

An Elves of Lessa Interview

By K. M. Shea

Kitty: Hello everyone! Today I have Princess Gwendafyn and Prince Benjimir of *Royal Magic* here with me for an interview, featuring questions from you Champions!

Gwendafyn: Hello!

Benjimir: Do we really *have* to do this?

Gwendafyn: Yes.

Kitty Squints.

Kitty: Also with me—for reasons I don't really understand—are Tari and Arion from *Red Rope of Fate*.

Tari: Hello! Don't mind us, we're just here for the fun of it, and because Seer Ringali offered to watch Braydynn for us.

Arion raises an eyebrow.

Kitty: Uh-huh. Okay, let's start things off! I've got a question for you, Benjimir, from **Kaitlin**. “*On the horse ride two weeks after your marriage, you were starting to relax until Fyn said that forging swords might be fun to learn but that she was more interested in the art of using one. Why did you draw back at that point, given that you later revealed that you didn't mind that she likes to learn swordplay?*”

Benjimir: My reaction had nothing to do with the subject matter, per say. It was more that Fyn's charming manners were seducing me.

Fyn: **What?**

Benjimir: At that point I still firmly believed I was in love with Yvrea, so I was displeased with myself for being so easily distracted by Fyn's engaging passions.

Fyn: You're lucky I have enough High Elf blood in me to know you aren't being sarcastic.

Kitty: So it had nothing to do with her desire to practice swords and more was an internal thing?

Benjimir: Precisely.

Kitty: That's...sweet? I guess? Gwendafyn, **Rhea** is wondering “*Did you ever get your original swords back from Jubilee after your aunt was exiled? I know your grandfather's sword specifically must have meant a lot to you.*”

Gwendafyn: I did, actually. When Benjimir and I toured Lessa I picked them up and brought them back to Haven with me. I'm starting a collection! It's great fun because I have all sorts of different swords for different occasions.

Kitty: While we're on the topic, **Megan** asks: *Do High Elf swords have special abilities? Like, conducting and directing Elf Magic extra well?*

Gwendafyn: There are several reasons why High Elf forged blades are so precious, the first being that the High Elves were simply the best in the continent in forging. Their blades are so well balanced and pure, and they are nearly impossible to damage as long as you take care of them. They're excessively slow to dull, and most of them are markedly lighter than their modern counterparts.

Tari: Please let me add that some of the blades sport minor enchantments. For instance, the dagger I gave Arion as a wedding gift. Usually it is a passive ability—so there are no swords that will spit fire on command or something similar. But in general High Elf swords are excellent conduits of magic.

Benjimir: In these times, their ability to conduct magic well is actually the least valued trait. Very few humans besides wizards and mages can use magic, and those who can don't often fight with a sword. They are mostly prized for their incomparable grade of a blade, and for the enchantments that are nearly impossible to recreate today.

Gwendafyn: Elven enchanters *might* be able to recreate some of them, but as we are Lesser Elves no enchanter has shown an interest in such a thing or even seen a reason for it.

Tari: We are a rather peaceful bunch.

Arion: I dare someone to say that to Seer Ringali.

Kitty: Good answer. Looking at my questions, it looks like I have another one for Gwendafyn. **Annabelle** asks "*Why couldn't your mother be more present in your life in Jubilee? Doesn't she have a say in anything? How long does it take to travel between Jubilee and Haven?*"

Gwendafyn: As Kitty explained earlier, both of my parents were extremely active in my life as a child. It wasn't until I was a teenager and Yvrea accompanied my father to Haven for longer and longer periods to learn her responsibilities. Until I reached adulthood my mother did stay with me more often, but the love that drives Tari to Arion and myself to Benjimir is the same love my mother holds for my father. It is quite painful—emotionally and to a certain extent mentally—for an elf to be apart from their love for long periods of time. And though my mother does love me, she and Father have the same sort divine love Benjimir and I share.

