**Last Name’s not Tolkien and I’m a guy.**

Warning this has not been betaed. I have a beta reader set up for the future of this story when we get to the dwarven realms, but I lack a real small mistakes guy for this story. If you think you can do the job, and wish to earn this story 10 points per chapter you look at, pm me.

**Chapter 5: A Meeting Unforeseen**

 Aa they had travelled to Rivendell Harry had fallen back from the forefront of the column, wishing to touch base with each of the dwarves in turn. He was amused to note that Thorin did the same thing, clapping shoulders and trading jokes with every dwarf in the column as well as Bilbo. He spent several minutes speaking quietly to Bilbo in fact, well away from Gandalf and their erstwhile host. Whether they were really out of hearing range Harry couldn’t say, but it was evident that Thorin was asking some questions of Bilbo about elves in general and Elron in particular.

Eventually however Thorin returned to the front of the column and spoke politely if succinctly with Elrond as Gandalf looked on, puffing once more on his pipe. Harry did not, preferring to let Elrond and Thorin talk about the company’s journey and various issues without muddying the conversation with his own. It was evident however that Elrond, for all his politeness and welcome of them, was being eaten alive by curiosity of the magic using yet seeming mortal young man. Still, his sense of propriety seemed to be in control, and he refrained from looking toward Harry more than a dozen or so times before they came to the edge of Rivendell itself.

This edge was not marked out as far as the dwarves could tell, but Harry felt it, like a subtle touch to his skin, making his hair stand on end. He glanced sharply at Gandalf and Elrond, only to find them both looking at him, the ancient wizard with a humorous quirk to his mouth around his pipe and Elrond, a searching look to his eyes. Yet as he and Harry locked eyes, that look faded and he smiled. “Be welcome, one and all to Imladris, or Rivendell as Men call it.”

That was the only sign of any habitation they saw for some time, until the column came through a crack in the hill to discover the path overlooked a hidden valley. The valley itself was wide, going on as far as Harry could see, filled with trees from one end to another. Yet here and there among those trees was an interweaving community of some size, with houses, two, three and even four sory sprawling mansions of stone built here and there, not fighting the nature around them, but working with them to a certain degree.

There was also the sound of water, not just from within the valley but from one edge of it, and looking in that direction Harry could see another side of the valley at the edge of his sight was protected further by a wide river. Yet behind that, there were fountains, visible even from here, tinny pools of deep water splashing one into another. And on the breeze there was song, not just voices, though the quality of those voices would have astonished Harry had he any ear for music. But no, there were wood instruments, a series of flutes and many, many stringed instrument working in chorus, their song filling the valley from one end to another.

Again as the sounds of the valley began to flow gently over them Harry felt the touch of magic. It was a kind he had never seen before, a softer, gentler side of Gandalf’s air magic perhaps. Regardless, Harry knew suddenly with the sort of intuitive grasp of magic that had always irritated Hermione and his more bookish friends, that the magic of the valley would repel anything of the dark. So long as that first defense and the power behind but yet not part of that music was there, this valley would remain clean of the taint of evil.

“This is my home Thorin Oakenshield and company, so long as you remain within this valley you are under my protection and that of my people. No evil can come within this valley, save that within you.” Elrond said, his voice somehow even more formal than they had been when he initially welcomed them into the valley, and in Elvish this time, since he knew that Harry and many of the dwarves could now understand his native tongue.

His eyes flashed between Thorin and Harry in particular for some reason, searching, judging. What he was searching for Harry had no idea, but he seemed satisfied, as he turned away and gestured the company to follow him. they did so, their ponies prancing now beside the taller horses of the elves, the sound and feel of the valley working with the magic of the elves to make them nearly giddy.

Bilbo wasn’t much better, beaming around him happily as the feeling of welcome worked on him. Harry could feel it too, but the magic of the valley couldn’t quite get a grip on him, though the feeling of the place did bring a faint smile to his face. The dwarves in contrast seemed almost immune to both magic and the feeling the music and valley evoked, looking around in some distrust. But a barked word from Thorin had Fili and Kili moving through the company, reminding all and sundry to be on their best behavior. They especially remained Dwalin, Harry noticed, amused.

Soon they were lead through the valley and over a small stone bridge and into what looked like a large cobbled square. There servants came out, dressed in flowing robes of green and white. They bowed quickly to Elrond and Gandalf, then moved forward taking their horses and leading them off.

After a few commands in Elvish that Thorin and Harry could follow thanks to his spell, Elrond turned to Thorin. “My servants here will tend to your animals, while you and your friends are shown to the bathing areas. By the time you are done there, we will have laid out clean clothing for you all if you wish, and I will send another servant to lead you to my dining hall. Time enough for more serious discussions this evening after we have all been fed and watered.”

“Is that your way of telling us we stink?” Harry asked while the dwarves grumbled and Bilbo looked like he was about to swoon.

“In a word, yes,” Gandalf said responding in kind and causing Harry to laugh as Elrond, and more obviously his servants, looked pained. “And if you do not, I certainly do. Moreover I am certain a bath and a nice bearding will put as all in better moods.”

Harry held up his hand conceding the point. Each of the guests were shown to a separate room with their own personal bathing areas, something every dwarf approved of, being rather prudish about nakedness even with other men. Harry, for his part just stared at the bath, which reminded him of what he had seen of the Prefect’s bath in Hogwarts, complete with hot water and numerous types of soap. *Pity it seems to be missing the mermaids though. Ah well, one can’t have everything.*

Gingerly pulling off his clothing and setting it all aside, Harry winced as he finally registered that yes, he did kind of stink. It had been several weeks since he had arrived in this world, and he had probably been rather ripe when he arrived to boot. Once naked he slowly lowered himself into the bath, grimacing then smiling as the heat of the water first stung then began to work at his muscles in a way he hadn’t even realized he needed. With a whoop he dived forward, fully immersing himself.

 Once he realized he was beginning to prune Harry exited the bath with visible reluctance, making certain he had cleaned his hair and body as much as possible. Outside the bathing area he found a servant had indeed come by with some clothing for him. It consisted of dark brown leather pants, a green shirt and a leather jerkin to go over it. Overall he looked more like one of the locals than he had since arriving, and Harry idly wondered what the elves would make of the zipper on the pants he had been wearing under his robes during the battle in the ministry.

The memory of that went through him once more and again Harry saw the faces of the friends he had left behind, the ones he knew had died Hermione’s face most prominent of all. Gritting his teeth Harry through his grief back down to where he kept it once again, concentrating instead on his face in the mirror set onto one wall. His hair was longer now down to his shoulder, and the scar on his face had healed far better than the ones on his hands and forearms. It was now a thin, clearly healed thing, while the ones on his hands still looked new and painful. The scars elsewhere were somewhere in between.

