Summary

The many meetings between Galadriel and Gandalf throughout the years, as seen through his eyes.

Notes

One day I wrote a ficlet - an imagined first meeting between Gandalf and Galadriel in Valinor before the destruction of the Trees - and then I continued writing. This will be a series of meetings starting from that first one and continuing hopefully all the way to the day they both depart from Middle-Earth. It's not a romance per se as this is meant to remain more or less canonical (but with my full admission that there is a possibility I will get some things wrong as the history of Middle-Earth is complicated and, especially in the case of Galadriel, often contradicts itself) but it's up for the reader, I suppose, to decide whether there is an attraction between these two or not.
He watches her, the young elf maiden with a golden garland of hair as she runs among her brothers. No longer a child but not yet an adult, she is like a spring flower on the brink of full bloom. Physically she is more slender than the elven youths she is racing against, but in speed and strength she appears to be their equal. Tall she is too, and beautiful beyond measure, seemingly blessed with her fair share of the grace that belongs to the Eldar.

He knows her name, of course. Artanis is the name she bears as given to her by her father, but today he is looking upon Nerwen - the man-maiden as her mother would call her - a fierce athlete equal to even the strongest of her kin.

In short, he finds himself quite fascinated with this youngling, so unlike any he has yet seen among the Children. And then suddenly, just as he is prepared to watch them all pass, the very object of his curiosity comes to a halt as if an invisible hand had stopped her.

Her brothers soon disappear into the distance, but she stands still and alert, no longer interested in the race. Something else has caught her attention and only moments later he becomes aware of a mind and will fumbling in an attempt to locate his own.

“Who are you?” she speaks out, her voice clear as music.

He has not taken a body, but it appears she can sense him where all her brothers had simply passed him by.

“You have a rare gift, Artanis,” he lets his mind speak to her, guiding her towards the source. “I pass unseen by most of the Eldar.”

“You are of the Maiar?” her unspoken response finds him. “Why can I not see you?”

“I usually take no physical form, but you have detected the presence of my spirit.”

The young elf maiden frowns. As the day passes and the lights of Laurelin and Telperion begin to mesh, the shots of silver in her golden hair that have been all but invisible until now suddenly appear to shine brighter, almost as if the light of the trees is coming to life in her tresses.
“You still have not replied to my first question.” He becomes aware of her mind addressing him again. He can tell her will is strong and for a moment he fears where it might turn to if not properly guided.

“You do not know me,” he replies at length, his mind weighing hers in return. “But I am Olórin of the Maiar and I expect now that you have found me we will meet again, for I walk often unseen among the Eldar.”

“Olórin,” she speaks out loud as if tasting the new name. “Are we to be friends?”

“I am a friend of all the Children of Ilúvatar,” his mind responds. “But it is not for me to determine who wishes to return that friendship.”

“Will I ever see you?” her mind inquires in return.

“Perhaps you already have,” he replies, starting to drift away, “and perhaps one day when you have mastered your gift, you will recognize me.”

When he sees her again, she is fully grown. Her beauty remains unmatched by any among the house of Finwë, and on the streets of Tirion she is a true vision to behold. Today her golden hair flows free, reflecting shades of both silver and gold as the wind gently touches its strands.

This time he himself bears the appearance of an elf lord but she detects him almost instantly. No more fumbling, her thoughts turn to him and hit the target like an arrow shot with skill from a distance.

“Olórin,” her thought echoes in his mind.

His eyes see the radiance of the noble elf woman as she turns to him, but in his heart a shadow passes through as he looks upon her. He fears that the dark power he has come investigate has already begun to fester inside the beautiful city of the Noldor, even in the heart of the fair Lady Artanis herself, but it is a thought he does not wish to share with her.
“Your senses have grown sharp,” he compliments her instead, bowing his head slightly as he addresses her in the tongue of her people.

“I can see into the minds and hearts of others quite clearly now,” she responds, a slight frown passing across her brow as if she has sensed in him a part that remains hidden.

“It is an uncommon gift, even among the Eldar,” his mind speaks to her, repeating his earlier assessment, but this time the communication is edged with a tone of warning. “I fear it may yet bring you grief.”

