Moving On

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/730.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Hetero (F/M)
Fandom:	Lord of the Rings - All Media Types
Relationships:	Legolas Greenleaf/Original Female Character(s), Boromir (Tolkein)/Original Female Character(s)
Characters:	Legolas Greenleaf, Original Female Character(s), Boromir (Son of Denethor II), Aragorn | Estel, Gandalf | Mithrandir, Gimli (Son of Gloin), Eowyn (Tolkien)
Additional Tags:	Romance, Drama, Hurt/Comfort, Fantasy, Adventure, Love, Grief/Mourning, Tenth Walker, Boromir Lives, Jealousy, Idiots in Love, Falling In Love, Modern Girl in Middle Earth, Canon-Typical Violence, Damsels in Distress, Kidnapping, Attempted Kidnapping, Pining, Yearning, Found Family, Guilt, Slow Burn, Angst, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Not Actually Unrequited Love, Love Corner, Love Triangles, Canon Divergence 2, Whump, Attempted Rape/Non-con, Cross-Posted on AO3
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-10-30 Updated: 2026-11-09 Words: 20,513 Chapters: 5/?

Moving On

by GingerSpice8675309

Summary

Samantha has found herself in the world of her favorite movie, though she can't remember what happens next. The more she tries to remember, the more she forgets. With her memories of this strange new world becoming distant she fears what might happen next. Especially, when asked to embark on a life or death adventure. As time goes on, Samantha must learn to adapt to this new world, and overcome the loss of her old life and home. Even as she worries that her presence will lead to the downfall of this world, she finds a home within the people she encounters. And, maybe, she will learn to move on and accept what this new life has to offer her.

Feelings blossom, but nothing between elves and humans can be easy. The heart grows fonder, but at what cost?

10th Walker. Legolas/OC/Boromir

Notes

As of right now there are 21 Chapters of this story. I've been meaning to go back and do some small edits, and this Ao3 outage was a great chance to motivate me. Hope to do at least 1 Chapter here a day. Hope you enjoy the story!

Chapter 1

The door to a small studio apartment opened. A young woman entered and locked the door behind her. She was thankful to be home and away from her soul crushing job as a cashier. It wasn't exactly what she expected to do with her life. When she was younger she had grand ideas of becoming a teacher. Helping young people to learn about the world and what they could do to make it better. She even had aspirations of a loving family. Though, her dating life was nothing to be desired. Sex was the only thing on men's minds. Oh, how she wished she learned that sooner.

Her keys clattered against the counter as she dropped them, not caring where they landed. *'Another day, another dollar,'* she thought with a sigh. She told herself she was content with her life, but she hated being so alone. After high school her friends kept in contact for a few months, but contact slowly dwindled to nothing. Maybe a like or two on social media posts. When they did talk, it was like they were completely different people. Her mother did her best to console her. Telling her that's what happens when people grow up. They grow apart.

Maybe she wouldn't mind growing apart from her friends if she could ever manage to keep a new one. Her coworkers would have gatherings and parties for all sorts of things, but she was never invited. Samantha was generally quiet around others. She would be so nervous to act foolishly that she wouldn't act at all. Giving the impression that she was never interested to begin with. While she was somewhat aware of this, she was stubborn. *'If they don't like me, then screw 'em!'*

She never stopped to consider it wasn’t the real her at all.

The first thing she did every night after work was get into more comfortable clothing. Removing her khakis and blue button up shirt, she opted for black leggings, and a dark red hoodie that was two sizes too big for her. She didn't mind though, it was soft and conformable. Removing the wretched contraption known as a 'bra' was also a must. So restrictive, and after a long day, she didn't need that kind of negativity. Going to the bathroom she looked into the mirror, taking in her red hair that had been put into a short ponytail. She released her hair and gave it a thorough brushing. When she was done she could see the natural curls start to lift. She really did like her hair, it matched her light blue eyes in a way that just made sense.

Retiring to the couch, she grabbed her laptop that had not moved from its spot on the cushion. The good thing about no roommates is no one touches your stuff. A few clicks later and she was watching some YouTube videos. At the time she was binging on one of her favorite series, 'Will It?' by Good Mythical Morning. As she listened to the sounds of Rhet and Link eating questionable food, she held her phone, occasionally looking up to see a part she wanted to see for the millionth time.

She browsed her phone and her eyes hovered over the text message icon. She rarely got texts from anyone. With few friends and a family who mostly didn't use smart phones, it was a surprise that made her heart skip a beat in excitement when she did get one. Sometimes she

wished she could be like the girls she knew in high school. A huge circle of friends and loved ones to help and support you. But, she would push that thought aside, for all she knew they were now just as lonely as she was.

After a time of scrolling through Facebook and laughing at Link's outbursts, her phone buzzed and the text app got a notification. That familiar excited feeling was there in an instant. But, just as quickly as it came, it left when she saw who it was from. Jacob.

She read the simple text that only said, 'Yo.' Did he not know any other way to say hello?

After a moment of thinking whether or not to respond, she opened the message and sent a simple one word response. 'no.'

She didn't want to continue with his games or get caught up in any drama. He already caused enough havoc in her life and she didn't want more. She remembered her college roommate at the time telling her, 'Have fun! See where it goes, maybe he's the one for you! Never know unless you try!' Naomi was kind, but very naïve. Though, so was she, because she took Naomi's advice. It ended up being one of the decisions she regretted most in life.

Now, she was content with just sailing through life, and she would wait for that magical someone to find her. Her mother was disappointed in this, but she just didn't have the emotional fortitude to deal with all the sex crazed maniacs when all she wanted was someone who would spend time with her and get to know her. It was because of this she decided to delete all dating apps from her phone several months back. All it ever got her was heartbreak, awkward dates, and unsavory pictures.

Heaving a sigh she dropped her phone on the floor next to her. Life had become dull. While she was content with her simple existence, there wasn't any motivator for her to do anything. It was just, go to work, make money, pay bills. She needed a hobby. She knew she could pick up one of the many books she owned, or even draw or paint. Even do a puzzle. But, that took energy, energy that she didn't feel she had after a long day.

After a short time her stomach began to rumble and the fridge called out to her. She heeded the call and rummaged through her fridge, deciding on a lunch-able and some yogurt. Cooking wasn't in the cards tonight. Perhaps tomorrow she would fry some potatoes since it was her day off. She grabbed what she needed and walked back to her spot on the couch as something caught her eye. Her parents copy of The Lord of the Rings trilogy. Last they had visited they had forgotten it and said she could keep it. Since it had been a long time since she watched it, she decided to start the first movie before sitting back down and munching on her food.

She loved these movies. The world it was set in was so mystical and as someone who grew up playing Dungeons and Dragons it was nostalgic as well. Soon her food was finished and she laid down to watch Frodo and the other hobbits run from the wraiths.

'That would be so terrifying.' she thought, thankful nothing like this actually existed. She knew she would die in that situation. While she liked to think if faced with that kind of danger she would fight, she knew she would be petrified instead. *'I would die.'*

The movie went on and on and she felt herself becoming more and more tired. She looked at the clock, surprised to see it wasn’t as late as she thought. She moved the laptop off the couch as well as her garbage from the food she ate, and laid down to watch the rest of the movie. She probably would fall asleep by the end and she knew it. And that was fine, sleeping on the couch was comfortable enough. Just as the company made it into Lothlorien, she could no longer keep her eyes open and let sleep take her.

