

Travels in Tamriel: Meldil's Story

by Elaina aka Thinalphiel

Volume 1

As it seems my travels are coming to an end, I put forth this record of my journey. I am Meldil, born in the forests of Valenwood. My childhood consisted of running barefoot through the forests with my friends enjoying all the beauty my forest home had to offer. My mother, a strong and at times domineering woman, insisted I train daily in the art of marksmanship. Her worst fear was always that the Khajiit or worse, the Imperials, would try to take away the Bosmer homeland. Though she would not explain (and frequently told me to mind my own business), she mentioned often that her own personal experiences with both groups led her to believe this would happen. This was the reason she was adamant that I should learn to defend myself and our kin. Nearly all Bosmer have skill with a bow, but I consider myself to be among the best—thanks to my mother.

One afternoon, as I was lazing in my favorite tree, I heard voices that were accented differently than any I had ever heard. I hopped down from the tree and cautiously proceeded towards the sound. In the distance, I could see a group of men, heavily armored. Was my mother right? Was this to be the first wave of invasion? I decided to have a closer look at these men who appeared to be making camp.

One of the men began breaking wood for a fire. This pained me, as I had never witnessed such abuse to a tree in my entire life. I remained silent, however. Hidden behind a large tree, I was now close enough to make out what they were saying.

"This shouldn't take more than a couple of days," one of them said. "We'll find what we need and then be on our way back to Cyrodiil."

These men were from Cyrodiil, Imperials. One of the men began taking fruit out of his bag and eating it. My stomach began to turn, but I managed to keep silent. Living deep inside Valenwood, I had never seen an Imperial before. I had heard from travelers who had been near the border that Imperials were snobbish sort of people very unlike the Bosmer. These travelers would tell me how war-like the Imperials are and how they have little tolerance for people like the Bosmer who they consider savage. So what could these men possibly want from us? Why had this group traveled so far inside Valenwood? I was about to find out.

As the afternoon was quickly becoming evening, I decided to ascend the tree I was hiding behind. It would seem I would have to stay the night and follow these men in the morning. They added more wood to their fire, and then they slept. Each man took a turn standing guard while the others slept. As morning approached, they gathered up their gear and extinguished the fire. They headed south, and I followed.

It became obvious to me after a matter of minutes that these men were hopelessly lost. Although they carried a compass, they moved very slowly and stopped frequently to look around. They knew they should continue heading south, but they were uneasy traveling in the dense forest. I decided the best thing to do would be to make my presence known. After all, they were in my territory.

"Hello there," I said as I emerged from behind a tree. "Slow going?"

The soldiers showed a very obvious surprise at my presence. Two of them began to draw swords before the captain held up his hand to stop them.

"Hello, young man," he said. "Perhaps you can help us find what we're looking for. We're seeking a skilled archer by the name of Bojenir."

At the mention of my marksman teacher's name, I became suspicious. What could these men possibly want with him? He was an elderly man now, hardly capable of training a legion of Imperial archers. Bojenir had been like a father to me, and I felt it my duty to protect him in his old age.

"Why are you looking for him?" I asked. "Might as well just get to the point, I thought."

"There's been an uprising along the Elsweyr border. A band of rogue Khajiit are trying to expand their borders into Valenwood. Since this could have a devastating effect on commerce in the area, the Emperor has ordered us to protect the border. Many of our soldiers have found it more than difficult to fight in these dense forests. Every time they draw back their swords, they hit trees. We're hoping Bojenir can help us find some Bosmer archers to assist us. It is your border, after all."

This was not news to me. I had heard rumors of this uprising and was considering heading to the East myself to defend my home. Knowing they were not here to harm him, I decided to lead them to my teacher. As the captain met in private with Bojenir, I decided to inform some of my friends of the situation. We were still young, but we had all come of age and were longing for adventure. We were ready to put the skills Bojenir had taught us to the test.

The majority of our tribe gathered to investigate the arrival of these Imperials. After a few hours, Bojenir and the captain came to address the crowd that had formed.

Volume 2

"It seems the rumors are true," Bojenir said. "Our forests are in danger of Khajiiti invasion. The tribes living there have sent messages with these soldiers asking us to come to their aid. If any of you are willing to assist your brothers in this time of need, please say so."