Tari: Indeed. That's the reason why I did not see my family much after I was assigned to Gloria as an Evening Star, even though I wasn't an adult yet. Though it is important to note that we are talking about more than a mere week or two in terms of time spent apart. But even so, Seer Ringali is the only elf I know who can stand to be away from his wife for a significant length of time. It might be because the blood of High Elves flows especially thick in his veins, but I also

think he is able to because his wife is quite formidable herself and is able to stay with her children without as much anguish as, say, I could.

Kitty: Really, it boils down to the idea that elves love in a far deeper way than humans. I purposely designed that into their culture—though you'll see Tari wrestles with it more in Red Rope than Gwendafyn does in Royal Magic. That's another indicator that she's got more High Elf blood in her, because the High Elves were a lot more resilient in this area as well.

Tari: Hear, hear!

Kitty: So far we've been focusing on Gwendafyn, so it's your turn again, Benjimir. **Kyra** asks you "*You never hid who you were with Fyn, why did you trust her? Was it instinctual or apathy?*"

Ben: It was mostly that I never had a chance to do so. As soon as she said she knew what I had done, there was no way to fool her. And she is too perceptive for me to believably lie to.

Kitty: But ironically, it's because you couldn't hide from her you had the tendency to lower your guard far earlier than you might have.

Ben: Perhaps.

Kitty: There is no perhaps. You are as open as a clam. If she hadn't been so uncaring at your past, it likely would have taken you a year to warm to her.

Gwendafyn: I see it like this, why would a wolf and a jungle cat hide their true natures from each other? It's instinctive.

Kitty: That's a good way of phrasing it, and it is a good lead-in to another question for Benjimir. **Arletta** wants to know "*How did you and Arion mend your relationship?*"

Benjimir: Arion did all the work—or if we want to be truthful, Lady Tarinthali did all the work. They greeted me without hesitation, and no matter when I saw Arion he was always polite and open. Once I realized he *meant* to act with such ridiculous honor and it was not an act, I began to question his motives less. And it helped that work constantly thrust us together.

Tari: Arion and I spoke about it before Benjimir returned. As Arion said in our story, he did have some sympathy for Benjimir and in some way understood his actions, even if he opposed them. I was more inclined to forgive him because he never did anything to put our safety in danger unlike Talon, and most of what he tried to do Arion and I could have—and did—stop.

Kitty: You mean if you had opened your big yap and asked Arion about all the things Claire told you, you could have avoided that mess entirely.

Tari winces.

Tari: Yes...thank you for that reminder.

Kitty: Naturally. Anything to add to that, Arion?

Arion: I was less wary and suspicious of him as soon as he announced his engagement to Princess Gwendafyn.

Tari blinks and peers at her husband.

Tari: Really? Why?

Arion: I was starting to grow concerned that he may fall in love with *you* due to your compassion.

Tari: No matter how I explain it, you really don't believe that you're the only one who loves me so passionately, do you?

Arion: You're too beautiful and too kind for that to be true.

Kitty: That is both cute and eye-roll-worthy at the same time. Next question! OOHFFF, **Karen** has a really good question. *"I'm curious to know who figured out Tari's pregnancy first. Was it the pregnant woman herself interpreting recent symptoms or the loving husband who can read her emotions?"*

Arion: I was aware something had changed before it occurred to Tari. The whirl of her emotions was...something.

Tari: Yes, and he told me in the most *offensive way possible*. But after that I started to put together my symptoms and realized what had happened. I considered not telling him—because I knew he was going to be insufferable about keeping me safe during my pregnancy—but I also knew if I didn't tell him fast my excitement would tip my hand.

Gwendafyn: How did he tell you he noticed the changes?

Tari: Let's just say, he asked if I was experiencing woman problems that caused drastic and unwanted swings in my mood.

Benjimir stares at Arion.

Benjimir: Wow. You are terrible at communicating.

Arion: It is not my strongest skill.