A chilling breeze brushed against her bare face. Why was it so cold? She reached down to try and grab at the blanket she always had at the other end of the couch when it suddenly occurred to her that she hadn’t opened her window. And she didn’t have a fan. Her eyes shot open and instead of being greeted by the white ceiling of her apartment, she was met with a glorious night sky filled to the brim with stars.

She had never woken up so fast in her life. She was standing up in an instant, taking in her surroundings. Her home was full of pine trees, these were not pine trees. They were enormous and she couldn't help but look up at them in awe. The dense forest was full of them and she knew she had to be miles from home. A sinking feeling settled in her stomach as her brain worked itself into overdrive to try and figure out how she got there.

'Was I kidnapped? No, I'm not that heavy of a sleeper. Did I sleep walk? Did I sleep DRIVE?! Oh hell no, that wouldn't make sense either!' After several minutes of trying to rationalize it all she settled on one thought. "I'm dreaming," she said to herself, "I must be."

Yes, dreaming made sense. *'Now that I know I'm dreaming, I should be able to fly or something.'* She jumped up to try and soar into the air. But just like in real life she landed right back on the ground. She tried a few more times before giving up. *'So... I'm not... dreaming?'*

Several more confusing moments passed and she decided she might as well walk around to try and find something or someone. She didn't want to spend all night out in the middle of nowhere. She did her best to try and keep her thoughts positive. Thinking about how she was probably not that far from home. How she would stumble across a road and flag down a car for help. She would be able to call her mom and tell her about this crazy adventure!

As her walk continued she wished she had on socks or shoes. There were no pine needles stabbing her like back home. She did step on the occasional rock or branch, however. Thankfully no injuries so far. She also found herself wishing for her bra. While her and her bra didn't always get along, she didn't enjoy them swinging free on this trek. It would make her feel more secure. The brief thought popped into her head of how she wished her breasts were a few cup sizes smaller. Then the situation would be better.

After an hour or so she came to a small clearing. The breaks in the tree canopy were larger and she could see much more of the sky. It was breathtaking. It was like all the air pollution and light pollution was gone. Almost like one of those fancy telescope pictures. For some reason that was the straw that broke the camel's back. She knew she couldn't be anywhere near home.

Suddenly she felt so small and helpless against the trees. She wanted to go home. Her feet hurt. She was tired. She was cold and she was scared. Her body sunk down onto the ground as tears stung her vision.

She cried silently for a few minutes but knowing no one was around, just let it all out. She needed this right now. She could think more about her situation once she had cried out all the stress. Her arms wrapped around herself as she cried into her knees.

She didn't know how long she had stayed like that before she felt a gentle hand on her shoulder. The shock of feeling another person made her scream and she was on her feet and whirled around to see a tall man. She rubbed her face of her tears before giving him a once over. He was indeed tall, almost a foot taller than herself if she had to guess. He looked like someone right out of a larping group, bow and all. The most pronounced thing she noticed was his hair, it shined in the moonlight.

"I'm sorry for frightening you, are you alright?" His voice was rich and smooth. He looked at her with a hint of curiosity. When he and his companions were traveling nearby they had all wondered why they could hear a woman crying. Against his companions' wishes he ventured off into the woods alone to find the source. His curiosity had gotten the better of him. He didn't know what he was expecting, definitely not someone clothed so strangely.

She took in his words and took a moment to answer, though it wasn't an answer, "Where am I?" This man looked strikingly familiar though she couldn't place her finger on it. She didn't remember knowing anyone in a larping group.

He thought it strange that she did not know where she was. "You are outside the realm of Imladris. How have you wandered this far on your own is unknown to me. From where do you hail?"

She was going to tell him no, that she had no idea how she got here, but then he would think she was crazy! Before she said anything though a word he said stuck out to her, *'Imladris? … like in the movie?'* She forced herself to answer, even though it was plain in her eyes that she was internally panicking, "I- I don't know how I got here."

The man could see the sincerity in her eyes. She was like a lost and frightened child. She was indeed very young and unarmed with no supplies. This prompted his next question, "What are you wearing?" It was a peculiar outfit. It didn't give her any support in this environment. The girl wasn't even wearing shoes!

She watched his eyes look down at her curiously and suddenly she felt very self conscious. It was cold and she wasn't wearing a bra... she crossed her arms over her chest and looked down at herself, pretending to ponder over the question. "This is normal."

His delicate brow arched in amusement, "It is normal to walk through the woods with no supplies? Or even shoes?"

'Shit, he's got me there.'

"...Well, no," she answered.

He continued, "Very odd to find you out here all alone. Orcs have been spotted in these lands, a human girl would stand no chance. Very reckless."

She felt her cheeks grow warm from frustration. It wasn't her fault! The worry of sounding crazy to him left as she gave a short rant in frustration, "This isn't my fault! Look, last I remember is falling asleep at home, now I'm here and I don't know how."

He eyed her with an expression she couldn't read. Did she make him mad? Did he now think she was crazy? Was he going to leave her here to deal with orcs on her own? If they were out here she didn't want to deal with them at all. She remembered what they looked like and the thought of actually seeing one sent a sickly chill down her spine.

They stood in silence as the man thought things over in his mind. She was defenseless and obviously had no training in battle. She never even took notice of the hand he held on the hilt of his sword when they first started talking. A warrior would assess for danger first, and while he had no intentions of harming her, he had to defend himself if necessary. And, if what she said was true, the manner of her arrival was one that might be worth looking into. He had a feeling in his gut that told him this girl was important.

He had made up his mind.

"I will bring you to Imladris. When we arrive, I will hand you over to Lord Elrond. He will see to it that you are taken care of."

"Um... thank you..." She didn't know his name, but she was thankful that she was being helped and that she was no longer alone, but the way he said that in such a monotone voice made her nervous. Would Elrond think she was a threat? What kind of "taken care" of? The kind where she would be given a bed and a hot meal?

He bowed his head, "Legolas. I will escort you the remainder of the way to Imladris." Legolas could see the shock on her face plain as day. Perhaps she knew of him and was shocked to be in his presence? It wouldn't be the first time.

Her eyes went straight to his ears. Blinking a few times she looked at the pointed tips and she didn't think she would be able to handle anymore tonight. She was really in Middle Earth. This was Legolas, THE Legolas. A character from a freaking book was standing right in front of her! She had to be dreaming. She had to be.

Legolas waved a hand in front of her face and it was enough to take her out of her panicked mind, "Oh, um, I'm Samantha... Nice to meet you."

The elf spoke some more but Samantha's mind was a mile away. They started walking back in the direction of his party and all she could think about was the movie. She had fallen asleep watching it. But now it was all a blur. She could remember the first bit of the movie, but nothing beyond that. She could no longer tell if something she thought of happened in the movie, or if it was just something that her mind made up. It was like a small pool. The more you dig at the bottom, the cloudier the water gets. Her memory was foggy and incomplete. Remembering felt like trying to grasp at smoke.

She looked at Legolas as he led her through the forest. He certainly looked similar to Orlando Bloom. The elf before her was much more... angelic. He moved with a grace she had never seen. His whole being demanded notice. She wondered if that was because he was a prince. Or at least she thought he was a prince?

How was she going to get home, she wondered. Would Gandalf be able to help her? What if he didn't believe her? Gandalf was wise, she only hoped he could make something out of this mess.

After a while the two came upon two other elves on horses. Samantha watched as they gave a greeting to Legolas in Elvish and looked at her with suspicion. Legolas spoke to them in his own language, telling them she would accompany them the rest of the way. He needn't say more than that at the moment. Legolas walked up to his horse and gracefully mounted it, he looked down at her and held out his hand.