I was the first to step forward, followed by many friends. Bojenir's urging was all I needed. He motioned for me to come to him. "I am too old now to be of service in this matter," he said. "But you, Meldil, can be of the greatest service. Your skill with a bow surpasses even my own. Please, take this bow, given to me by my father. May it serve you well." He handed me a shining, silver bow engraved with vines and leaves. It was the most beautiful bow I had ever seen. I thanked him and hugged him goodbye. We would be leaving the next morning for the Imperial camp where we would train.

It was a three day walk to the Imperial camp. The other Bosmer and I were given leather armor and a more than adequate supply of arrows. The Imperials recognized my leadership skills among the other archers and insisted that I become their commander. My fellow Bosmer took quickly to this, as they did not like to be ordered around by Imperials. These were my friends, and therefore, they trusted me to help them in this battle. I knew, however, that the Bosmer alone could not win this fight, and that we needed the Imperial soldiers. So I did my best to keep everything smooth between our two groups.

After our first full day of practicing and learning formations, we learned that another group of Bosmer would be joining us. However, they were not archers-they were warriors. They were all Bosmer women dressed in heavy armor carrying hammers and axes. It was quite an exhilarating site. I decided to mingle among these women as the Imperials were preparing our dinner.

It only took a moment for my eyes to fall upon her. A woman with dark hair and eyes whose armor reflected beautifully the light of the stars. Her face was beyond radiant beneath the light of the moon. Her gaze met mine, and she smiled. In all my days I had never beheld a woman so beautiful. Her name was Thinalphiel, and she was to become my soul mate.

The time I didn't spend training, I spent with Thinalphiel. Though we could only spend a few hours together each night, our love grew incredibly strong. She was also a leader among the women. She was highly skilled with a double headed axe and was eager to show these Imperials what she was made of. Though my free time was very limited, I enjoyed the rare moments when I could watch her in action. Though her body appeared lean and delicate, she could swing her axe with twice the force of the Imperial men. I almost pitied the Khajiit who would cross her path in a matter of days.

After a week of training we headed east towards the border. Two nights before battle, the captain informed me that the archers were to hide out of sight among the trees while the soldiers and warriors advanced. That did not sit well with me. "Captain, we are not cowards," I said. "We don't wish to hide among the trees during battle. We can be far more useful on the ground."

"My men can't be distracted trying to save you and your friends. You can shoot just fine from the trees. Those are my orders."

"Captain," I said. "We won't need saving. We are just as strong and brave as any soldier here. We know our place."

"Place?" A nearby soldier scoffed. He was a very large man, with a very large sword. "My place is on the front line, little man. Where is yours?"

"Right behind you," I replied.

Volume 3

My strategy was simple. We archers would have a place of protection behind the oversized shields of the Imperial soldiers. This way, we could begin firing as soon as we were in range and eliminate a large portion of the enemy before they could reach us. It was the best way to preserve the soldiers' strength for the combat ahead. Much more practical than waiting in the trees for the battle to come to us.

"You're pretty smart for a Wood Elf," the captain grinned.

“Um, yeah, “ I replied. I had very little else to say to this man who obviously thought so little of me. I was ready to prove myself in battle, as were so many of my kind. We are often looked down upon by Imperials. Not only because of our height, but because they seem to consider themselves our superior in every way.

We spent the next day practicing this new strategy of mine before we would face our enemy. At dawn the day of battle, we began to form ranks. I found Thinalphiel preparing the women for battle and I kissed her for luck, though I knew she would not need it. I took my place behind the large soldier who had mocked me.

“Let’s see what your made of,” he said. “If you’re left standing after all of this, I’ll buy you a drink.”

As we advanced, I began to hear the distant war cries of the Khajiit. It was time. I gestured to the other archers to make ready. A few more steps and we fired. Screams of agony broke out in the distance. Without seeing them, we had managed to hit our targets. We sent another volley their way and heard more cries. They were advancing on us.

We continued to fire until the Khajiit reached us and we were no longer safe behind the soldiers. Without any shields to protect us, we took to the trees and fired on the Khajiit below as they battled the Imperial soldiers and the Bosmer warriors. I paused just long enough to behold Thinalphiel in full battle mode. She was breathtaking. I watched her every move, as she blocked her opponent’s weapon and finally cleaved his head in two. I had never seen another Bosmer woman with such strength and skill.