 Now satisfied with his appearance Harry exited the room and went looking for Thorin. He found him quickly enough coming out of his own room. Thorin too had changed his clothing, though he had ruined that by putting his armor on over his new clothing once more, and then his cloak over that. He didn’t have his new sword tied to his side though, which Harry thought was as mush a concession as Harry was going to get from the black-haired dwarf. Thorin had however taken pains on his hair and beard, which was much shinier and more cared for than Harry had seen before, and he seemed to be smiling somewhere behind that beard too.

 The two men nodded to one another and began to walk down the hall side by side. “So,” Harry said as they came to an intersection, breaking the companionable silence. “I know I shouldn’t have to ask, but you’re not going to fly off the handle here are you? I know you have reasons to hate elves, and I could see earlier that this place makes you uneasy for some reason but…”

 Thorin chucked. “No I’ve had my bit of adventure for the day. Even I can see that is would be best not to anger an Elven lord in the seat of his power if I can but help it. Besides, you and Gandalf were right, we’ll need his help if we are to succeed in our quest.”

 From a nearby doorway Balin walked out, joined quickly by Fili. As Thorin’s closest relative Fili was his designated heir, and Thorin tended to push him to join any discussion about their plans going forward. He was also somewhat more diplomatic than Thorin tended to be, and thorin had requested he join Balin, his other advisor, for this discussion.

 The five of them stood in the hall, talking quietly and looking around them watching as the others gathered along the hallway. Once they were, they were led off by a group of servants to an overlooking second story balcony, which held a single large table and several other servants. The balcony wound around the house, and to the other side of the house was a smaller, cozier alcove, with an equally small table set for six.

 There Gandalf and Elrond waited for them, also dressed in different clothing. Gandalf’s tattered gray robes had been replaced with a new gray robe, his bear and hair as well cared for as Thorin’s. Elrond had left his armor and weapons behind and was dressed like a lord in his raiment. He sat at the front of the table but stood with Gandalf beside him as Harry and the dwarves came around the bend in the balcony, addressing them in the trade tongue. “Welcome to my table friends. Please, sit.”

 They did so, with Thorin directly across from Elrond and Harry across from Gandalf, with Balin and Fili spaced between them. Once they were sitting servants moved forward with several plates of food.

While they sat, Elrond was once more caught by the young magic user’s eyes. Those emerald eyes were such a peculiar color, so vibrant and powerful that they looked like something from a different age. His looks in general however made Elrond wonder if he had come from Ranger stock, which he voiced to Gandalf.

“Ah, no, Harry is something else, which we will need to talk about later. For now, let us concentrate on Thorin’s issues.” Gandalf replied.

“So you say, yet I can see that the two are intertwined Gandalf,” Elrond replied shrewdly. “Nevertheless, let us talk first about what your and your company are doing Thorin Oakenshield.”

Thorin glared at Elrond for a moment, hearing the note of command in the half-elf’s tone and not liking it. Despite that, he nodded to Fili, who began to speak of the mission of the company, telling the story far more clearly and diplomatically than Thorin would have been able to, as well as the reason they had been making for Rivendell in the first place. “The map we have to show the hidden entrance however has much of the instructions to find it written in Moon Runes, a language which none of us can read. Thus Gandalf advised us to speak to you. Needless to say any help you give us in this, and in terms of provisions, will be paid for after we have reclaimed Erebor.”

“Reclaimed Erebor?” Elrond said softly, having listened with increasing concern as the story continued. “Reclaim the Lonely Mountain from Smaug, the greatest dragon seen since the Fall of Numenor? You say that as if it was so certain, as if you would not instead rouse Smaug from his rest on qa world that has little which could halt his rampage!” He stared at Thorin then over at Gandalf. “And you have gone along with this?”

Gandalf looked back amiably, waving the dwarves and Harry to silence when they seemed to speak. “Whether or not I had gone along with it, Thorin and his fellows would still have gone forward with their plans. And between them and Harry they would have had a chance to succeed regardless of mine or your aid. With it, they are far more likely to succeed in their mission rather than, as you said, igniting Smaug’s ire.”

 Harry laughed incredulously at Gandalf’s joke, while Elrond simply stared at him, then over to Harry and Thorin. Seeing the truth of Gandalf’s words in Thorin’s steely gaze and Balin and Fili’s level looks, he sighed, leaning back. “Very well, show me this map, and I will translate it. I also understand that you have found two weapons of my people? Show them to me, and I will name them for you. Beyond that what aid I can give you we will see.”

 The rest of the discussion went by somewhat more amiably. Elrond informed them of what the map said, and named Gandalf and Thorin’s swords, Glamdring and Orcrist, fell blades that in Elrond’s words should never have been found as they had been in a troll’s lair. Gandalf took that in stride while Thorin was well pleased with his weapon’s pedigree, though he tried to hide it.

He was also startled that Elrond made no move to claim the weapons due to their elvish heritage, instead saying that they had found their way into his and Gandalf’s hands for a reason. Elrond didn’t say it, but he felt the act had the hands of the Valar in it, guiding simple chance so that these weapons were once more found when they were needed.

 From there, Gandalf and Harry were surprised that Elrond made no further moves to ask Harry about his past, instead asking about his sword. “For I can see it is of near equal quality to the elven blades Gandalf and Thorin now carry, even if the style is not known to me.”

 “Yes I suppose the style would be different,” Harry replied dryly, before letting Elrond send a servant for the sword of Gryffindor. When it arrived Harry spoke of the blade’s special properties, grabbing Elrond’s hand as he made to touch the blade. “Don’t cut yourself on it, trust me, the poison is incredibly deadly.”

 “I see…” Elrond mused, staring at the blade then over at Thorin and finally Gandalf. “And you say the poison of this came from a… basilisk… a great land wyrm? If so then yes, if Smaug lives **and** you can get the poison into his body, you might be able to kill him. If, that is, you can survive until the poison does its work. I am no betting man, but even if I were, I would not deign to wager on that outcome.”

 To his shock however Harry merely laughed. “I’ve made a habit of beating the odds before this, and at least this time I’m not going to be alone. That counts for quite a bit.”

 Elrond nodded at that but then seemed to hesitate, staring first at Harry then Thorin before looking over at Gandalf. “Yet even if you should kill Smaug your danger will not end.”

 “If you are thinking of anyone else trying to come along and take Erebor back when they hear about our victory, don’t,” Thorin said coolly. “Erebor’s defenses might not have prevailed much against the dragon, but I have no doubt we will be able to defend my halls against any normal, land based army given even a short amount of time to work on it.”