“Why do you say this?” she asks aloud, but he can tell she is troubled as well. Her mind is not at peace.

“Seeing into the minds and hearts of others can be both a gift and a curse,” he replies simply. “Have not you already seen things that trouble you?”

Her face darkens and he can feel a shadow pass between them as the name “Fëanor” echoes from her thoughts to his.

Unfortunately he can give her no reassurance. The same name has begun to trouble his mind as well. Indeed, the growing doubt in his chest is the reason he has arrived in Tirion today.

“He would have a strand of my hair but I have not yielded,” she tells him, giving up the use of spoken words again. “And I will not yield for his motives have become twisted with greed and pride.”

“You judge him harshly.”

“I judge him as I see him,” she responds and he sees a flash of that same Noldorin pride in her eyes that she has just accused Fëanor of. Despite her young age she is already mighty among the noble house of Finwë, and he knows that with her abilities she could become greater still.

The thought is not an altogether comforting one for he already senses a conflict brewing among her kin. The same fire that drives Fëanor also burns in her heart, even though she is not yet wise enough to tell.
The blissful light of the Trees is no more. Gone are the lights of Laurelin and Telperion, preserved only in the Silmarils that are also lost, perhaps forever.

The loss of the Trees brings him sorrow, but greater still is the grief he feels as he watches the Noldorin princes take the Oath of Fëanor, one after another. Perhaps their anger is just, but his heart tells him these words can only lead them all to death and destruction for they do not fully understand the power of Melkor.

Furthermore, it gives him pain to see her among the leaders. Tall and valiant among the princes stands Artanis, a lone female figure amidst the mighty elf lords. She has spoken passionately of her will to leave, but when the oaths are being taken, she remains silent.

His mind seeks her then, but she refuses the connection even though he knows she could sense him. She has grown proud and self-willed, but he cannot yet give up hope on her. Since their second meeting in Tirion he has sought her out a number of times and he knows even if her mind is clouded, her heart is not corrupted. Beyond the pride, there dwells a true kindness in her and she judges harshly none but Fëanor.

And yet, the wisdom she could have achieved in the guidance of the Valar now seems nothing more than a vain dream. Instead she will know the sorrow that will find all of her kin if they leave. He doubts whether he will ever see her again before the world is remade and he watches with a heavy heart as the legions of Noldor depart.

Heavier still his heart grows as he hears of the kinslaying of Alqualondë and it is in the house of Nienna that he for many years grieves the faith of the Noldor.
Clad in grey robes, disguised in the body of an old man, he wonders if she will recognize him still. Many are the years that have passed since that day she had refused his counsel and many are the deeds of both good and evil that have been carried out in the world in the years following their last encounter.

Those years and deeds that have landed him in Middle-Earth in the body of an old man have not changed her on the outside. Even though the Trees are long gone, in her golden hair a memory of that light still remains. It is no wonder that the name she is now known by is Galadriel after the radiant garland of hair she possesses.

“My Lady,” he addresses her, bowing his head down.

She looks upon him, silent, and in the depth of her eyes he can see the years that have passed and the sorrow she now carries. Of all the children of Finarfin, she alone has survived all the wars and calamities.

“You have come from Aman,” she finally speaks. It is a statement, not a question.

“That is true,” he says. They are alone among the trees of Greenwood and their voices are low but audible. She has not sought to communicate with his mind.

Finally she smiles a bright smile and for a moment she is the elf maiden again that he saw those many ages ago, running through the fields of Lórien in Aman.

“You have not changed, Olórin,” she says, a hint of amusement in her voice. “Your appearance may be altered but you are as forthcoming with your responses as you ever were.”

She does recognize him. Of course she would. And in one respect the years have changed her for she has grown great in wisdom. Among the Eldar of Middle-Earth there are none who could compete with the power of her mind. He had feared for her and the direction she might take but he sees now he had also underestimated her. She has done well, prospered even, in the life she has chosen.

“That may be true, My Lady,” he responds eventually, “but what need is there for long explanations when you already comprehend my purpose?”