She had never ridden a horse before so this was new. Uncertainly, she grabbed his hand and he helped her get seated on the saddle in front of him. It was very nerve wracking at first trying to stop herself from falling. And almost right away she felt a pain on her backside she had never felt before.

After several hours of riding the sun began to rise and they came to a shallow river and began to cross. A shiver ran up her spine and she felt Legolas chuckle in amusement, "It is the old elvish magic you sense. It has long since protected these lands."

Samantha only nodded, not really sure of what to say. Only another hour or so later they came upon a marvelous and enchanted looking city. Samantha didn't think she had ever seen anything so beautiful. The three rode into a small courtyard and dismounted. Legolas leaped off and quickly turned to help her off the horse. She really appreciated it. Just jumping off would have been very difficult and she feared breaking an ankle. She thanked him and now that she could see his face in the light she could say that his face was only slightly like Orlando's. They could have been brother's. The biggest difference was the eyes, they were much more intense, guarded. Though, he put on a friendly mask. His features were much more defined as well. Sharp but sleek. Rugged yet elegant.

As the other elves took the horses, Legolas motioned her to follow him. She couldn't help but marvel at the architecture. It was so elegant and magical. She was sure the movie put it to shame. After several twists and turns Legolas spoke, "I must announce my presence to Lord Elrond, at the same time, I will let him know of you."

She nodded, nervous but happy to not be in the forest alone anymore. "Thank you, Legolas."

It wasn't long after that when they reached Elrond's study, Legolas knocked on the door a few times and they could hear a voice call out for them to come in.

Legolas walked in and bowed to the Lord. Samantha, now knowing what to really do, did the same. "Lord Elrond, I assume I do not make an intrusion."

"Not at all, Prince of the Woodland Realm, we have been expecting you." Samantha looked at Elrond. Long raven black hair and his piercing eyes studied her. "Who is this young one?"

"I'm Samantha, Lord Elrond."

Legolas looked to the side and sensing Elrond's question, answered. "We found her in the woods not far from the here. If I had not helped her she would have surely died. I brought her here to find shelter, and so you might help her. She has no memory of how she got here either."

Samantha frowned. He had to say it all in Elvish. She hoped he didn't mention how much she had been crying. How embarrassing.

Elrond seemed to think for a moment and nodded. "If you do not think her to be a threat, Legolas, I will certainly have a room set up for her." He shifted his gaze toward her, "We will speak of your predicament later. For now, rest."

Samantha only nodded. She didn't want to think about that chat. She was afraid of what things could happen or what would be said. For now she agreed. Rest was most important.

Chapter 2

Samantha's eyes flickered open and settled on the unfamiliar ceiling. This wasn't a dream. She pulled herself upright and looked around the room. The room Elrond had let her stay in for the time being. She had hoped that when she woke up she would be back home and in her own bed. *'I really am in Middle Earth,'* she thought. It was still so hard to believe.

She was unsure how long she sat alone with her thoughts when there was a knock on the door. "Yes?" She called out uncertainty.

The door opened and Penneth entered. An elf of extraordinary beauty, as they all were. Her hair a lovely chestnut brown and eyes the shade of molten honey. She gave the human a gentle smile, "Good morning, Samantha. I hope I did not wake you."

Samantha held up a hand and smiled in return, "Oh, no! You're fine, I was already up actually."

Penneth smiled at the human girl, "I am here to help you prepare for the day. I have drawn a bath for you and require your measurements for a gown. I will also have your clothes sent off to be washed."

She looked down at her clothing and realized that these clothes were all she had left of her home. She supposed it was alright for them to be washed, as long as she got them back. She also thought about the bath. A bath sounded unbelievably nice after the night she had in the woods. But having help? She wasn't a child.

Samantha nodded and Penneth led her through a few halls to a bathroom. It was unlike any bathroom she had ever seen before. Penneth motioned to the tub and looked at Samantha expectantly. An awkward silence soon fell over them and Samantha quietly asked, "Umm, do you mind turning around?"

Penneth smiled in understanding and nodded. She turned to give the girl some privacy. Once Samantha knew she couldn't see her, she stripped off her clothing and hopped into the tub. The water was slightly warm and there were some bubbles. *'Elves are fancy,'* she thought. She had expected just plain water, but this water smelled of lavender or maybe some other floral scent she couldn’t place. "Alright, I'm good. Thanks."

The elf turned back around and reached for a bar of soap to lather her hands before scrubbing Samantha's hair. Samantha could tell she had done this many times before. She was skilled and maybe it was just because of her own lack of physical contact, but it felt so refreshing to have this. This touch was like going to a salon, only better.

Once Penneth was satisfied with her work she wrung out Samantha’s short red hair and handed Samantha a different bar of soap for her body before turning and giving her privacy.

Samantha began to scrub herself. She had a feeling that Penneth had no issues at all with nudity. Though for her it was embarrassing to be seen undressed by someone so lovely. Once

Samantha said she was done Penneth gave Samantha a bucket of clean water to rinse and a thin robe before turning back around. She stood and dumped the bucket over herself before wringing her hair and using her hands to squeegee off most of the water. When she put the robe on, it was a little too thin for her liking. At least it was decent enough to go back to her room.

When given the go ahead, Penneth turned around and looked her up and down with a little surprise. "Oh my, I was told you were barely a young-ling, though I see now you are much more mature. May I ask how many years you have lived?" Penneth had Samantha hold her arms out in a T formation so she could take her measurements.

Samantha thought for a second, how young did they think she was? It was true her hoodie had hidden all of her curves, and she had always looked young for her age. When she was sixteen she had been mistaken for twelve. But she had also worn baggy clothing at the time. When she wore clothing that fit properly her figure made mistaking her for a child impossible.

She also rarely wore makeup, finding it more hassle than it was worth. "I'm twenty. I have a baby face, so I'm not surprised you thought I was young. Happens all the time, really."

"I see. Lord Elrond and the Prince will be surprised. I'm sure they thought you were only a babe." Penneth said as she measured Samantha’s hips.

"Well, compared to you all I am, right?"

"Most everyone is compared to an elf, but you are a human. At the age of twenty you are most definitely a lady. And you will have a gown most befitting of one with such beautiful hair." Samantha felt her cheeks redden from the compliment. She had always been complimented for her hair, but coming from an elf it felt different. Penneth smiled at her innocent reaction, "I will take you back to your room and I will be back shortly with a gown for you. After that we shall fetch you something to eat."

Samantha's stomach cried at the thought of food and the two women laughed. It had been a long time since she ate and she couldn't wait. She would be happy with a glass of water and a slice of bread.

Penneth led her back to her room where she was left to her own devices. Samantha decided to explore the room a bit. The night before she had fallen right to sleep in hopes of waking up back home. She wandered over to the small book shelf and grabbed a large book with a basic brown spine and decided to flip through it. While she had no idea what the elvish words said, she could assume it spoke about different weapons and armor, going by the incredibly detailed pictures.

It didn't take long for Penneth to come back with a beautiful blue dress in tow. Samantha usually didn't wear dresses, but this dress was so pretty she would feel rude refusing it. Penneth helped her get into the dress, as well as educating her about what women in this world wore as undergarments. When the dress was being put on she was very happy she had Penneth there to help her. The back of the dress had delicate and intricate knots and had to be tied. The neck was low cut and swooped in a gentle arch with dark navy blue on the hem. The

rest of the dress was a brilliant blue, the sleeves flowed down to her knees and the same navy bordered the sleeves. Lastly, a beaded belt accessory sat across her waist.