 “That is not what I was speaking of Thorin Oakenshield.” Elrond replied sternly then glanced again at Harry and Gandalf before going on. “When I met you I had no inclination to bring this up, but your family is known for a certain malady of the mind when it comes to gold. Your own grandfather suffered from it, slowly going mad and becoming ever more paranoid as the years went on.”

 As Thorin stiffened, his beard practically bristling as Balin too girt his teeth, Elrond went on calmly. “Yet added to that is the corrupting effect Smaug will have had on the gold. Dragon’s gold is tainted, able to twist and warp the strongest of minds.”

 “That is why we have our scout, along,” Harry said quickly, knowing any response Thorin would have made to that blunt warning would not have been diplomatic at best. “Hobbits apparently are almost immune to such taints, and can even remove the taint eventually. Something,” he went on calmly, gesturing to Gandalf, “That even Gandalf had not known until Bilbo mentioned it in response to a few questions.”

 Elrond fell silent, staring first at Harry then Gandalf, who nodded and explained, while Thorin stewed, his anger cooling as he saw their words allay Elrond’s concerns. When Gandalf finished however he could no longer hold himself back. And when he spoke, his voice was pure steel, hammered on the anvil. Yet his anger was not the white hot sort that Elrond’s words had first evoked, rather it was like magma moving under the steel of his words from a pain he had dealing with for decades.

“You were right Lord Elrond, my grandfather Thror did fall to the gold madness. Many of my ancestors have done so as well at various times. But I was forced to watch as Thror did so, slowly weakening relations with our neighbors, even the humans of nearby Dale which had long been our staunch allies before the dragon came. I then watched as my king, my grandfather nearly killed himself during the evacuation for a fistful of gold from our horde. Heard how Thror walked willingly into the mines of Khazad Dum alone to demand the orcs turn them over. I saw my father too exhibit some of the madness, before grief in his father’s death drowned it out and pulled the dwarven states into war. Then it came back, and he roved off on his own, leaving kith and kin behind in his mad quest.”

Glaring into Elrond’s eyes, Thorin smacked his chest with one fist so hard Harry knew if he had hit someone else with that force he might have laid them out. “I saw it all. I know, I **know**, more than you can ever imagine about what gold madness can lead to. And I swear on the honor of my house that I will not fall to the same malady. If I do, I will end myself before I let my actions harm those who follow me.”

Lips twitching Harry nodded. “And if he even shows the slightest sign of it, I’d wager a good smack upside the head would get him out of it.”

Thorin rolled his eyes, his serious mien dissipating at his friend’s jovial humor. “Oh yes, and that has worked so often when you’re in one of your moods?” the two looked at one another than laughed and Elrond, who had sat shocked by the power of Thorin’s words and oath, could only smile as well.

 From there the conversation segued into what Elrond could tell the dwarves of their routes, and what provisions he could offer, which Fili took over from his uncle easily, with Balin helping him at times to actually write up a contract, though Elrond did not seem to think it was needed. While his people couldn’t supply much in the way of meat, they could supply lembas, special bread which supposedly could fill someone up in a few bites and keep a person going for days. On top of that they could provide warm weather gear for the mountains, arrows for Kili and Bilbo, and some medical herbs and poultices.

 What they could not provide was information on the High Pass through the mountains. “It has been many years since that was in use more often than once a year or less. Further, the goblins of the mountains have grown bold of late, something has stirred them up, though my scouts have not discovered what, and they never move in this direction. My sons and I remember all too clearly the horrors such as them visited upon my wife Celebrain to ever allow such.”

 Standing, Elrond moved toward a servant who had just arrived, holding a plater. On it was a silver leaf with several small lines of Elven script. “But I can hopefully aid you in another way. This is a symbol of one who is acting with my knowledge and under my protection, a request that they be given leave to pass through Elven lands. I have not exchanged messages of any sort with Thranduil for centuries, but it is hoped that this will convince him and any of his people to let you pass through Mirkwood unmolested.”

 He made to hand it over to Thorin, but stayed his hand, staring hard at Thorin, Balin and Harry. “But remember this, as I said Thranduil has not communicated with me or any other nation for centuries, the elves of Mirkwood have turned almost entirely inward. This might work, or it might not. The best thing you could do would be to keep on the East Road through the forest, whatever happens.”

 “We were told the spells protecting it might have been warped.” Thorin said, looking between Elrond, Harry and Gandalf as he took the silver leaf on its chain, placing it over his head and tucking it into his undershirt.

 Elrond twitched in surprise at that and looked sharply at Gandalf. “Indeed, then tonight’s discussion will be even more interesting than it was already shaping up to be.”

 Gandalf merely nodded at that, and the meal slowly came to an end. Thorin, Fili and Balin, after a glance at Harry and a wave from him indicating he was fine, moved to join the other dwarves. As they did, Elrond stood up once more and gestured for Gandalf to follow him. When Harry moved to join them at a similar gesture from Gandalf, he made no move to stop him.

“You were foolish to encourage the dwarves on this mad scheme Gandalf, yet chance seems to have favored you,” he said bluntly in the trade tongue, which he had been speaking since he had translated Thorin’s map.

**{Trans from the movie}**

 “It is not just me you need to answer to,” Elrond said, sweeping to one side as they entered the top of the spire. It overlooked a huge chasm to one side of Rivendell, a drop of some thousand yards going straight down, the faint noise of water barely rising to where they stood, a stone escarpment built out of this side of the chasm marked by large stone plinths. Above them the moon shown down, the night astonishingly clear, the light of it filling the area. Yet for all of that, neither Gandalf nor even Harry had any attention to spare for the view. No, their attention was on he woman who stood there, slowly turning from the chasm to look at them.

 Never could Harry ever describe to his own satisfaction that first sight of the Lady Galadriel. She was fair, the fairest of elven maidens perhaps with blonde, almost golden hair cascading down her back, deep, compelling eyes set into a face, whose regal bearing no queen among Man or Elf could ever match. Dressed in a simple white dress with the moon streaming down on her, Galadriel still exuded a noble majesty and power that could be felt, far beyond what Elrond did. Or rather, it was as if Elrond could perhaps hide his power inside himself, Galadriel could not.

 Yet the part that Harry would never be able to describe later was the feel of the Lady. There was compassion there, understanding, not innocence or naiveté but a feeling of such powerful goodness that it practically shimmered in the air. Yet at the same time there was also good humor, amusement perhaps, and simple welcome and friendship as she looked at Gandalf. “Mithrandir.”