Her eyes scan him from the top of his pointy hat to the edges of his muddy shoes. His appearance is clearly not what she was once used to seeing but it is the ring on his finger where her gaze finally settles. It is hidden, but not from her eyes, for she too is a Ring-bearer.

They do not speak of it, not even in thoughts, and yet a quiet acknowledgement passes between them. Perhaps it is the connection of the Rings which he is still learning to understand.

“Not all of it,” she finally speaks again. “But there is much I can see and some more that I am able to guess.”

Her next question is a little unexpected, and yet it is a natural one.

“How is my father?” she asks when he remains silent, bringing up the past they have not yet
spoken of.

Her mind remains closed, but in her eyes the sadness deepens, as if remembering a shadow long passed.

“Your father is well, as is all of your kin that remain in Aman.” He pauses as he feels words are of no use anymore in this conversation. Instead, he shares an image with her of Tirion, her former home, where her father still awaits for his children to return, even knowing that only one now remains among the living.

As if aware that he is testing her, she does not flinch. Even now, she does not regret leaving, but he can sense a longing in her. Middle-Earth has become her home, and yet she can no longer find rest in its woods. It’s the work of the ring she bears.

“You did not accept the pardon of the Valar,” he finally says when she remains silent both in word and thought. It’s not an accusation, only a simple statement.

“You think me proud,” she replies with a gentle smile. He opens his mouth to speak but she shakes her head. “Perhaps you are right. I am proud, still. But the House of Fëanor is not guilty of the deeds of Fëanor and his sons. I will not ask for pardon where I have not sinned.”

“And still a day may yet come when it will be your time to return.”

She smiles again, sadly.

“You are wise, Olórin,” she replies. “But what ship would take me there now? No, it is here I must remain and watch everything slowly perish.”

They stand in silence for a moment. He does not want to offer her empty words of comfort but he has something he can give her to ease her longing.**

“Perhaps you would wish to have the Elessar, the elf stone, to keep your forest alive in memory of the Undying Lands,” he says.

“The Elessar?” she inquires. “But it passed into Valinor many years ago and now all that is fair must fade and perish.”

“In the end it must, true, but until the Age of Men, it need not be so.”

She smiles again. "I know you, Olórin. You like to bring hope, but surely the Valar are now far removed and those who still cling to Middle Earth are left under a shadow so long it can't be chased away."

"But it is not so," he replies, producing the precious stone from beneath his robes. "The Valar have not forsaken Middle Earth."

She looks at the stone, the Elessar, in wonder.

He continues: "This I bring to you from Yavanna. Use it as you may, and for a while you shall make the land of your dwelling the fairest place in Middle-Earth. But it is not for you to possess. You shall hand it on when the time comes. For before you grow weary, and at last forsake Middle-Earth one shall come who is to receive it, and his name shall be that of the stone; Elessar he shall be called."

"I fear the stone will not be all that he will have of mine," she replies with a far away look in her eyes, as if struck by a sudden vision of foresight of her own. Then she returns her gaze to him and
smiles, taking the stone from the palm of his hand. "Fear not, Olórin," she says before they part. "The Elessar will pass on to him and it will become his name."

Chapter End Notes

**The end of the chapter concerning the Elessar is borrowed largely from the Unfinished Tales, some quoted verbatim but mostly paraphrased. I decided to include and use this version of how Galadriel came to have the Elessar since it includes Gandalf.**
He does not see her again for some time. While she withdraws to Lothlórien, his journeys take him to the furthest reaches of Middle-earth, forging connections with men, elves, half-elves, dwarves and -his personal favourite - a little tribe of halflings that call themselves hobbits.

It is when he is returning from one such journey to the North that her message reaches him. She is asking for his presence in Lothlórien where she intends to summon the Istari as well as the wisest of the Eldar. He does not usually respond to summons but now he wastes no time to answer her call, for a shadow of threat has been growing in his heart of late, and he suspects she has sensed the same.

He is the first of those summoned to reach the woods of Lothlórien, and he finds her wandering alone under the golden mallorn trees. Lord Celeborn, he later learns, has ridden north to meet Elrond and Celebrían who are also expected.