When Samantha looked into the mirror she was shocked at how good she looked in the dress. Her eyes popped and the blue made a beautiful contrast to her hair and skin.

Penneth looked as well and smiled, "Yes, I thought this dress would suit you well. Beautiful indeed." The elf looked fondly at the dress, it was one of her own creation and she was happy to see it fit so well on someone.

Samantha smiled and laughed a little bit, "Thank you, it's beautiful."

The elf grabbed for a brush and began to work through Samantha's hair. "Your hair truly is beautiful, I have never seen a human with such a rich shade of red."

Samantha twirled a slowly drying curl in her hand, thinking of her mother fawning over her hair. "Yeah, it can be pretty rare where I come from too."

Once Penneth was done brushing her hair she walked toward the door, "Now, I do believe you must be hungry. Let us hurry before your stomach eats itself."

"Yas," Samantha said in exaggerated excitement that made the elf laugh.

They walked and once again Samantha caught herself admiring the beauty of Rivendell. She doubted she would ever get used to this place. The dining hall was also beautiful. High arched ceilings and open doorways leading out into several gardens. She imagined it looked like a 5 star hotel in the German countryside.

Penneth guided her to a table currently unoccupied where there was still food set out. Samantha took notice that there was no meat. Only fruits, vegetables, cheeses, and bread. She was content though. Samantha loved most everything on the table and dug in as soon as she sat down. She focused on a few rolls of bread and cheese, munching on some grapes in between. The sweetness of the grapes pairing beautifully with the mild salty cheese.

Penneth watched in amusement as the human ate. "You must have been *very* hungry."

She finished the bite of food in her mouth and laughed a little, "Yeah, just a little."

Samantha began to eat slower now and looked around at her surroundings more. The other tables in the hall had some elves seated at them, and they were wrapped up in their own conversations. When she looked toward one doorway, she saw a familiar face. She waved in greeting as he approached.

Legolas had been coming in search of food of his own and wasn't expecting to see Samantha again so soon. His eyes widened in surprise when he looked her over. He had thought her to be very young, but now he felt like a fool for not noticing her... *assets* . He walked closer and greeted the two women as he sat to join them, "Hello, Lady Samantha." He put just a touch of emphasis on the word 'lady'.

The woman held up a hand and waved dismissively, "No need for that. Just Samantha. And, hello to you too, *Prince* ." She opted for using his title instead of his first name, he wasn't sure how other elves would perceive it. Would they think it was rude? She just got here and didn't want any trouble.

Legolas grabbed a few pieces of cheese and took a bite. Once his mouth was free he gave her a small smile, "Alright, Samantha, I expect you slept well?"

'Other than crying myself to sleep, yes.'

"Yes, the bed was very comfortable and Penneth has been a great help." She gave the elf a nod in thanks, which she returned.

He nodded and after a few more bites he gave the woman a more serious look. "It is fortunate I happened upon you, who knows what could have happened. Elrond wants an audience with you soon. And Gandalf will be there as well. Your sudden appearance has piqued his interest."

Samantha only nodded as she felt that rock settle in her stomach. She could only imagine what was going to happen. What would they say? And most important, could Gandalf help her get home?

The three ate in pleasant silence. Samantha felt tension in the air as she tried to hide her own anxiety. Once they had their fill, Legolas began to lead Samantha back to Lord Elrond's study.

He looked down to his side at the girl walking next to him. When he had mentioned Gandalf there was a sort of spark in her eyes. As if the name struck a chord within her. Could she possibly know the Wizard? Although, she had had the same look upon her face when he first introduced himself. He was certain he had never met her before. He had never seen a human with such a rich red color to their hair. He was sure he would remember it if he had seen it. The red he usually saw in the few humans who had red hair was light, as if the red color had been mixed with blonde. But Samantha's shade was a darker and rich color. He only saw it in dwarves. Out of all species in Middle Earth, dwarves were the most likely to have red hair.

The two reached Elrond's study and Legolas gave a quick knock before entering. They were greeted by the sight of Elrond sitting behind his desk and Gandalf holding his pipe. He was pacing the room and turned to see the door open. Samantha couldn't help but wonder what it was that Gandalf was smoking. Could it be tobacco or... something else?

The wizard blew out a few smoke rings while studying the young woman in the doorway. Gandalf smiled at the girl, "Hello, my dear. Thank you for escorting her Master Legolas, it is time to have a chat, privately. Much to discuss."

Legolas nodded and bowed before looking down at Samantha and closing the door behind her, leaving the three in the room alone.

Awkward silence filled the room and Samantha gave a wave, "Hello… What's up?"

'Why did you say that? Stupid!' She groaned internally.

Gandalf and Elrond shared a glance over the odd wording before Elrond motioned her to a chair. She sat down and looked at the two expectantly. She felt like a child who had been brought to the principal's office to be scolded. Gandalf began, "Samantha, could you tell us how you came to be in the forest last night? Legolas tells us you remember nothing and were traveling with nothing but the clothes on your back." He placed the pipe back into his mouth as he leaned against Elrond's desk, waiting for her response.

Samantha looked down and sighed, "I don't know. I was getting ready for bed and fell asleep. When I woke up I was in the middle of the forest. I don't remember anything in between the two."

"And where is your home?" Elrond questioned. "Perhaps you traveled from Bree?"

This was something she didn't really know how to answer. Her home wasn't anywhere they could take her. After a few moments of silence, Gandalf gave her a small gentle smile, "You can trust us, young one."

She looked into his eyes and she felt like she could trust the old man. She thought, *'What the hell.'* and said, "Well, my home isn't anywhere you have heard of."

"What do you mean?" Lord Elrond asked, leaning forward in his chair. In all his long years there was hardly a place he had not either heard of or traveled to.

She looked down, "I mean, where I come from, none of this is real. Both of you don't exist. You are characters in a book."

Silence fell over the room. Elrond looked at her very skeptically before he asked, "And you have read these books?"

She thought for a second and she could honestly answer no. The books were mostly a mystery to her, she had only seen the films and read portions of the books. She would have loved to read the books if not for the school library banning them for some stupid reason. She could tell them she had seen the movies, but how would she explain a movie? They weren't even invented yet. So, instead she went with what was the more simple answer. "Yes."

Elrond nodded slowly trying to give her the benefit of the doubt, "So, you are telling us that you know what future events will occur? What the outcome will be?"

Before Samantha could say anything Gandalf raised a hand and looked at his old friend, "Now, Elrond, we do not need to know the outcome. If what she says is true, we should not know. It could influence us to make choices that are most unwise."

"You're in luck then," Samantha stated grabbing their attention, "I can hardly remember anything about this world to begin with. It's like the more I try and remember what happens the more I lose. I know that there are dark times and horrible things are going to happen, but past that, everything is fuzzy."

Gandalf's face became grim. He thought back to when he was talking to Saruman. The White Wizard's words rung clear in his mind,

"I have seen many things. A new presence grows nearer to this world. A girl who holds information both of us could only wish to know. She holds the past, present and future, locked away in her mind, only I hold the key."

The wizard looked at the woman before him, knowing the girl Saruman spoke of was in front of him. He had no doubt what she told them was the truth. He raised his hand and pointed to her for emphasis, "You must not tell anyone of what you know or where you are from. Keep the information about your home minimal."

