

## Galadriel and Celeborn

Artanis was restless. The weather was hot, and she could find no appeal in any thing. The pleasure she had formerly taken in the land was vanished, she knew not whence or why; all that she felt was a sourceless irritation.

Elves in general are not like men. We who live short lives must always be planning how to fill them. We are constantly becoming – becoming a child, becoming grown, becoming a lover; becoming a partner and a parent; becoming an apprentice, a journeyman, a master; becoming old, tired, hale, ill, respected, ignored. But for the Elven race whose life is the life of the world, each day is as a Sunday morning when one is eighteen. Elves must not always be doing; they are mostly content simply to be. The world is, and so are they. For indeed they and the world are one.

The Elves of Doriath walked their woods in peace and found their lives in every surrounding, and on every time scale, be it seconds or centuries. One might take joy from the momentary sparkle of a dewdrop, or from a turn in the wind's voice. Another might stand and savour the pulse of leaf in the eternal cycles of the seasons: green, yellow, gone, green, yellow, gone – the slow, year-long breathing of the forest. In all cases it was the same joy. Time for them had little meaning, and every day, every year, every century, was as blessed as the next, or the previous.

Artanis however was suffering a painful absence of heart, as though a dear friend had died. She missed exceedingly the company of the Powers. Born as she was in their land, she had walked from her earliest days with those whose being wove through every corner of her world. She had revered the power and clarity of Manwë, the cold, aching beauty of Varda, the fire and force of Aulë, and the eternal spring of Yavanna. She had run and laughed with Tulkas, and she had never been so merry. She had sung with Lórien, and her heart had never been so moved. Many times too she had treasured converse with Ulmo, Lord of Waters, absorbing always slow wisdom from his words.

Such were the radiant days of her youth; but the dream had been shattered, the wonderful vision quenched. In her grief and unrest, Artanis had fled that land, and she was not yet ready to think of returning. Indeed she felt that she could not return. To what should she go back? To darkness, where once had been Light; to silence and sighs, where had been singing joy unending? But despite the uncrossable gulf that stretched between her and those lost days, Valinor remained, a dream at the edge of vision. She longed to see again the light in the eyes of the Powers, and to listen to the profound music of their voices.

Here in the outer world there was no light, no message. She felt as one who had wandered far from meaning into a dark land of the unliving. Only in Doriath, and in the face and voice of Melian, had she found comfort.

For long periods the shining lady of the Noldor could forget her troubles, and live as her hosts lived. But ever anew she would be moved to cast aside the day-dream, to stride out of calmness, seeking what she knew not. At such times, running water was her solace. There at least she could sense the presence of Ulmo, who alone now of the Powers ventured into the wider world. Almost at times she could hear the murmur of his voice. To Artanis, he was a wise and dear friend whose ear she had always had and whose hand she could almost hold. Sometimes she sobbed with the painful joy of a renewed encounter, but always she came away refreshed, stronger, at peace; the bitter notions born of grief and disquiet washed away for the time.

In her wanderings through the woods and hills of Doriath she had found a secret place of waters. In the hills above Menegroth were many springs, which fed trickling rivulets, winding their ways down through mossy bouldered slopes, chuckling. One such dived into a cleft and disappeared. Artanis, exploring idly, found at the foot of the slope an entry concealed behind some bushes. The passage to which it led was unroofed, but so narrow at the top that the growth met overhead in most places, permitting only a dim green light to filter down. The crack wound into the rock for a distance until it opened into a small but airy space. There the rock walls overhung; and on each side they were decorated by streams of falling water of every size, from thready drips, to the pouring of an ice-cold freshet that battered the head and left one gasping for breath. Ferns and other lacy growth danced and nodded beneath the flashing drops. At certain hours of the day sunlight lanced down, warming the sandy floor and glittering off the spray. It was a special place, a holy place. Nowhere did Artanis feel the presence of the god more certainly than here.

Artanis, like all Elves, welcomed all weathers equally, and had bathed in the cleft on days when the falls were garlanded with ice. On hot days, however, the waters gained naturally an added charm. So on this present day of heat, she turned her steps thither. As she pushed aside the rustling growth at the entry, immediately she felt the relief of the cool air in the shadowed passage. Eager for the refreshing touch of the water, she turned the last corner; but stopped then in shock.

Somebody else was under the falls. For an instant her eyes took in the sight of the tall, broad-shouldered figure in the water. He was pushing silver hair away from a noble and beautiful face. The hair made a gleaming river down the whole length of his back, reaching to well-formed twin rounds at the base of it. His legs below were shapely and powerful. Muscles played and moved in his shoulders and arms, but his hands were long and graceful. In the first instant of burning vision Artanis thought it was the King; then she knew it was another.

One single glance, then she turned her gaze away, blushing slightly. At the same instant, the man became aware of her. He reached for his robe with unhurried dignity and wrapped himself in it as he stepped out of the falling runnel.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said Artanis. “I did not know anybody was here. Indeed, I did not know that anybody ever came here.” While she spoke, she was trying to erase the vivid recollection of what she had just seen from her mind.

