I'm going with Haldir and Orophin and Elladan and Elrohir!"

He ran off before anyone could contradict him. He knew he'd just lied, but it was necessary. He had to find a way to make his hair dark. He knew that the ladies used some plant to dye cloth black. They chopped it up and put it in water and cooked it. Then they poured it into a big pot, added more water and stirred the cloth in. He'd helped one day and got his hands all purpley-black.

Today wasn't washing day, so he knew the washing room, full of big tubs and which always had a big kettle of hot water, would be empty until someone came to bank the fire at night. That was where all the plants were stored for dyeing the cloth too.

Rúmil darted down the stairs now, trying to avoid being seen. He ducked into the small outbuilding that served as the laundry and clapped his hands when he saw that the water kettle was indeed, full, and steaming hot. He tugged a smaller black kettle down, letting it clang onto the floor. He froze after that, listening to see if anyone had heard. He finally blew out a big breath and searched along the pouches hanging on the wall for the one that made the cloth black.

It all looked different in the pouches. The roots and leaves were all dried out. Well, one of them had to be right. He dumped roots and leaves from each pouch into the kettle on the floor. Then he carefully used a dipper to scoop hot water from the large kettle over the fire into his kettle on the floor. When he had nearly filled the smaller kettle, he got a big stick from the braces on the wall and stirred his potion. As he struggled to get the leaves and roots all wet, the dark water boiled, and there was a hideous stench.

Rúmil coughed and stopped stirring to hold his nose shut. Now he just had to let the water cool a bit before he dunked his head into it. He wouldn't bother adding more water, that would just make the dye lighter, and he wanted black hair. He stood over the kettle, blowing on the surface and waving his hands over it in an attempt to make it cool faster. It really stunk now, and looked slimy. Rúmil figured he'd maybe added too many roots to it, but he couldn't change that now.

He was getting impatient, so he ran outside to look around, to make sure he was still alone. Nobody was near, but he would still have to hurry. He dragged another kettle to the floor, holding his breath again when it clanged even louder than the first one. He used the dipper to move some of the thick water to the clean kettle, which allowed the concoction to cool faster. He was getting clumps of roots into his dye, so he would just have to be careful and not get them stuck in his hair when he dipped his head into it.

The kettle was full enough. And the liquid was cooler. He could touch it now. He dipped a finger in and held it there for a bit before he pulled it out. It was black when he looked at it! He wiped his finger on his shirt, and it didn't wipe off! He could make his hair nice and black now, and look bigger!

He had to make sure and get his whole hair dyed, so he took off his shirt, unbraided his hair and took a big breath. Then he plunged his whole head into the stinking kettle. He used his hands to make sure all of his hair was in the dye while he counted to ten. He pulled his head out of the potion, took another loud gasping breath, and plunged in again. This time, he counted to fifteen. He pulled his head up, and flung his hair back over his head, so it wasn't hanging in his face. He failed to notice that he left a wide trail of black water on the ceiling, then the wall behind him.

He had to dry his face, so he used his shirt. He had a moment of fear when he realized that his shirt was now black too. He would surely be punished for that. After thinking about it, he grinned when he decided to turn the shirt inside out, and put it on backwards. Nobody would see the big black wet spot now.

His hands were still black from pushing his hair into the dye, so he quickly shoved them into his pockets while he swung his hair around by jerking his head back and forth. It was black! And hardly any roots in it! Satisfied, he didn't even want to let his hair dry before he showed Lord Celeborn that he was bigger now! He ran all the way to the private rooms where Lord Celeborn was sitting with his daughter, son-in-law and Lady Galadriel. Rúmil just had to tell him he was big enough to play with the other boys now.

He flew by the different wardens that stood guard at various doors, then burst through entrance of the sitting room, where the adults were gathered, having tea or doing something grown up.

"Look!! I'm bigger! I have black hair like the twins so I'm bigger because black hair makes you look grown up!! Look!!"

Rúmil stood in front of the adults, smiling as brightly as he could, his chin up, obviously proud of himself.

Celebrian and Galadriel both gasped, then tried not to laugh. Elrond had to turn away to laugh into his hands, and Celeborn tried to talk, laugh and take a sip of tea all at the same time and ended up choking. When he was able to speak, he went to Rúmil and took his hand, leading him to the looking glass that hung on the wall.

"Rúmil? What did you use to dye your hair? And whoever gave you the idea that it would make you look grown—uh, grown up?"

Rúmil frowned at Celeborn's complete lack of appreciation for how big he was now. "I heard someone saying that the twins look bigger than me because their Papa gave them dark hair. I

used the roots in the laundry to make it black. It smelled awful too. But I held my breath and dunked my whole head!"

Now Celeborn was struggling to keep a straight face. "I can see that you dunked your whole head. And I can imagine how bad it smelled, because your hair rather...smells. Look at yourself in the glass and tell me if you think you look bigger."

Rúmil scowled at Celeborn for still not recognizing how big he was. Then he looked into the mirror.

"I'm a ORC! I turned into a ORC! My face got dyed too! That's not fair!" His announcement was followed by a high-pitched shriek that only young children can make, then he ran out of the room, down a small corridor and burst into his own bedroom, where he dived under the bed and began to cry.

As soon as Celeborn composed himself, he followed the poor dyed elfling and spent the next hour coaxing him out from under the bed. When he finally left Rúmil to re-join the others, he was still laughing a bit.

"Elrond, I don't suppose you know of any plants that might help fade the dye? Were the twins this rambunctious at this age? I know Celebrian wasn't."

Several days later, with the help of more hideous smelling potions, Rúmil was nearly back to normal. His hair never did grow back as light as it had been, and the stains on the walls of the laundry never faded completely away, so he always had reminders of how foolish he'd been.

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It was several centuries before they stopped teasing Rúmil about his dying adventure. He laughs about it now, but deep down inside, a little part of him believes that Celeborn doomed him to being the shortest of his brothers—all because he had to keep his blond hair.

~End~