 {“bit about her beauty, for then I would truly become fortune’s fool in the presence of your beauty,” teasing ending with a teasing lilt to it that made Galadriel her break out into a chuckle.

 “The lady Galadirel is not the only one here, though I of course completely understand overlooking one such as I in her presence,” said a somewhat jocular yet serious voice, causing both Harry and Gandalf to look away from Galadriel, very reluctantly in both their cases. That voice was powerful too in its own right, not so much commanding as simply one you had to listen to.

 The speaker was a man who looked like Gandalf in many ways, old and bearded, wearing a white robe and with a staff in one hand. Yet there the similarities ended. Gandalf was weather-beaten, his robe frayed here and there despite being cleaned, his beard more natural looking than groomed. His face also was more austere, thinner and less outgoing, even as he smiled. In fact Harry could see far more of Dumbledore in Saruman’s face and body language than he had of Gandalf’s, which caused his back to stiffen somewhat.

“Saruman,” Gandalf said, smiling and striding over to clasp forearms with the other man. “I had not thought to see either of you here.”

 “Ah, when one goes to tickle awake a dragon my friend, one should always at least warn those who watch for such things,” Saruman

Galadriel looked at him in interest. Like Elrond, she too could feel the magic this young man held within him. But she was struck more by two other things. For one, there was his youth, which was somewhat startling in relation to the power of him. Then there was those emerald eyes, eyes the like of which had not seen the like in literal ages. *Not since Faenor have I seen eyes like that, full of such power and life, marked by fate… Yet for all his power I see no ego in this young Man. And there is pain too, deeply hidden, but there, and powerful, along with grief and rage. This young man has been hurt deep inside, but hides it with his flippant air.*

 “But before we get to this mission you have set yourself upon Gandalf, can you introduce us to your young companion? He is the one who has been using magic so profligately of late is he not?” Saruman asked, looking over with intense, one could almost have said covetous interest at Harry.

 Harry’s eyes flashed, and he moved over to the table sitting down and leaning propping his feet up on the table. “Mages and even half-elves seem to be so wedded to their dignity, yet I think you would look just smashing with perhaps a shinny gold beard, no neon pink. Your lack of bright colors displeases me, almost as much as being talked down to.”

 “Can you do silver?” Galadriel asked before any of the others could speak, her lips twitching into a smile.

 “For you milady?” Harry asked, then as she nodded, pointed at her. “Done.”

 They all felt the brief susurration of power, and Galadriel felt it actually impact her person, sticking there almost before she consciously allowed it to effect her. A further wave of Harry’s hand and a small mirror appeared there, which he held out for Galadriel’s inspection. “Hmm… you do magnificent work, but the color does not work quite as well as I would have hoped. Gold?”

 “And what do I get for this service milady?”

 “My momentary affection and undying constraint perhaps?” Galadriel replied back, arching an eyebrow.

 “Hmm… not enough I think,” Harry replied even as he used another color changing spell on her hair.

 “Then perhaps my aquiseance to your attempts to, what is the term, prank these three worthies? And not quite, it’s too like my normal look. Hmm… perhaps a different style then? And for that I might even deign to aid you in your efforts.”

 “Done!” Harry crowed, while the three men now looked rather horrified.

 Chuckling Galadriel turned to them, and suddenly all three were struck nearly numb with the feeling of awe filling them, her beauty entrancing even them for a brief instant. Before they could break out of it, Harry struck. His spells shot out as they jerked back, unable to gather enough of their own powers to block his attempts.

His first spell changed Elrond’s clothing to that of the character Puck from a Midsummer Night’s dream, which Hermione had taken him to see once. The memory hit him once more, his eyes dimming as Galadriel watched, her own eyes searching. Yet the moment passed quickly, and Gandalf once more found himself sporting a bright green beard. Saruman’s however was worse, a bright pink monstrosity that had the man nearly apoplectic at the affront to his dignity.

“Excellent, but it is missing something…” Galadriel mused, one elegant finger coming up to tap her chin. “You seem to think in terms of colors, and small changes, such a… limited theater. Still you are young yet, I’m certain you’ll grow out of it.”

 “Excuse me?” Harry asked, turning to almost but not quite glare at the elven queen. He couldn’t seem to work up enough ire to truly glare at her.

 “Yes, you think too small. You could have not just changed their clothing, but made them match perhaps, and instead of a neon beard, you could have shaved it off entirely.” Galadriel said, smiling beatifically as Saruman and Gandalf both squawked in outrage.

 “Lady Galadriel please!” Elrond said, almost reaching over to shake her but thinking better of it.

 In reality, while Galadriel was of the opinion that Saruman in particular needed to have his ego shrunk in no uncertain terms, she did have ulterior motives for going along with Harry’s attitude. For one thing, she did enjoy pranks, though it had literally been four ages since she had ever done some herself. She was also no stranger to the odd ways Elves dealt with emotional pain, and felt that humans would be much the same. Elves sometimes tried to hide their pain in music, art, duty, or, yes, pranking. Just like Harry was using at right this moment. It also showed Galadriel some of what Harry could perform with his magic.

 “I do not have nearly enough pipe-weed for this,” Gandalf muttered, then glared at the two pranksters. “Go on, get it out of your system, But I’ll warn you not to do anything to my beard beyond changing it’s color. That is one touchy spot I have in common with our dwarven friends.”

 “Tsk, that takes all the fun out of it,” Harry said, almost but not quite pouting, while his eyes locked on Saruman.

 Saruman sighed, then waved his hands over his beard and clothing, changing them back to what they had been. “Most interesting how quickly you were able to cast those spells, and have them stick too. Still, creating a permanent color change like that is impossible to do on one whose body is imbued with magic like ours.”

He looked over at Elrond, then his lips twitched into a smile, which caused Harry to relax somewhat, the lack of only serving to draw Galadriel and Gandalf’s attention to the original tension. Both wondered what that was about, but Saruman went on seemingly not having noticed. “Your clothing on the other hand, changing that back quickly is not going to be a quick task.”

Elrond gritted his teeth, looking down at himself, then back at Harry who smirked unrepentedly at him, then at Galadriel, who chuckled, leaning back in her chair and leaving him to Harry’s tender mercy. “Might I ask that you change my clothes back Harry? This… odd thing you have me wear seems built for either a small child or a woman, and it chafes something fierce.”

When Harry opened his mouth, Galadriel moved at last, touching his shoulder gently from where she had sat down next to him. “Please do so Harry. I think it’s time to be serious now.”

Pouting Harry complied and Galadriel nodded while Elrond breathed a sigh of relief, moving to join the others at the table. “So, transfiguration, changing one thing to another, even people to a limited extent, and conjuration,” she mused, handing the conjured mirror back. “Fascinating, and most definitely not from around here. So, where have you come from?”