“I have come here since I was a child,” replied the man. His voice was low and full, pleasant to hear. It matched well with his face and figure. “My father first showed me this place. But I have met no other who knows of it.”

“I – I wonder then that I have not seen you here before.”

The man considered her as he dried himself with slow movements. “I am only lately come back to the court,” he said. “I have been in the East.” Then he too looked slightly abashed. “Lady, I must confess to you: I have seen *you* here before.”

Her eyes widened and her chin came up as she realized the implications of this. He had seen her, as she had just seen him? She felt her face grow warmer.

“But only for an instant, then I turned away,” he continued. And she, looking into his eyes, knew it for truth. But she also saw that it was not all of the truth.

“What more?” she demanded.

Now it was his cheeks which reddened slightly. “Since that time, I have come oftener,” he confessed. “Until today, in vain.”

Artanis, feeling suddenly flustered, had to look aside again. The man took the opportunity to appraise her more fully. He saw a tall, golden-haired woman clothed in a brief white dress which left her arms and much of her legs bare. Although she stood in the shadow of the cleft, her body and hair seemed to glow with a light of their own.

“You are the one they call Artanis<sup>1</sup>, are you not?” he asked. “One of the newcomers?”

“That was my father’s name for me,” she said. “My mother called me Nerwen<sup>2</sup>.”

“I ween the father had the clearer sight,” he said, smiling. “But I have had my own name for you, since I first saw you at the court – and elsewhere.”

Her eyes returned to his face, curiosity warring in her breast with vexation at his boldness. “And what name is that?”

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1 Noble woman.

2 Man-maiden.

“Alatarriel<sup>3</sup>,” he replied. “That would be ‘Galadriel’ when spoken in the modern fashion.”

“Galadriel, Galadriel,” she echoed, pleased at the sound of it in spite of herself. “I do not know that it is right to go around making up names for people. My name is my own to choose.”

“Ah! Very true,” said the tall Elf. He was squeezing the water out of his thick rope of hair. Eyeing her slyly, he continued, “Lady, your freedom is complete; I doubt it not. As is mine, to voice my fancy. But even supposing I spoke my own choice on every occasion – as, indeed, I am minded to do – so that all the court took it up and called you Galadriel; still, you would be free to choose another name to carry in the privacy of your heart.”

“You would not dare!” she glared at him.

He grinned at her cheerfully. “Would I not?”

The intense blue eyes considered him for some moments, her thoughts impossible to read. Suddenly she spoke again: “You are wet, sir. Would you be dry?” She beckoned to him, and retreated out of the passage. Puzzled, he followed her outside. She turned as he came out, and smiled in her turn. “Catch me if you can!” she cried. With that, she set off running.

Artanis could run. She could run as no mortal can run. Strongest woman of her people, pupil of the gods, child in the fresh morning of the world: she could run as few maids have run before, and none since.

The faster she ran, the more power she felt streaming through her body. The earth supported her, the sparkling air lent wings to her feet. She outran the deer, left eagles behind. Trees whipped past her, one after another. The land rose slowly under her flashing feet, then fell again. Laughing, she ducked like lightning under low branches that loomed up, and sprang over chasms that gaped suddenly at her feet. Then she was on the flat land beside the river. The gale of life in her blew stronger, hotter; and she ran faster yet.

Suddenly she became aware of another beside her. The man had caught up. He was running with seeming ease, his silver hair cracking behind him like a flag. And no matter how hard Artanis tried, she could not shake him off.

She turned suddenly, crossing the river in a shower of spray. Thereafter she plunged straight into the forest. Leaves thrashed at her body, disregarded. The path led uphill towards the hilly country in the centre of Region. Artanis put forth her last effort, and ran as she had never run before. The wind became a roaring wall against her forehead, and the clothes whipped and hammered on her body and threatened at any moment to tear off. Sparks of brilliance, torn from her streaming hair, danced in the wake of her passage for a moment before winking out. But exert herself as she might, the man stayed ever at her side.

She skidded to a stop on a rocky height, the man pulling up beside her. Both were panting hard in the sudden silence. The forest stretched behind them, but directly in front the land disappeared. Artanis knew this place, had come here often. They stood on the rim of a cliff overlooking a quiet blue lake curving away between the hilltops. The cliff fell some ten fathoms, over-sheer, into deep water with no snags. One could simply step off and enjoy the cool plunge following on the breathless drop.

“Not too much man in the maiden,” said the Elf when he had somewhat caught his breath. “But you run well. What else can you do?”

“You are hot, sir,” she said instead of replying directly. “Would you be cool?” And without waiting for his answer, she whipped off her dress and leaped straight off the cliff. He glimpsed her graceful form briefly before she disappeared. After a second or two, he heard the splash. Wincing a little at the height, he took off his own clothes and took the plunge himself, without daring to spend too long thinking about it. The drop was terrifying, but he was concentrating too hard on his posture to worry about it. Then the cold water smashed at him.