Samantha could only nod. Her body had sunken into the chair more from the wizard's serious tone of voice. "I won't tell anyone, I promise."

"And I hold you to it." Gandalf told her. "Now, go on. Lord Elrond and I have much to discuss about the days to come."

Samantha nodded and left. She felt like now wasn't the time to ask how she could get back home. A sinking feeling settling into her stomach. The way Gandalf looked at her, it was as if she was in some kind of danger or something. It was easy enough to not tell anyone about what she was supposed to know, because she didn't remember it. So, if she couldn't remember, why would she be in danger?

Back in Elrond's study, Gandalf had taken the seat Samantha had left open. The two sat in silence for several minutes before Elrond broke it. "Something troubles you, Mithrandir. What do you know that I do not?"

"I have told you how Saruman betrayed us." Elrond nodded. "I did not mention the way he let himself be found out. He started telling me of Sauron's plans. Sauron knows a hobbit has the ring, and he spoke of a girl who knows our future, but doesn't remember. I do believe, Lord Elrond, that Samantha is that girl."

Elrond looked a little surprised. "If she is the girl Saurman spoke of, then she is as much a key to winning this war as the One Ring."

Gandalf nodded, inhaling from the pipe and spoke as he exhaled, "Yes. I have had some time to ponder this on my return trip. I believe that she may have to join on the journey to destroy the ring."

Elrond's head shot up, "You cannot be serious, Mithrandir. Putting the ring and her in the same place is the last thing we should do. And just look at her. She is not trained to fight, certainly she would die."

"She will be protected by myself and anyone who is brave enough to join our cause. She will be trained, I will see to it that she is able to defend herself." He looked at Elrond seriously, "If Sauron gets the ring, we know it is over. If he gets his hands on Samantha, he will in short order have the ring. Placing them together will be easier to protect them."

"But why not leave her here? She would be safe."

Gandalf shook his head, "You know as well as I do that the magic protecting this sanctuary is fading and your people are leaving to travel west. She may very well end up here alone. And leaving her here would be even more reason for Sauron to attack here needlessly."

Elrond sighed. "There is no arguing with you. If you think it best I will put my trust in you."

"Thank you, my friend."

"I only hope you know what you are doing."

Chapter 3

Her intuition told her something big was about to happen, and it drove her nuts! She knew she should remember but she couldn't! As she walked back the way she came, her mind raced. She was torn from her thoughts by a gruff voice, "Where's the meat?" She looked up as she entered the dining hall and saw four dwarves. Or really short and hairy men, but either way they stuck out like a sore thumb. She noticed they were at least a foot shorter than her though she had a feeling they could throw her pretty far if they wanted to.

One of the elves who had been taking empty plates and trays back to the kitchen approached him, "Master Dwarf, forgive me, but Elves do not frequently indulge in meats."

The dwarves all looked at the elf in bewilderment and an uncomfortable silence built over a few seconds. Samantha became curious and decided to walk over, "When do you guys eat meat?" It had been a thought in the back of her mind. She didn't see a single piece of meat and had thought maybe they were vegetarian. They had cheeses, so obviously they either traded for it or had livestock somewhere, right?

The elf smiled at her curiosity, "Here in Imladris the consumption of meat is saved for holidays and other special occasions. We feel that we gain more from the animal if we allow them to live their lives. After all, a single goat can offer us milk for years before it passes, killing a young goat for the meat is seen by some elves to be wasteful." He bowed, "I should be on my way, Miss."

The elf walked away to what she assumed was the kitchen. What he said made logical sense, but Samantha had to admit, she loved herself a steak. She was taken out of her thoughts by one of the dwarves, "What is a human lass like you doing here?"

She jumped a little bit and looked at the four of them. They probably didn't mean it, but it came out really intimidating. Three of them were well aged and the one looked like the equivalent of a man in his late thirties. Appearances could be deceiving though. Like elves, dwarves lived an extended life, but were not immortal.

She rubbed the back of her head, "I honestly don't know..."

"What do you mean you don't know?" The youngest one asked.

"Well, I was found in the surrounding forest by an elf. I have no idea how I got there though. Last I remember I was falling asleep at home and when I woke up, I'm lost." Samantha hoped they wouldn't ask her much more about her home after that.

One of the older dwarves motioned for her to sit down and she did so politely, not like she had anything else to do, right? "What's your name, lass?"

"Samantha."

"Well, Samantha, the name's Gloin, and this is my son Gimli. And over here we have Flic and Thesomri." Samantha smiled in greeting. She sat with them for a while and talked. But only three of them, as Flic wasn't interested in the conversation and was stuffing his face with a plate of cheese. Gloin told her the story of how his company had been here sixty years prior, and that led to her hearing about the story of The Hobbit, but from Gloin's perspective. She thought it was fascinating hearing about the trolls and goblins and about the trip through Mirkwood. She had to wonder if Mirkwood was still so murky after all this time.

After the story Gloin shared the topic changed to the lack of alcohol and wine. They asked her about the food from her homeland and she told them it was pretty similar to here, but with a much wider variety. She told them about markets where they could have food from any season. She could have fresh strawberries in the middle of winter. This fascinated them, but instead of wanting to know how, they wanted to know about what kind of meats were available at the market. Once again it was a massive selection. Beef, chicken, pork, you could even get a container filled with just chicken feet or other parts viewed as rubbish.

Before long, she was being told about the different ways the dwarves prepared meat and wine for a feast in their homeland. Apparently that night there was going to be a welcome feast for all of the newcomers who were there for a council the next day.

"What council?"

"You don't know, las?" Gimli began, "That's why we are here, to speak with Lord Elrond and his council."

"Okay, but what about? Since your home is so far away it must be very important."

"Aye, we be discussing the future of Middle Earth." His father kicked him under the table and Gimli cursed. Samantha could clearly see the disapproval in Gloin’s eyes.

Her head started to hurt a little bit, this was all very familiar. She should know why the council was meeting, right? "I think I'm gonna go walk around for a while and stretch my legs." She said while standing and giving them a smile, "It was nice to meet all of you."

They all said their goodbyes as she turned and walked off into one of the gardens. She thought it had to be a few hours past noon. That's what it felt like to her. Since there wasn't much of anything else to do, and she had a small headache she decided to take a look around.

The garden was beautiful. There were all sorts of flowers of many colors and sizes. She followed the path for a while and found her way down to a river. The water was calm and the shore was full of rocks. She got down and picked some up, nearly all of them were perfect for skipping. She decided to take her shoes off and fold the bottom of the dress up to her knees and tie it to make it stay. Kind of like how some girls she knew from high school tied their t-shirts. Her feet touched the water and it was nice and cool. She tested a smooth flat stone in her hand and started skipping them to see how far she could get them.

It reminded her of going camping with her uncle, brothers and cousins. Her uncle would take them camping every summer when they were little and they would play in the lake and skip rocks. She remembered how they would roast marshmallows and how her uncle dared her

little brother to take a bite of a raw cob of corn. How he found a ripped apart and abandoned laptop and threw it in the fire and watched the bright blue and purple flames… not good for the environment at all, but oh well. She was kind of sick of nature by the time she would get home, mom and dad were always there when she got back.

Just the thought of her parents made my throat tighten. The thought of never seeing them again hurt more than anything. Before coming here even the thought of them dying was enough to make her want to cry. She had probably been skipping rocks and thinking about home for a little over an hour when she heard a familiar voice, "Samantha?"