 “Not from around here,” Harry replied dryly before wilting somewhat under Galadriel’s look. He glanced over at Gandalf then back to Galadriel and then to the other two. “My personal tale is a long one, but the short of it is…”

 Harry spoke for some time, with Gandalf interjecting what he had discerned of Harry’s world and his brand of magic, as well as where he and Voldemort had been, caught between worlds. Throughout Elrond and Galadriel asked questions, both of a different sort. Elrond asked about his schooling, magic and the teachers, while Galadriel began to ask Harry some questions here and there about his friends. Saruman too asked a few questions, but as the story went on he fell silent, simply looking at Harry as if he was a puzzle Saruman had to unlock, or a treasure he wanted to find the key to. He was quick to cover that look however whenever Harry or any of the others looked at him.

 Eventually Elrond nodded, leaning back and looking between Gandalf and Harry. “To hear there are other worlds beyond this one is an amazing thing, and one that has never felt the light of Eru Illuvitar too. Yet your words have the ring of truth to them Harry Potter, and your magics are amazing, an entirely different school than our own.”

 “And a world that while not as stepped in death or violence as our own is just as flawed by stupidity, arrogance and betrayal.” Galadriel murmured, looking down at her own long, thin hands for a moment as she internalized all they had heard.

 “Yes, well, as fascinating as Harry’s past is, and as stupendous his arrival, nay momentous, we did not in fact gather just to discuss the new magic user in Middle Earth.” Saruman said, with a slow, thoughtful shake of his hand.”

 “Not just that at any rate,” Galadriel said, smiling at Harry who smiled back. It was a real smile, a warm, caring yet shy smile which made her own lips broaden slightly before she turned back to the others.

 “Indeed, what exactly were you thinking of Gandalf, trying to hide and even instigate this journey of the dwarves?” Saruman asked. “Even with young Harry’s help, this mission is a parlous one, and many more people could pay for tickling a sleeping dragon.”

 Harry leaned back, clamping his jaw down on the joke that had just sprung to his mind hearing Saruman use Hogwart’s motto, refraining with difficulty as he knew silence would lead him into a greater understanding of Gandalf’s larger mission, and the discussion they had with Radagast. Across from him Gandalf quickly began to speak, covering several things that he and Harry hadn’t talked about, Gandalf’s long term concerns that the Necromancer was a worse threat than the White Council had thought.

What that meant, he didn’t say, but the others seemed to understand what he was talking about. Indeed they seemed to look at Harry somewhat askance, but Galadriel and Gandalf both nodded, and the other two subsided, though Saruman’s interest in Harry increased.

The discussion continued, with both Elrond and Saruman downplaying Gandalf’s concerns, saying that the Necromancer was merely mortal. As Saruman finished taking a shot at Radagast for his love of mushrooms and how that made him a very dubious source of information. Gandalf paused, looking at his fellow wizard and the other two.

 At that, Galadriel seemed to frown, staring at Gandalf. Harry’s hairs stood on end for a moment, as something like an electric current flowed out from her for so brief a moment he would have been hard pressed to say it had been there at all.

 Then Gandalf brought Harry’s attention back to him with a thump as he reached into his robe and brought out the sword that Radagast had given him. He set it down on the table in front of them all and Harry hissed as the cold of the weapon seared through the scars on his hands.

He bit back a growl, as the pain from the blade being this close was worse than what he had felt before, but his reaction was not the only one. Saruman’s back straightened as he stared at the blade, Elrond moved from where he had been leaning against the balcony’s banister, staring. “What, what is that?”

“A blade of Mordor,” Galadriel said softly, her voice deep and powerful as she too looked at the blade with loathing. **{more from the movie}** But then she turned to Harry swiftly going to her knees next to him. “Your hands, the scars react to the blade!”

“Yess…” Harry gritted out, “Which Gandalf knew. I’m going to have to hurt you later for this Gandalf!”

“I am truly sorry my friend, I had forgotten your reaction to the blade of the Ringwraiths. The touch of death is deep within him from his time fighting this Voldemort shade, you see.” Gandalf said, though he moved aside as Elrond joined Galadriel at Harry’s side.

Harry however had seen Gandalf’s eyes. While they were apologetic, they were also firm, and Harry understood. The other White Council members might have not believed even the appearance of the blade. With Harry’s reaction however, they knew it had been tainted by something beyond, like the shades these Ringwraiths were supposed to be. *And if they are involved, then Gandalf’s concerns about Sauron might also be real. He sued my pain, but the bastard at least did it for a good reason. I’ll see how well he takes his thumps later before passing judgment.*

“These are deep, and only half physical. The other half is mystical in nature,” Elrond mused, working on Harry’s scars. As this was his house, he took the lead when it came to dealing with wounds like this, though he liked to think he was actually a bit better at the physical side of things than Galadriel in any event, although he would bow to her in the realms of the mental.

Running one of his thumbs gently over the red, raw looking scars, the pulsing which had gone through them seemed to fade, as Elrond’s healing magic combated the cold beyond the grave which infused them. Galadriel did the same, and between them the two were able to banish the pain for a moment. When they stopped it came back, but Harry could control it and stood up, moving away from the table.

He didn’t see the looks that passed between the two elves, who had been able to tell a lot more in those brief touches than Harry would have believed possible given his limited understanding of their magic. The scars had been dealt by a being of incredible magical power and utter evil, the likes they had not seen since the Second Age. Indeed, in Galadriel’s estimation this Voldemort fellow might have been more powerful than any two Ringwraiths beyond the Shadow King himself. Worse, the touch of death was so deeply entrenched both of them felt it would take many years’ worth of healing and a lot of life magic to do away with it.

“We have done what we can for your wounds Harry son of James,” Galadriel said softly. “We have seen such things before, but your case is among the worst we have seen in literal ages. I however can see they can be healed given time. We will discuss this further after this meeting is over.”

Harry thanked them both then began to move around the balcony, walking off the dull throbbing pain he was still feeling in his hands, cocking his head to the discussion which restarted swiftly. Now that the bonafides of the weapon had been proven beyond doubt, which Elrond put into words. “This blade was clearly carried by a Ringwraith then, and recently to, to be so imbued with the power of that which lies between life and death. And no man could ever command a Ringwraith, even one of the lesser five.”