“Olórin,” she addresses him, her voice pure and resonant – always a pleasure to be heard. “It has been a long time.”

“Lady Galadriel,” he responds, bowing his head slightly in greeting.

“Perhaps I now ought to call you Mithrandir,” she continues with a wry smile. “Gray Pilgrim, I hear they call you.”

“Well, My Lady, you have a choice before you as I have just returned from the north where they have taken to calling me Gandalf,” he replies with the same lightness of tone. “Lady Artanis,” he adds with a hint of cheek.

A wistful look crosses her face for a fraction of a moment as he speaks the name long forgotten, but soon her smile returns.

“Gandalf,” she speaks, as if tasting the word on her mouth. It is not of Elvish origin but he cannot tell whether she likes it or not. Mainly it appears to amuse her.

But they understand each other. In a silent exchange that follows, it is settled between them that hereafter he will only be known by the names that he is given, just like she has adopted the name given to her by her husband. Olórin, too, shall be forgotten.

“You said you had been to the north,” she speaks again out loud after a while. “Do you bring any news?”

Her tone is laced with concern, confirming his suspicion that she too has felt the shadow. He shakes his head.

“Nothing that would prove my fears,” he admits. “But my heart is uneasy.”

“Something moves in the shadows,” she agrees. “Unseen, hidden from us. It will not show itself yet, but I sense a growing threat. I believe you have felt it too.”

“Yes,” he confirms. “It does not seem to have taken shape yet, and I have not found the source, but I fear an evil is stirring again.”

“That is why I have called you all here, to take council together,” she responds. Then she casts her eyes down and takes in a deep breath. “Elrond and Círdan will come, but of the Istari, only you
and Curunír have responded.”

“It seems unlikely that the others of my order will prove to be of help in the task we were given,” he says, shaking his head.

“Do you believe that Curunír will?” she asks, unexpectedly. He looks at her for a moment, discerning her mind.

“You do not trust him,” he asserts. It is not a question. He has seen that look on her before.

“For now I do,” she responds evasively, turning her head away, “and yet I would feel more comfortable if you were to lead this council.”

“Curunír would be more powerful,” he responds. He himself would rather not take the added responsibility of a leading position in the council. That is not his task and he cannot afford to stray from it.

She pauses and draws a breath. “Power is a fickle ally,” she finally says, a rueful smile on her face. “Those who do not want it are generally the ones who ought to have it.”

He looks at her for a moment in silence, contemplating her words. She is right, and he knows well that it is acquired wisdom for which she has paid a heavy price.

“You no longer desire power?” he finally asks. “You could be the head of the council.”

She laughs, though without much mirth.

“To desire something and to know better than to seek it are two different things,” she responds with a wry smile. “But even if it were not so, I could not claim leadership over any of the Istari. You might not resent me for it, but there are others who would.”

Again, a reference to Curunír. It is clear she does not like him but it is hard for him to understand why. She should have no reason for distrust.

And yet, had not she been right before? She who saw the darkness in Fëanor and distrusted Annatar when others in Eregion had been charmed by his skill and tongue.

He resolves to remember the warning laced in her words.

It is hard to tell whether days or weeks pass in Lothlorien, but at length everyone is gathered.

As the council convenes, its leadership is a matter of only a short discussion. Without much debate, Curunír is elected to take the position. He can tell the choice is not to her liking, but she does not speak up openly against it once the decision has been made.

It is only later, at the moment of their parting, that she addresses the subject in private.

“I hope we have made the right choice,” she addresses him in silence. The trees have ears, and Curunír is not yet far gone.

“He is a noble spirit, both wise and powerful,” he responds.
“I do not disagree,” she imparts, “but still my heart is troubled. He is not like you.”

“Many would consider that a blessing,” he responds, attempting levity.

Her lips curve into a smile, but her eyes still speak of a troubled mind.

He could produce words of encouragement, but he knows it's not courage she lacks.

"You are determined against him, then?" he asks instead.

Her chest rises as she takes in a deep breath.

"I'm only determined to caution,” she responds.

Then she suddenly smiles again, bright as the sunlight plaing in her tresses. The shadow is still but a distant threat.

They do not return to the subject again.

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