He struggled up from the green depths to find the damned woman already a respectable distance down the

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3 Shining crown.

lake. Well, no matter – he could swim too.

The story here was the same. Artanis swam so that the water arched in two streams from her head and fell back far behind, but ever the silver-haired man matched her stroke for stroke. Indeed, he began slowly to draw ahead.

By the end of the lake, he was well in front. He turned into a narrow creek and came to rest in a pool carpeted with pale petals, blown in from a densely flowering tree above the bank.

She swam slowly in and joined him. “It seems you know all of my places,” she said with a touch of dismay.

“This is my birth-land,” he replied simply. He ducked under the surface briefly and rose again, snorting. She laughed to see the white flowers decorating his face and head. Disconcerted, he put his hand up, discovering them. He joined her in laughter as he tried to blow petals off the end of his nose.

“You swim well,” he said. “What comes next?”

“No, no!” she laughed. “I know when I am beaten. You are my better, sir, I confess it.”

He shook his head gravely. “Not so, lady. I am only somewhat stronger in the body. And any man who prides himself on the size and power of his muscles need only consider the ape for the complete restoration of his humility.”

“Well,” she considered, “if you do not claim the prize for strength of body, that just leaves mind. And to better me in that measure, sir, were no great undertaking.”

He shook his head. “Not so.”

She frowned. “Must you force me to display my every failing? I am not clever. You are as big a fool as I if you think otherwise.”

“We cannot all be scholars, subtle masters of lore and craft,” he replied. “I know that such is not your nature, no more than it is mine. But mind has other qualities, just as valuable.”

“What qualities?” she asked.

“To see into hearts,” he replied. “To hold many threads, to weigh many desires. To choose rightly.”

“I cannot think you are still speaking of me,” she said. “Choose rightly? That would be a jest if it were not too bitter for one.”

“Look into my heart, as I know you can, and see if I speak my true thought,” he said simply.

She looked into his eyes; then turned suddenly away, blushing slightly.

“You are greater than I,” he went on soberly. “I must own it, for I cannot conceal it. Not from you. I knew your worth from the first moment I saw you, and every word from you today has but graven the wound deeper. And it is a wound; I am not used to being bettered. You lay my pride in the dust. I do not know why I do not turn away from you. I do not understand myself.”

She swam around him for a while, considering. “Must the man always be the better?”

“So I had always believed; until I met you, Galadriel.”

“Do not call me that.” She swam some more through the petalled waters. “Perhaps your pride is less than you supposed.”

He shrugged. “Maybe so. No man can see the back of his own head; he must trust to others to obtain an account of it.”

They swam idly for a time, enjoying the day. “Shall we go back?” she said at last. Together, they swam slowly back down the length of the lake. The air was still, leaving the surface very smooth; a mirror with scarcely a warp.

The lake ended at a tiny beach, at the foot of a path leading up beside the cliff. Artanis looked a little sideways at the Elf. “Having seen my unclothed form now twice already, you doubtless need not see it again,” she said.

He grinned at her. “I could tell you the same story, Galadriel,” he said, “and it would have exactly as much truth in it.”

“Meaning none at all, I suppose. And my name is Artanis. Pray *stop* calling me by that, that... fanciful invention!”

He shrugged again, still smiling. He had a radiant smile which lit up dark eyes, full of humour – humour, and other things. Kindness she saw there, and resolution, and wit.

Infuriating.

“And what is your name, sir? Or shall I make one up for you?”

“They call me Celeborn.”

Him!

“Well, Celeborn landsman of Doriath: just don’t look, that is all! I shall know if you do!”

He turned his back, still grinning. “Whistle when you are ready. Certain I am that you *can* whistle, Man-  
maiden.”

A snort was the only reply he received. Before long, a penetrating whistle came from above. He grinned again to himself before climbing out and ascending the path.

She was standing with averted gaze when he reached the top. Trying not to look at what the thin cloth of her dress was revealing of her still wet body, he donned his own hose and tunic.

She turned to face him as soon as he was dressed. “You do not seem to me like a man whose pride lies humbled in the dust.”

“To tell you the truth, I do not exactly feel like it either,” he admitted. “It is beyond all reason.”

“I do not know what you mean by that,” she said.

“It means, my reason tells me I should flee from you. But my heart tells me quite another tale.”

“And what tale would that be?” Suspecting all the time what he was going to say.

“That I would fain speak with you again, Galadriel of the Noldor. Or run, or swim, as you please.”

She looked down, seemingly intent on scratching in the earth with her toes. “We might do that...” she said in casual tones, “some time... to while away an idle hour...” Then she looked up directly at him again, fire now in her eyes. She raised a warning finger to his face. “But only if you cease these silly games, and call me by my rightful name!”

He spread his hands. “Of course!” he said. But while there was nothing but candour in his voice, a twinkle remained in one eye. “Your wish shall be as a command to me – Galadriel.”

Alas, he had neglected to mark how close to the edge he was standing.

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