She turned and Legolas was standing on the shore next to her abandoned shoes. "Hello, what's up?"

He gave her a strange look. She was learning that she had an odd way of speaking compared to everyone else. She would have to work on that. "I was wondering where you had gone. Lord Elrond has asked me to keep watch over you for the time being."

She turned back around and began picking up a few more rocks from the shallow water. Like a babysitter? She wasn't sure how she felt about Elrond wanting her to be watched all the time… but if Legolas did it, it wasn't so bad. He was a nice piece of eye candy. Well, all elves were, but Legolas had something about him that was more wild. Maybe because he was a wood elf and not a high elf?

As she was bending down he asked, "What are you doing?"

"Skipping rocks," She stood up and turned her head, "have you never done it before?"

"The thought has never crossed my mind." He told her honestly.

She gawked at him. "You're how old and have never skipped a rock?" Ignoring the surprised look on his face she walked up to him on the shore and handed him one of the rocks from her hand. He looked at it for a second before taking it awkwardly. She moved to stand next to him, "I'll show you. Hold the rock in your hand like this." She held the rock in her hand and he copied her. Watching her with calculating eyes.

"And throw it like this," and she threw the rock, making it skip three times before it sank. She would have told him to throw it like a Frisbee, but she had a hunch he had no idea what that was.

She watched him as he took the rock and threw it just like she had done and the rock just made a big splash and sank. She picked up another rock and gave it to him, "You need to throw it like a saucer. Make it spin as you release it." He did it again and this time was able to make the rock skip once. "Good job!" She smacked him on the back and he turned and looked at her, surprise etched on his flawless features.

No one had ever been physical with him like that before. Friendly claps on the back and informal talk, only Aragorn came close. He watched her in astonishment for a moment and thought about how different she was from a normal woman. Human, elf or otherwise.

"Thank you. How long have you been doing this for?" he asked.

Shrugging she stated, "A while, I'm not really sure how to tell time here."

He nodded his head and looked back at her, "There are a few hours until the evening meal, is there anything you want to see?"

"Well..." She began, "I already feel like I've seen so much since coming here." She thought for a moment and then she suddenly remembered something. "So, is it true that Imladris has animals? Like goats?"

He nodded.

She put her hand on her cheek and gave him a small smile, "Can we go see them?"

Silence.

"You want to see goats?"

Silence.

"Is there a problem with that?"

More silence.

"No." he stated simply, "it's just I didn't think a young woman like yourself would want to see farm animals."

She shrugged, "Well, back home I don't get to see farm animals too much. Mostly dogs and cats. I have always enjoyed playing with animals though."

He nodded, "It isn't that far, come." He turned and walked a few steps while she had a huge grin on her face and hurried to put her shoes on. Legolas watched her, 'Strange woman indeed,' he thought.

They walked to the barn and when they got there it reminded her of every other barn that she had been in, only it wasn't the stereotypical big red barn. It had a flat roof and was made of stone, like most of the buildings there. The smell was familiar as well, only it wasn't so strong. The barnyard smell didn't punch her in the face when they walked in. Elves took pride in everything it would seem.

When she spotted a goat, she gasped and went up to it. She bent down and held her hand out for the little animal to sniff. When its little nose sniffed her fingers and it started licking her hand she swooned. "You are so adorable!" She said while giving the animal pets and rubs all over its back and head. "Are you gonna pet her, Legolas?" She looked up at him, inviting him to join.

He didn't say anything as he walked up and slowly ran his large hands over the animal. The goat made its signature sound, making Samantha swoon even more. As she gave the goat more attention for being so overwhelmingly adorable she noticed that Legolas was looking at

her. The look on his face reminded her of when she had no idea what to do on a math problem.

Indeed, he was looking at her like a complex math problem. He had never seen a woman fawn over animals in such a way. There were indeed women who love animals, but he had to admit, the way Samantha swooned over the simple goat was endearing.

She was gonna ask him if he was alright but she heard another goat make an adorable sound and she looked over, in one of the stalls was a baby goat! Maybe only a few weeks old. The one they were petting had to be mama and that was her baby. She couldn't help herself and slowly walked toward the baby. She looked back at the mama to see if she was gonna ram her or not, but she seemed cool with it. The baby made another noise and she moved to pick him up. He didn't put up much of a fight, just made a sound like he was surprised.

She moved back over to Legolas and the mama and sat down on the ground. She didn't really care about getting her dress dirty, she could always change, right?

"Isn't he cute?" She asked Legolas as she snuggled the little kid. She rubbed his head and neck and he made a sound that must have meant he really enjoyed it.

Legolas smiled and nodded at her as he continued to absentmindedly pet the mama goat.

They stayed there for a while, maybe an hour. She played with the goats and Legolas watched, occasionally chuckling at her antics, like when the baby ran after her and she pretended to get hurt. She played with the baby kinda like it was a human baby, even though it didn't understand she was pretending, she had a blast.

After a while Legolas said it was time to go and she reluctantly nodded. She picked the baby up one more time and snuggled it. She had a feeling it would be her last time seeing the little fella. "I'm gonna miss you." she said dramatically before placing him on the ground and walking with Legolas.

"You're going to have to change." He told me simply.

She looked down at the dress and he was right. Covered in dirt and hair and who knew what else. She clasped her hands in front of her, just below her chest. "Yeah, I guess you are right…" she said after a long pause. "Would you mind finding Penneth for me? I'm sure there is another dress or something I can wear in my room, but I'll never be able to tie it in the back."

He nodded, "Of course."

She assured him she knew the way back to her room and Legolas left to go find Penneth. Samantha was glowing, she had never gotten to play with goats before. She was still internally swooning over the baby and how tiny and cute it was. All in all, it was a great distraction from her situation. She got to her room and Penneth had beat her there.

"Oh Heavens! Look at the dress!" She said in shock.

Samantha hung her head a little, "Sorry... Legolas and I were playing with the goats."

Penneth blinked and fell silent. Playing. With goats? What a strange girl indeed. "The prince was playing with the livestock?"

Realizing that she shouldn't have said anything she rushed, "It was mostly me, Legolas just accompanied me!" She didn't want to ruin any reputation Legolas may have had.

Penneth smiled and waved a hand, "Do not worry so much, young one. Legolas is a sweet boy, I am sure he had his own fun too. Now lets get you out of that dress and into this one." She held up a very similar dress, only this one was red. There were no shoulders as long flowing ribbons acted as sleeves, leaving her arms essentially bear. There were also small designs in the fabric in black stitching. It was very pretty, and had a very different vibe from the one she was wearing.

Samantha fondled the red translucent sleeve, "This is much different."

"You looked so lovely in that dress, I wanted to see you in this one as well. But please, do not frolic with the goats in this one."

Samantha laughed nervously and nodded. Penneth helped her get into the dress and sent her on her way to the party, telling the girl to have fun.

She got there and she could tell the feast was a lively event. There was music, dancing and plenty of wine for everyone to enjoy. Samantha walked in and she noticed several people look at her. None of them were familiar faces though. There was a space cleared out for dancing and the melodic music made for a great beat to dance to. She walked by a table with refreshments and against her better judgment grabbed a small glass of wine. She was only twenty, but she had drank before. One glass would do nothing to her.