We were victorious. The Khajiit who had refused to retreat lay dead all around. This group would make no more attempts at taking any part of Valenwood. As Bosmer do, we began to celebrate by feasting on the flesh of our enemies. The Khajiit I shared with Thinalphiel was particularly sweet, most likely due to a moon sugar addiction. Thinalphiel mentioned a preference for a sweeter meat, and we both laughed.

All around us the Imperials were beyond disgusted. Some of them couldn’t hold their stomachs, and vomited all over some of the corpses. The ones who managed to eat a little ate only bread. Hardly satisfying after a day of battle. If that’s civilized, then I prefer being a savage.

After the night’s feast, the captain congratulated us on a job well done. He offered to let us all join the Imperial Legion. A few among us accepted his offer. Thinalphiel and I, however, refused. We had already discussed our plans after the battle. She spoke of a land called Vvardenfell, where some evil creatures from a Sixth House were causing a problem. It was her desire to travel to that land and test her skills against these monsters. She had also shared with me her knowledge of the other five houses. Apparently there was great wealth there to be stolen by anyone who had the skill. I was soon to prove that archery was not the only thing Bojenir had taught me.

Volume 4

We traveled slowly towards Vvardenfell. Why rush? We were so much in love and truly enjoying each others company, that we didn’t really care where we were. Together, we battled some creatures and bandits along the way. Whenever we spotted a bandit, I would ascend the nearest hill or tree and she would slowly approach the bandit. When the bandit would notice her and

begin to attack, I would fire an arrow and stop him dead in his tracks. Then we would feast. It was wonderful to fight (and feast) alongside my love.

After a long while, we arrived in Vvardenfell. We learned quickly that Dunmer do not like outsiders at all. At first, I thought the word "N'wah" meant Wood Elf, but I was soon corrected when I heard members of other races being called that as well. Thinalphiel joined the local Fighter's Guild to further polish her skills while I spent my time among the thieves learning even more tricks of the trade.

While Thinalphiel was away battling sixth house monsters, I passed the days picking pockets and stealing small items from local merchants. I was a little rusty at first and had to pay a few fines and even spent a little time in jail. But with a little practice, I was back in thieving shape and ready to take on some more challenging work.

Eventually, Thinalphiel decided we should travel to the city of Vivec, where she could test her skills in the arena. We traveled upon one of their giant insect-like beasts called a silt strider. The journey was surprisingly smooth and quick. Along the way, she informed me that the vaults of the great houses—the Redoran, Hlaalu, and the Telvanni—were located in Vivec. I felt it my personal duty to rob all three of them and bring my love as much treasure as I could carry.

Thinalphiel was quite successful in the arena and had acquired a large sum of money. That did not make me want to stop thieving. To me, thieving was an art form. It was about so much more than taking other people's prized possessions. I was on a mission to prove that I could succeed in robbing the most heavily guarded places in Vvardenfell.

I began with the Hlaalu vault. With the help of the chameleon and invisibility spells Bojenir had taught me, I managed to break in and steal an enormous amount of gold and jewels. I also stole some weapons and jewelry that I thought Thinalphiel might enjoy. She was very pleased with the gifts I brought to her and we celebrated with a night out on the town. We went out to dinner and a romantic midnight gondola ride. She was incredibly beautiful in her new jewels.

The local guards were upset, of course. The Hlaalu vault had been robbed, and therefore more security would be added to the other vaults. I didn't let that deter me from robbing the Redoran vault a few weeks later. I didn't manage to find as much money and jewels as I had in the Hlaalu vault, but the full suit of ebony armor I stole made Thinalphiel very happy.

With security increasing around the city and rumors that the Telvanni had added some intense security, I was aching to break in and prove myself. I know robbing the other two vaults successfully should have been more than enough, but I just couldn't walk away. I was addicted to thieving.

Volume 5

Thinalphiel told me that I should wait a while before I attempted to rob the Telvanni vault. She said eventually the guards would arrest some poor soul and coerce him into confessing just to set the citizens at ease. But I couldn't wait that long. Every day that went by was torture. I had to do it soon.