“I accede that point, and your concerns about the Necromancer were well founded.” Saruman said quietly, his face set in a expression of sadness as he looked over at the pacing Harry before looking back to Gandalf, one eyebrow rising in censure, but Gandalf merely nodded, acceding that he would have to pay for using his young friend like that and Saruman went on. “However, I think we cannot afford to concentrate our full attention on Dol Goldur. Moving against that fortress could blind us to other threats. The orcs of the mountains in the far north are gathering in force once more, their numbers nearly equal to what they were when they warred with the orcs in Wars of the Dwarves and Orcs**.**

“And I have had reports from the Rangers. Not many but bits here and there,” Elrond said quietly staring down at the blade on the table as if he was willing it to melt. “Before this, I had not read much into it to my dismay, but now, now the organization the orcs and goblins might be putting into place they have spotted signs of seem far more believable.”

“We ran into something like that,” Harry said, rejoining the conversation, but making no move to come closer to the table. Galadriel joined him at the banister, but Harry continued, explaining about the White Orc, his sending out packs apparently looking for Thorin, as well as the larger outpost of raiders he and Thorin had wiped out.

“That rather gives my worries more concern then.” Saruman said, leaning back and thinking. “The White Orc might be a general for the resurgent Sauron. Though truly how much power could he have amassed without the One Ring at his command? With that gone from Middle Earth his personal power will not be nearly as much as it was in past ages. The true danger will be in those he commands, and the fear his aura can still generate.”

Gandalf was forced to nod at that. “Yes, if Sauron had regained his true strength I doubt Radagast would have been able to escape Dol Goldur as he did. But I would still prefer to assault Sauron himself at Dol Goldur before he can escape.”

“I believe that to be a good idea” Elrond said thoughtfully. “However, Saruman is correct, the threat of his troops needs to be addressed. Further, remember that Sauron’s most dangerous powers have always been guile, subterfuge and persuasion.”

“Exactly. Who is to say Sauron himself is at Dol Goldur at all? Why would he use an abandoned fortress that doesn’t have as much of a logistical base as he could find in the North?” Saruman said.

Having no real idea of the land they were talking about, Harry fell silent, simply listening as, to his surprise, did Galadriel. She only mentioned a worry about the ruins of Khazad Dum, which from her comments stretched through the mountains to near her own realm, being used as a base of operations. For some reason at the mention of the ancient dwarven fortress all of them became stern, nodding at her words and worried more about that idea than the idea of Sauron being at Dol Goldur in the first place.

As Harry listened, the White Council, or rather four of it’s members, agreed to put a watch on the northern orcs, as well as to put a cordon up around any entrance to Khazad Dum. They lacked the strength to take it from the enemy, but they could at least keep it isolated for now. Indeed, none of the four were talking about military strength at all, which threw Harry for a moment, but he set that aside, reasoning that they would need a lot of time to gather such forces.

When it came to direct action against Dol Goldur however, they could not agree, and they further were very concerned with the idea of rousing Smaug from his slumber. Gandalf to his credit volunteered to scout out Dol Goldur on his own, which made Harry nearly volunteer to go with him. Gandalf might have manipulated Harry’s injury to his benefit, but he also was willing to sacrifice himself for his mission, which made Harry respect him.

Still, he shook his head. “I really wish I could go with you, but I have a prior engagement as it were with Thorin and his band. Not only did I make Thorin a promise, I don’t want to leave my friends in the lurch like that.”

“Nay,” Saruman countered. He would be one of those watching over Khazad Dum, while Elrond would be sending his sons to watch the north while remaining in Rivendell with Galadriel, ready to move the instant they were certain where Sauron was. “The march against the dragon is important Harry Potter, and I think we would all feel better to have a wizard there, even one who is not technically of the Wise. ALthoguh he would not respond to any evil but Sauron himself in person, we must keep them from meeting, if Smaug can be roused at all.”

Gandalf chuckled at that and nodded. “Indeed, and never fear, I will be with you until we are on the other side of the Misty Mountains**.** Indeed, I will set you and the dwarves on the path through Mirkwood before making my way south from there.”

“Then why don’t we move on the dragon first? Finish that mission then move together on Dol Goldur and whatever is there.” Harry proposed.

Gandalf shook his head as did the other three. “We have lost too much time as it is. We need to know for certain what we are dealing with, and that means my going to Dol Goldur on my own.”

Scowling Harry had to accede that point, as he truly had only the vaguest idea of the power this Sauron creature could bring to bear given time. Gandalf had otld him about the wars of Numenor and the last war of Elf and Man, but he lacked any idea of what Sauron could do now, after so much time. The fact he was almost certainly still around at all was worrisome enough on it’s own though for Harry to understand the severity of the threat, especially when he considered the orcs and the sword which had apparently been used by one of Sauron’s followers rather than the being itself.

“We should tell Thorin.” He said instead, holding up a hand as all of them save Gandalf opened their mouths to protest. “I know that he personally cannot call upon any great force of arms, but he has connections among the remaining dwarven clans, and if the orcs in particular are stirring they need to be told.”

“I do not agree with that,” Elrond said, shaking his head. “The time is not yet come for force of arms. And the dwarves would not be quick to respond to even one of Thorin’s pedigree on the scant information we have.”

“Agreed. And remember, deception and betrayal were ever the most dangerous tools of the enemy,” Saruman cautioned. “You and Gandalf vouch for this Thorin and I say very well to that, yet can you vouch for whoever he may tell? And further, how could he get a message to his connections as you put it? Any elf we send would perjure the listeners against the message.”

Needless to say Harry lost that argument as well, though he saw a look pass between Elrond and Gandalf at that point, and he wondered what they had decided.

The discussion ended soon after that, but Harry was somehow not surprised to find Galadriel moving with him down the long, winding staircase back down into the rest of Elrond’s home. “Come walk with me Harry Potter.”

Nodding wordlessly Harry matched his step to her, letting Elrond, Saruman and Gandalf move off together, still speaking softly. Saruman would be leaving later that day to head towards the nearest entrance to Khazad Dum to start his watch, while Elrond would send for his sons and a score of others who he would send North. Gandalf would remain to prepare himself for the journey ahead, catching up with Harry and Thorin while they pushed through the mountains. They would not be taking the High Road either, instead they would take several back routes through the mountains to try and keep from being noticed. How likely that was Gandalf couldn’t say, but he needed to talk over the route with Thorin and Balin and broke off from the other two quickly to search out the dwarves.

The elven queen and dimensional vagrant were silent as they walked down the steps before heading down a hallway. Then from there Galadriel led the way through the forests of Rivendell. The silence between them was odd, warm and welcoming yet a different sort of companionable air than Harry felt around Thorin.

Eventually the two of them left the lights of the Homely House behind, though the music still reached them as it would wherever they were on the valley floor. Soon after that Harry followed Galadriel into a small clearing in the forest, a natural one from what Harry could see. There, Galadriel turned to him, taking one hand in his lightly as she looked into his eyes. “What was her name?”