She continued to walk around slowly sipping the wine. Men would bow to her as they passed, she found it odd, but no harm done. Eventually she spotted a very loud table with the dwarves, they seemed to be in the middle of a drinking game. Oh, she remembered those days. There was the night she had gotten black out drunk and woke up in a random dudes bed. Not her proudest moment, but college changes you. She was sure to get tested within the week, and thankfully she was on birth control. Since then, she tried not to drink to excess. That night was a very embarrassing endeavor.

Finally, she spotted Legolas, he was across the hall against the wall, speaking with a man she had not seen before. Long shaggy hair, and a grizzled beard, though when she got a look at his face, he looked familiar. Perhaps he was another important member of the story. Their talk seemed important so Samantha decided to leave them alone for now. She would talk to them later.

She decided to sit at a table toward the edge of the hall, watching everyone as they talked and danced. She tapped her foot along to the music and tried to enjoy the moment with some wonderful wine and music. Parties were not generally her thing, but she could at least enjoy that.

"Samantha, are you enjoying yourself?"

She looked up and smiled at Legolas. She stood to talk with him, "I'm not used to parties, but this is nice."

Legolas had seen her when she first entered the hall and he had been so distracted that Aragorn had to tap him on the shoulder to regain his attention. The blue dress looked beautiful on her, but the red held a certain allure. Throughout his and Aragorn's talk, he had kept an eye on her, making sure that nothing unsavory occurred. While they were among friends here, too much alcohol can certainly change a person. "You look radiant, Samantha." He caught himself saying.

She smiled at him and touched his arm, "Thank you, Penneth thought I looked good in this dress too." She felt heat rise to her cheeks at the compliment but she could just play it off as the alcohol. She wasn't intoxicated but she could sure pretend to be!

Legolas shook his head. It seemed she was not aware of her own beauty, with or without the dress. He would think Samantha would have been fawned over in her own homeland. To produce a woman of her liking, it had to be something to behold. His eyes looked up and he saw Aragorn watching him. Yes, their chat wasn't done yet. "I will see you in a while Samantha, I have more business to take care of. Please do try to enjoy yourself."

"But Penneth said I can't play with the goats in this dress!" She exclaimed jokingly as she giggled to herself.

Legolas smiled, "Yes, another time then."

Samantha watched him go and wondered if that had been a little too weird. But, oh well. She went to go put down her drink on a table as an elf approached her with an open hand, "May I have this dance?"

She was taken aback by the offer. Usually dancing was not her thing, but this elf looked kind and she had watched the dance enough to have a basic idea of how it went. She took his hand and nodded and they walked to the dance floor. It wasn't an overly long dance and was simple. She didn't have the same grace as the elves, but she was content that she didn't make a fool of herself. When the dance was done, the elf thanked her for the opportunity and let her on her way.

'That was fun' she thought to herself as she went to go stand next to the wall away from the the party. She leaned her head back to close her eyes a little. She hadn't gotten much sleep and was getting tired.

Suddenly she smelled alcohol and heard heavy footsteps. A man, obviously drunk walked right up to her and leaned against the wall with his hand next to her. "Hello, M'Lady. Might I say, you were stunning out there."

'...great.' She just went with it, maybe he would just leave. "Thanks."

"The dress really suits you," he said eyes looking her up and down, "What is a pretty lady like you doing alone?" His words were slightly slurred and with every word she could smell more and more alcohol on his breath.

"Waiting for someone." Maybe he would get the hint? Not likely.

The man got closer to where his face was only a foot away, "Oh? If he's making you wait he ain't worth it, Love." His hand went to sit on her waist flirtatiously and she was in so much shock she didn't move right away. "I won't make you wait." he slurred, trying to be charming.

'Nope. I'm out.'

Samantha shook off the shock and pushed him away. It was so sudden that the drunken man tumbled and fell on the floor laughing, "Oh, she's a feisty one!" He laughed as Samantha marched back in the direction of her room. What a disgusting man. And she knew he was a human, no pointy ears.

Half way to her room she heard Legolas, "Samantha!" She turned and she watched him nearly jogging to catch up to her.

"Oh, hello, Legolas. Did you want to talk to me so badly that you chased me?" She was teasing of course and he knew it.

Legolas held his composure while he had watched the man try and make advances toward her. Then he saw the man place a hand on her and she pushed him away. He knew something had happened. He had left Aragorn without a word to come flag her down. He looked at her seriously, "Are you alright?"

She blinked. Did he see what happened? "I'm fine. Talking about the drunkard? He was just trying to get a little too friendly with me. Basically wanting sex, that was clear. But it's fine, I pushed him off so we're good. I'm just gonna turn in for the night. Tired after everything, ya know?"

Legolas nodded, anger bubbling within his chest. How vulgar for a man to grab at a woman and ask for such a thing. Even if the man was drunk there was no excuse for that kind of behavior. It wouldn't surprise him if this sort of thing happened again. Samantha was very cute. Not to mention her hair was beautiful and made her stick out like a sore thumb. Also, as much as he hated to admit it, she had a very womanly figure he failed to notice the other night.

"I can escort you the rest of the way."

She smiled, "Thank you, Legolas." They walked for a while and she finally said, "I'm sorry I took you away from the man you were talking too. It seemed important."

You could call it important. They had been discussing the council and what Lord Elrond might have to speak about. Also about Gollum's escape from Mirkwood. "It is alright. They were topics we can discuss later."

They continued to walk in comfortable silence. When they came to the door, Legolas had planned on wishing her a good night but she spoke first, "I have a favor to ask you."

"Yes?"

"Well, I'm not gonna be able to get this dress off on my own, do you mind coming in and just undoing the back?" She realized that could be a little weird, "Don't worry, you won't see anything, I just can't reach the ties in the back."

He looked at her awkwardly. He had never been asked something like that before. Samantha had a habit of surprising him. She was like no other woman he had ever met. He was thoroughly entertained by her and her quirks. He wanted to go get Penneth, but he didn't want to have her wait for him to get her. So, he agreed.

She smiled in thanks, offering a polite nod. She opened the door and walked in and kicked off the slipper-like shoes.

Legolas walked in and when she turned her back to him he took it as his cue to start. He took a look at the ties and quickly and swiftly undid them. When he was done she turned and looked at him. Her hands held the dress, preventing it from falling, "Thanks. I appreciate it."

He nodded, "You're welcome. Goodnight, Samantha."

"Goodnight, Legolas."

Chapter 4

Samantha looked around at everyone sitting in the half circle. Men, elves, and the three dwarves she had talked to the previous day were there. She had been surprised when Penneth told her she would be attending the Council. Even though she didn't know what would happen she felt a heavy and unsettling feeling twisting her gut.

When she first sat down, Gandalf introduced her to the hobbit Frodo who sat between them. He was a kind and gentle person. Much different than everyone else there, but not because of his race. He was very quiet and docile. Unlike everyone else who appeared ready to pounce at any moment. Samantha couldn't help but think they were both a little out of place there.

Samantha looked around at the others. Legolas sat with the elves. Gloin and Gimli with the other dwarves. Her eyes found the drunk man from last night as she scanned the room. Their eyes met and she watched the shame and embarrassment cross his face before he looked away. He suddenly became very interested in the pedestal in the middle of the circle. It was clear that he must have remembered her and regretted his previous actions. *'Maybe he's not so bad...'* Samantha was quick to give second chances depending on the circumstance. Alcohol can do a lot to a person, she should know.