Kitty: **Jocelyn** asks *"Why, even when Fyn first arrived at the palace, did she not have at least an elvish attendant, like Tari does (Evlawyn)? Especially given that her Calnoric had to be learned the hard way, wouldn't it be convenient to have a personal assistant who spoke her language? (I understand why she might have only human aides after marrying.)"*

Gwendafyn: I didn't have merely one elvish attendant—I actually had several. I just never was very close with any of them like Tari and Evlawyn, so you never got to see them.

Kitty: Yes, in the scene when Celrin and Gwendafyn go out to the gardens to discuss if she has to give up her swords or not, **Celrin** says one of his attendants will show Gwendafyn to her quarters and select attendants to care for her.

Gwendafyn: When I married Benjimir I was officially moved to the Calnor Royal Family's wing, and thus was put under the care of human attendants because I was then considered part of Benjimir's family.

Kitty: Yes, and due to the difficulty in learning Calnoric/Elvish, there are *no* attendants that speak both languages. It's either one or the other. That is starting to change, now, and many of the servants know a few snatches of the other language. But that is only because of the cultural revolution Gwendafyn and Benjimir launched, and it's a very slow process.

Benjimir: Indeed. I'd like to see any readers learn a difficult language that famously takes years to learn, mastered in a few weeks.

Kitty: Watch your claws, Benjimir.

Gwendafyn: Ignore him, he's upset people overlook how hard he and I had to work to learn languages compared to Tari.

Tari: Sorry!

Gwendafyn smiles.

Gwendafyn: There is nothing to be sorry for—its part of the magic of your bond, and it's wonderful!

Kitty: Yeah, yeah, thank you for summarizing *Red Rope* in a sentence, Fyn. This next question is a good one I probably won't ever get a chance to explore in the books. It's for you, Fyn. **Tiffany** is wondering "*what happened with Talon?*"

Fyn: He was shipped back to Jubilee and rotted in the dungeons for a while.

Benjimir: Really? I wouldn't have thought Lesser Elves would *need* dungeons.

Gwendafyn: We don't—not enough that we would build them ourselves, anyway. But Lessa was one of the territories belonging to the High Elves before they left, and their architecture remains. At any rate, I questioned him multiple times—we needed to be certain he wasn't working with anyone—and scared him a bit before making my judgement and shipping him out to the coast. He's working as an indentured servant for a troupe of Evening Stars, who are also righting his arrogant and prideful ways.

Kitty: The next question is for Ben, and it's from **Anna**. "*Where did you find Wulf and what does he think of being a personal body guard?*"

Ben: I found Wulf through Arion, but he was also highly recommended by Wizard Edvin as well. Wulf was stationed as a ranger in Sacred Wood, which just so happens to be Arion's original post before he and Tari were bonded. Both he and Wizard Edvin worked with Wulf on multiple occasions.

As for how he feels about being a personal bodyguard, I think he rather likes it. As you might tell by his unusual background he is interested in a variety of things. Working with Fyn provides a

different sort of challenge you wouldn't be able to get anywhere else. Plus, I am a generous employer.

Gwendafyn: He isn't the most talkative traveling companion, but he is excellent at what he does.

Kitty: I have a few more questions for you, Benjimir, from **JD**. "*How many swords does Fyn have? How many of these are presents from you? Have you been to Lessa yet? How was it?*"

Benjimir: I'm not entirely certain how many swords Fyn has, but she does have the equivalent of a private armory. While I have given her a fair number of swords, the bulk of her collection is made up of High Elf weapons we retrieved during our visit to Lessa—something the Calnor blacksmiths cried tears of joy over. She's had a steady stream of blacksmiths visiting her beauties ever since then, studying them in hopes of improving their craft.

Obviously, we did visit Lessa as mentioned earlier in the interview. It was...something.

Tari: You said it was a lovely trip, and Lessa is beautiful.

Benjimir: It *is* a beautiful land. I've done a fair bit of traveling, and it's safe to say Lessa is the most advanced and beautiful country on the continent. But...

Kitty: But?