The question came out so gently and so suddenly that it bypassed Harry’s defenses entirely, cutting the word out of him before he could stop it. “Hermione. Her name was Hermione.”

Harry looked away, realizing now what Galadriel had brought him out here for. A part of him resented it, while the rest of him wanted to bring his humor to bare to hide his pain. Too many people had been able to see it for his liking, and he really just wanted to avoid talking about it. Yet staring at the austere beauty of Galadriel, seeing the compassion on her face, visible in the moonlight almost like it was glowing, and the warmth of her hand on his, he could not look away.

 Instead, the words came tumbling out at last as he faced his pain squarely. He talked about Hermione, how they had met, how he had attacked a troll to make up for not standing up for her, the years they had known one another. “We, we hadn’t been together for very long, but she was, she was dear to me. and I saw her die, I saw the light disappearing from her eyes.” Harry quivered as he said that, boiling in remembered rage and renewed grief, yet the tears would not come again as they had that first night in this word.

 Galadriel fell silent as Harry spoke, looking at him. She was reminded that Harry, for all that he looked older, was actually quite young, having spent so many years locked in the Void**. “**Losing one so young cannot be easy,” she said at last, “yet you say you had years together as her friend?” As Harry nodded she went on. “You need to remember those times further Harry Potter. Let the memory of them wash out the pain of her loss and leave it behind.”

 “But I don’t want to, to forget her like that!” Harry protested, his voice somewhere between a cry of grief and a growl of anger at the very idea.

 “I did not say that you should,” Galadriel said soothingly, squeezing his hand lightly. “Instead said you should not dwell on the pain of her loss, and further the loss of what you imagined the two of you would become over time. Would your Hermione want you to live your life always remembering what cannot be? Would you wish that for her?”

 Harry twitched but made no response, looking away yet unable to tear his hand out of hers, despite her not actually trying to hold onto him. “No she would not.” Galadriel answered her own question, pulling him to the center of the clearing, where she slid down to sit on the grass, looking natural there despite her regal air as she pulled Harry down to sit in front of her. “Instead, tell me of the good times you shared together. Not as a courting pair, but as friends. Tell me of the laughter, of the times you stood together against any challenges that came your way. Tell me about Hermione the girl, not Hermione your prospective lover.”

 Hesitantly Harry began, but after talking about how they had initially met on the train to Hogwarts the stories seemed to tumble out of him. The stories then spread to his other friends, none of whom he would see again yet most of whom he knew were alive. Before he knew it the moon had moved across the sky and there was a faint light in the distance of the sun, whatever they called it here, rising in the sky. Yet despite being tired, Harry felt… lighter almost, unburdened. His grief was still there, but it was no longer a raw, painful thing. He could now remember Hermione and the others without immediately thinking about how they died, without thinking about what he had lost.

 Seeing this realization in Harry’s eyes Galadriel smiled, rising with no hint of stiffness in her limbs. “I am happy for you, to have had such friends.” As Harry stood up she touched his face gently. “You must remember however Harry Potter, you are young. Do not be so quick to seek to join those you lost in the lands beyond. There will be other friends, even other loves. Do not close yourself off to that possibility. Your heart is too noble to be forever alone.”

 Harry twitched, shaking his head as some of his humor came back to him, the real thing now rather than a shield against his grief. “I don’t know about that. Considering I’m going to be travelling with dwarves and maybe living with them for some time with them if we win, which will be a tall order even if I’m not going to welcome death if it comes my way. Beards and extremely short, stout women just um, don’t attract me.” He finished, changing what he was saying so that Galadriel could understand his point.

 “Ah, but you will not spend all your time among dwarves, will you? There is much of the magic of this world you have yet to learn Harry Potter, and you will have time to learn such.”

 “Well I suppose after several thousand years you would know all about that wouldn’t you, grandmother.” Harry quipped, earning himself a very light slap upside the head.

 Shaking her head at Harry’s returning sense of humor Galadriel smiled. “When you are done with aiding Thorin Oakenshield on his mad quest, come to Lothlorien my young friend. You will find further healing for your hands, and time. Time to get used to your new life here, and to bid farewell properly to your past one.”

 Harry looked at her closely at that, knowing somehow this was beyond any kind of concern she would have been showing for a stranger, even if that stranger was a strange magic user with powers she had never seen. That there was something special about Galadriel inviting him to this Lothlorien place, which Gandalf had told him of briefly as being a nation of elves. “I, I will think about it.”

 Stooping down he picked up a handful of grass and concentrating transfigured it into a delicate white rose, which he held out to Galadriel. “I will think about it, and I… I am very thankful for your help tonight milady.” He smiled then, his eyes turning almost intense as he looked away then back. “But if I am to do so, I will need to make certain that I and my friends survive. So if you will excuse me?”

 Smiling Galadriel held up the rose to her nose, noting it felt real, but that Harry hadn’t quite gotten the scent right. Still she nodded acquiescence and watched as the green-eyed wizard strode off, purpose radiating off him.

 Still holding the rose to her face Galadriel turned her eyes out past the edge of the valley to the mountains. Slowly the smile slid off her face as she wondered what challenges her new friend Harry Potter would face before she saw him again. And what strange destiny had brought a Fate Marked from one world to their own.

**OOOOOOO**

 After meeting and discussing the changes to their routes through the mountain with Balin and Throin, Gandalf found himself walking along the river Anduin with its lord. “I would rather keep young Potter here to instruct him in the deep mysteries and the Valar if nothing else,” Elrond said. He could feel where Galadriel had woven a subtle spell of healing for some reason in his woods, and knew she was doing what she could to bring out and then lance the pain and growing rage they could all see in Harry Potter, but beyond that, the young magic user’s presence represented both an oddity and possible concern.

“Alas, I doubt that any such would work. While young Harry’s powers come from his own being as it does mine or Saruman’s, tt does not need the flavor to it from following one or the other Valar. Despite that, I have no doubt that the Valar know of his presence,” Gandalf replied.

Elrond stopped, searching Gandalf’s face as he gave voice to one of the most disturbing worries he had about Harry’s arrival in Middle Earth. “How certain are you that he was brought here by them and not sent by the Greater Darkness?” Morgoth had been banished into the Void after all, which all of them agreed was what he and this dead spirit named Voldemort had passed through.

 “I am as certain as I possibly can be,” Gandalf replied with a laugh, shaking his head firmly. “There have been too many coincidences since he arrived here, first meeting Thorin then myself, and finally the effect he has had on the dwarves, in particular Thorin. You did not know him before this, but I can tell you Thorin has mellowed considerably since their meeting. And it was he who brought out the fact that hobbits could remove the taint from things. Further, you have to only spend a few hours in his presence to know he would never serve Morgoth or any of his followers.”