Finally, the night had come and I head toward the Telvanni vault. It was surprisingly easy to get in, which should have been my first clue to the danger ahead. But greed clouded my better judgment, and I accepted an easy entrance as if it were my own skill that had gotten me inside the vault. Unfortunately, the exit had been bewitched. When I tried to leave, I found myself teleported into a room with two Storm Atronachs. I was taken completely by surprise, and suffered a few shocks before I could get out of their way. I pulled out my bow and enchanted arrows and managed to kill them both. But it was too late. The noise had awoken the Telvanni guards who were already advancing on me. There were too many of them to escape-I was trapped.

"It figures it would be a filthy Bosmer who was doing all this," one guard said.

Since I had trespassed against the great house Telvanni, it would be their Archmagister who would decide my fate.

I knew of Archmagister Gothren by reputation. He was not a kind hearted man, and I knew he would not be forgiving. The guards dragged me to his tower and forced me to my knees in front of him.

"How foolish of a lowly little Bosmer to think he could outwit me. Did you not think I would protect the greatest treasures of my house? You and all of your kind are pathetic savages. I sentence you to slavery. Get him out of my sight."

I was still in shock and in quite a bit of pain after my ordeal and the realization of my fate had not yet sunk in. The guards dragged me to an open-air marketplace and threw me into a cell where slaves awaited purchase. I slumped over and spent that night drifting in and out of consciousness.

I awoke to a sudden sharp pain. An Altmer man was prodding me with a staff and ordering me to my feet. An elderly Dark Elf woman was looking me over, apparently deciding whether she would like to purchase me. All of a sudden she shouted "How dare you look me in the eye!" No one had informed me of the rules of slavery, but I took that to mean I was not to make eye contact with anyone who was not a slave. She decided to purchase me and teach me a few manners.

Her guards tied some rope around my waist to ensure I couldn't slip away and we journeyed to my new home on my mistress's plantation. The work there was very difficult for me. Since I was a Wood Elf and had been raised to live in accordance with the Green Pact, my mistress found it amusing to force me to dig up plants and destroy them. She called it harvesting, but I called it destruction. If I refused, I was beaten severely. There was no escaping for me since the slave's bracer prevented me from performing any magic, and I was under constant surveillance. My diet consisted only of bread, since I refused to eat any of the vegetables I was given. My only hope was that Thinalphiel would be able to find me.

That hope was not in vain. After weeks of slavery, my stay at the plantation was almost at an end. One evening, as the stars began to show, my mistress insisted that I take a load of her laundry down to the creek. Naturally, she sent a guard along with me. As soon as I knelt down to place the linens in the water, the guard was struck from behind and fell dead. I looked up from his body, and to my amazement, beheld my beloved Thinalphiel.

She grabbed me and kissed me and said, "I'm so sorry it's taken this long to find you. I was arrested shortly after you were and held as an accomplice to your crime. I finally managed to kill a few guards and escape."

Words could not express how happy I was to be reunited with Thinalphiel. Unfortunately, we were both fugitives now. Our only hope for freedom and peace was to get as far from Vvardenfell as we could. We traveled by night and avoided the roads at all costs.

We finally arrived in Cyrodiil and decided it might be time for us to settle down and stop adventuring for a while. No one here knew of our crimes, and we had no intention of changing that. However, all of our possessions were gone. The guards in Vvardenfell had taken everything we owned, including the bow Bojenir had given me. That was the one possession I missed most. It was time for us to start over and try to make a new life for ourselves.

Luckily, we managed to find work in a weapons shop in Kvatch. The elderly Imperial who owned the shop was no longer able to string bows or repair axes, so he gladly hired us to look after his shop. Unfortunately, the pay was not enough to bring back the lavish lifestyle we were accustomed to, and I decided to fall back on my career as a thief and began picking the pockets of the wealthy. Thinalphiel was not too happy with my decision, but she appreciated the extra income. She even decided to join the arena and offer training to less experienced warriors.

For a few years, this was how we lived. Life was less eventful than it had been in the past, but we were content. As long as we had each other, life was wonderful.

But our happiness wasn't to last. When the city of Kvatch came under attack from Daedra, my brave Thinalphiel was killed attempting to save many of the citizens from harm. In an instant, my beloved was gone forever. My life was now meaningless.

I have returned to my childhood home in Valenwood where I plan to live out my days in peace. I have taken the place of my former teacher, and now teach archery and stealth to the youngest members of my tribe. My thirst for adventure has been thoroughly quenched, and I long for the day when I can reunite with my beloved.