Benjimir:...Everyone is so *cheerful* and *good-hearted*. If we hadn't interacted with as many Evening Stars as we did, I might have been tempted to drink myself into a nightly stupor.

Gwendafyn: *Finally*, someone else understands why I was so desperate to leave!

Benjimir: I'm amazed you lasted as long as you did.

Gwendafyn: It was a test of my mental fortitude.

Kitty: You two aren't wrong. But time for the next question. **Lauren** asks: "*What's the plan on kids? I for one would love to see bunches of adorable half-elf kids running around.*"

Gwendafyn groans a little and rubs her face.

Gwendafyn: I was hoping no one would think to ask this question.

Kitty: Why? You aren't embarrassed, are you?

Gwendafyn: Not really. It's just—

Benjimir speaks in a purring voice.

Benjimir: Yes, my love. What *do* you think of having *bunches* of children?

Gwendafyn groans.

Gwendafyn: Him. We've already agreed to children. This isn't something we need to discuss *again*, Ben.

Benjimir: Yes, but we don't have any.

Gwendafyn: Right now. You're settling into your new role and I'm having the time of my life running across Calnor. I'm not particularly motivated to have one right this moment.

Benjimir leans into Gwendafyn so his lips brush her cheek.

Benjimir: Are you certain about that?

Kitty: Hey—stop that. This interview has to stay PG rated.

Tari: Selfishly, I rather hope you two have a child soon. The Translators' Circle has started pestering Arion and me about a second child, and Braydynn can't even talk yet. Imagine how bad it will get when they can ascertain whether or not he'll be able to easily learn Calnoric *and* Elvish!

Kitty: Too true. As it stands you two couples are the most fluent non-translators in the world, though I know others are trying, like Thad and Evlawyn. Moving on, **Sophie** has a good question for Gwendafyn about the High Elves. She asks, "*Do you plan to be on the front lines when the High Elves return; how does Ben feel about it?*"

Gwendafyn: While I wouldn't be opposed to it, it's unlikely I would be present for the High Elves return for several reasons. First of all, it would require I live in one of the coast cities in Lessa. That won't be happening, ever. Calnor is my home, now, and I have greater responsibilities here fulfilling roles only I can.

If I were to be there by luck, it's still unlikely I would accompany them. Evening Stars are essentially well-trained assassins. My magic is stronger, but it's also flashier. I do better in an actual war or battle. The Evening Stars will hit the High Elves in one strike and paralyze them before a war breaks out.

Kitty: And we'll close up with a question for Benjimir, from **Lyn**. "*Have you ever sparred with Fyn before and if so, what was the result?*"

Benjimir: I have sparred with Fyn, and I lost. Not quite as badly as the Trio of Daftness and the other guards they've thrown at her, but that's only because I cheat when I fight.

Gwendafyn: I learned several new, ruthless moves from him!

Benjimir: I really doubt there is a single fighter that could stand on even ground with Fyn. Even if she doesn't use her magic, she's faster and far more athletic. She really is like a High Elf in that way.

Tari: Yes, if we Evening Stars don't use our magic we aren't nearly as lethal. Gwendafyn is incredibly strong either way.

Arion: It's very useful.

Kitty: What do you mean, Arion?

Arion: Whenever an Honor Guard needs to be humbled, he or she serves as Gwendafyn's sparring partner for as long as they can stand. Literally.

Gwendafyn: I am a great favorite of the Honor Guard Officers!

Kitty: Too true. Well that's all we have time for today. Thank you to everyone who submitted questions. We hope you enjoyed this interview, and *Red Rope of Fate* and *Royal Magic*. Goodbye!

Gwendafyn: Thank you for your support!

Tari: Farewell!

Arion waves.

Benjimir: So, Fyn, about those bunches of children...

Gwendafyn: Perhaps we should decide it with a sword match?

Benjimir: Ouch.

Arion: You've been rejected.

Benjimir: Thank you for illuminating me on that fathomless mystery.

Kitty: Benjimir! Claws!

Benjimir: Fine. Bye.

THE END