 “I will take your word on that, I suppose. Still, whatever made you look in the hobbit’s direction in the first place if you did not know about their ability?” Elrond asked curiously.

Gandalf paused, then smiled as he watched Bilbo coming out of the homely House, his hobbit bow on his back and a quiver of new arrows in his quiver as he moved after one of Elrond’s followers towards the practice range. “He gives me hope.” He said simply. “If such a small being can have an impact it gives me hope for all of us.”

He then shuddered slightly. “I have to worry however what Harry will do to me for having forgotten about how his scars reacted to being near that sword.”

Elrond shuddered, moving perceptively to one side as he recalled the outfit he suddenly found himself wearing. “Ahh, yes well better you than me there.”

**OOOOOOO**

 Saruman left Rivendell as Harry returned from his night spent talking to Galadriel, smiling and waving farewell to Elrond and many of his elves who Saruman had befriended over the decades. As soon as he was out of the valley and away from any eyes however Saruman’s expression turned calculating, stern and distant.

 *Young Harry son of James will bear watching, close watching. His magical abilities are beyond anything I have ever seen, yet perhaps I can duplicate some of it.* Saruman thought as he rode along. *Not his childish color changing spell of course, but the conjuration of solid objects. I am a follower of Aule after all, creating should be well within my abilities now that I know it is possible. Transfiguration would probably be easier to start with however. And I must never let word of this ability spread to Sauron.*

Shaking his head, Saruman had to mentally nod his head at Gandalf’s gambit. Using the young wizard’s wounds like that had been harsh, but it combined with Harry and Gandalf’s words about where he had been in the beyond had convinced Elrond and Galadriel of the veracity of the blade Radagast had handed off. From there, Saruman had been fighting a losing battle trying to convince the others to not move against Sauron. Still, he thought he had done enough to let Sauron escape.

Letting Sauron live was a necessary evil at this point, since it would give him time to find the One Ring. If Sauron was banished entirely, the One Ring would lose much of it’s power. Yet once Saruman possessed it, he could use it to could banish Sauron forever, claiming his power for his own. *And then I will take his place, I will rule this word through guile, vision and word rather than brute force, no longer will the races be allowed to go their separate chaotic ways. It will be better for all that a strong hand guides Middle Earth, and I am that hand…*

**OOOOOOO**

The dwarves left the next day, their ponies and their own backs laden with all the goods the elves had been able to lend them for the day. Bilbo and Kili were particularly happy, given the elven-made arrows that filled their quivers. Even the dwarves who had the least time for elves, Dwalin and Bombur, could only grumble about the lack of meat which had been added to their supplies. The only real pall over the company was the fact Gandalf would not be with them for a few days. Despite that, and the knowledge they would be keeping to harder, less-travelled routes through the mountains, the party left Rivendell in good spirits.

 Thorin sat in his pony at the head of the company, Dwalin and Bilbo taking up the rear of the column, waiting for Harry. His pony too was ready and packed, but the young human had yet to be seen since being led off by Gandalf the day before. Bofur put the dwarves concerns for their friends into words. “So have we lost both our magic users? I would have thought young Harry at least had enough stone sense to not be caught by the wiles of this place, no matter how subtle.”

 “Ah, but there are wiles, and then there are charms Bofur. The trick is always to tell the difference between them.” Harry said as he came down one of the paths leading into the square. He looked tired, somewhat bedraggled. Yet for all his seeming tiredness, there was an almost jaunty edge to his steps as he moved to his pony, swinging up into the saddle with more enthusiasm than skill. The pony whickered irritably, huffing out air but made no move to try and buck him off as Harry took up the reins.

Looking over at his human friend, Thorin smiled slightly, the expression hidden by his beard. Something had changed in Harry, a weight was gone from his shoulders almost, his eyes seemed clearer. There was still the glint of the devilish humor he had been using as a front for his grief, indeed it seemed magnified, or perhaps purer, not so cracked and jagged. The grief it seemed had gone.

 “And what did you spend the night working on Harry?” Thorin asked, flicking his reins with one hand as he held up the other in a clenched fist. The company all began to move with Thorin and Harry leading the way.

 “Oh, this and that, cracked open my rune carving set. Let’s just say I’ve begun to really think ahead, tried to figure out what small arrays I could create to help us on our way. Some simple glow stones for night, protective arrays we can set around the camp at night as I did for the two of us before we entered the Shire. This many people meant I had to power and enlarge the array somewhat and I’ll need to renew the power of each stone every night.”

As the dwarves began to gape at him, Harry continued, counting off points on his fingers. I also came up with one shot protective arrays that will act like a shield against blows, though the number of blows they’ll stop vary, so they aren’t perfect. Another few that may serve to ward off animals, cover our scents, that kind of thing. I couldn’t figure out how to create an offensive runic array, but I think this will give us an edge no one should expect. We won’t be able to use them at first against the dragon, but according to the Lady Galadriel orcs won’t be able to sense the magic in them.”

Thorin chuckled, reaching over to clap Harry on the shoulder. “Aye Harry, that sounds amazing indeed. As does the fact you’re thinking long term as you put it.” His words might have been light, but the look in his eyes was not, and Harry understood the hidden meaning of his words. Behind them Balin too smiled as did a few of the other dwarves who had realized how damaged Harry had been internally before their arrival at the Last Homely House.

 Harry chuckled dryly. “Yes, well, the Lady Galadriel helped me get over my grief and anger at my friends passing. And that I was letting my grief stop me from remembering the good times. I don’t know, it seems easy to say, but I couldn’t think of it before she told me it. She also offered to open her home to me when we are done.”

 At Thorin’s quizzical look, Harry explained, and Thorin nodded slowly, awed by the idea that the Lady of the Wood would let a human into her realm. As far as he knew that was something that happened literally once an age. Still, to Thorin it didn’t matter much, at the moment. “Aye, that’s for later though lad.”

“True,” Harry said with a laugh. “Time enough for any thoughts along those lines after the dragon is dead and you and yours have reclaimed your halls.”

“Now there’s a plan I can get behind,” Thorin replied, a grim laugh coming from his own lips as they both turned their attention to the trail leading up and further up into the mountains.

**End Chapter**

A shorter chapter than most of mine I realize, but I don’t have the goblin town scenes right. It’s a big battle, yes, but it is also one happening entirely underground and with an entirely different environment than I’ve used before. Also have to think hard about how this Bilbo will react to Gollum etc. I am not pleased with the notes I have on that meeting at this point.