Once everyone had seated, Elrond took his place behind the stone-like table, and began to speak, "Strangers from distant lands, friends of old. You've been summoned here to answer the threat of Mordor. Middle Earth stands upon the brink of destruction. None can escape it. You will unite, or you will fall. Each race is bound to this fate, this one doom." Elrond spoke with passion, trying to get everyone in the group to understand the importance this meeting held. Samantha could feel the deja vu plain as day. Elrond looked to Frodo who sat between Samantha and Gandalf. "Bring forth the Ring, Frodo."

Frodo reluctantly stood and made his way to the stone. There was a small voice in his mind that told him to not let it go, don't let them have it. It was small though, like a mouse before a giant oak door. From his hand he placed a ring on the center of the pedestal.

Everyone was talking in hushed tones of surprise and awe. They all stared at the Ring. A relic thought lost or destroyed many years ago. When Frodo sat down he let out a sigh, as if a burden had been lifted from him. Samantha noticed this and placed a hand on his shoulder, offering him a reassuring smile. She couldn't remember much but she knew the ring was a heavy burden. Even she could tell there was something ominous about the ring, a dark and malevolent presence resided there. Frodo gave a small smile in return, but their attention was quickly caught by a familiar voice.

The drunk from the night before stood and spoke, looking at the ring, "In a dream, I saw the eastern sky grow dark, but in the west a pale light lingered." He walked a little closer to the ring. "A voice was crying, 'Your doom is near at hand. Isildur's Bane is found.'" Elrond and Gandalf shared a look as they watched him get closer and closer to the Ring, hand outstretched to grab it, "Isildur's Bane..." he said just above a whisper, now entranced by the Ring.

Elrond shot to his feet, "Boromir!"

Just as Elrond shot up Gandalf did as well, but instead of calling out to the man he chanted a dark language. Gandalf chanted and the council fell dark. The world itself began shaking around them. Samantha felt like she could hardly breathe. A presence prevented her from moving. She glanced around and found the rest of the council in a similar state.

When Gandalf finished everyone looked around in shock as the darkness around them receded. Weary and fearful gazes locked on the wizard. Boromir looked at him, now out of the mental cloud he had been in.

Elrond's sharp eyes fell upon the wizard, "Never before has any voice uttered the words of that tongue here in Imladris." He could not believe Gandalf could be so foolish as to invite such darkness.

Gandalf leaned on his staff and took a deep breath, "I do not ask your pardon, Master Elrond. For the black speech of Mordor may yet be heard in every corner of the west." His eyes scanned the Council members, some of whom were still in shock over the display. "The Ring is altogether evil." Gandalf turned to return to his seat but was halted when Boromir again spoke.

"It is a *gift*." He said with suppressed excitement. He stood and turned to everyone, "A gift to the foes of Mordor. Why not use this ring?" No one spoke, so he continued, "Long has my father, the Steward of Gondor, kept the forces of Mordor at bay. By the blood of our people, are your lands kept safe. Give Gondor the weapon of the enemy, let us use it against him!"

A man interjected, "You cannot wield it, none of us can. The one Ring answers to Sauron alone, it has no other master." Samantha recognized him as the man Legolas was speaking with at the party.

Boromir turned and said accusingly, "And what would a *ranger* know of this matter?" He had long since wondered why this man was here. His appearance suggested no status to warrant his presence. The council was composed of some of the most influential people in Middle earth, or represented such people. His eyes looked the ranger up and down, sizing him up.

Legolas stood, he would not sit idly by and let this man insult his trusted friend. "This is no mere ranger. He is Aragorn, son of Arathorn. You owe him your allegiance." Samantha had never heard him speak in such a tone before. The cool restrained voice and his sharp eyes sent a chill down her spine.

The man turned back toward Aragorn. "Aragorn. This is Isildur's heir?" he asked in disbelief. He couldn't believe that the so-called, '*true king*' had spent his time frolicking through the woods when he should have been fighting for his people! A true king does not run and hide.

"And heir to the throne of Gondor." Legolas added what the man already knew.

Aragorn sighed and asked his friend to sit back down. It wasn't worth the trouble to go on. He felt that he had lost the right to be king long ago, it didn't matter.

Boromir shot Aragorn a sharp look, "Gondor has no king." He said before returning to his seat. "Gondor needs no king."

An uncomfortable silence settled on the Council before Gandalf decided to speak up. "Aragorn is right. We cannot use it."

"You have only one choice." Elrond began, "The ring must be destroyed."

There was silence before Gimli said, "What are we waiting for?" He grabbed his ax and wasted no time in bringing it down upon the Ring. When his ax made contact with the Ring, there was a bright light and the ax shattered. Samantha held her hands up to protect herself from the broken ax pieces. Before her arms could fly up, she was shocked when she saw a massive flaming eye. She blinked rapidly, eyes darting frantically in search of the image that was already gone. *'What the hell was that thing?'* Whatever it was, it made her feel sick.

She could only wonder how much stranger this world could get. Her nerves were fried from Gandalf's display and now from the eye of fire she saw. Her foot began to bounce from anxiety. Just what had she stumbled into? She should know!

Samantha was brought back to reality by Elrond, "The Ring cannot be destroyed, Gimli Son of Gloin, or by any craft that we here possess. The Ring was made in the fires of Mount Doom. Only there can it be unmade. It must be taken deep into Mordor, and cast back into the fiery chasm from whence it came. One of you must do this."

Once again, there was an eerie silence. No one wanted to do such a task. Eyes shifted across each and every person, just waiting for someone to volunteer.

Boromir could not believe what he was hearing. He looked out at the other members of the council, "One does not simply walk into Mordor. Its black gates are guarded by more than just Orcs. There is evil there that does not sleep. The great Eye is ever watchful. It is a barren wasteland. Riddled with fire, and ash, and dust. The very air you breathe is a poisonous fume. Not with ten thousand men could you do this, it is folly."

Samantha could feel a cold sweat start on the back of her neck at the image Boromir created. *'No thank you!'*

Legolas shot from his seat, "Have you heard nothing Lord Elrond has said? The Ring must be destroyed!"

"And I suppose you think you're the one to do it?" Gimli shot back at him.

"And if we fail, what then?" Boromir questioned, "What happens when Sauron takes back what is his?"

Gimli stood, "I'll be dead before I see the ring in the hands of an elf!"

Not much else had to be said before everyone was up and arguing with each other. Some thought Gondor should take the ring, while others knew the ring needed to be destroyed but none of them wanted to complete this task. Samantha watched from her chair and crossed her

arms. *'If I knew what was going to happen I could help!'* She was surprised when even Gandalf stood and began arguing, telling them how foolish they were for wasting time when a decision needed to be made.

Frodo watched the council and he knew. He knew they would never be able to settle on a choice. Bilbo left him the ring, it was his responsibility now. He stood and walked toward the bickering council, "I will take it!" he could feel Samantha's gaze on him as he shouted again, "I will take it!"

The bickering stopped and they all turned to look at the hobbit in disbelief. Out of all races and people, this hobbit was willingly sacrificing himself for this quest. Frodo looked at them all, knowing he had been heard, "I will take the Ring to Mordor," he stated confidently. After a pause he continued, a little quieter, "Though, I do not know the way."

Gandalf gave a quick laugh though his heart was heavy for the hobbit. He nodded and moved to stand behind Frodo. "I will help you bear this burden, Frodo Baggins, as long as it is yours to bear."

Aragorn stood and approached the young hobbit, "If by my life or death I can protect you, I will." He took one of the hobbits tiny hands in his, "You have my sword."

"And you have my bow." Legolas announced after a moment and stepped forward.

As if not to be shown up by an elf, Gimli walked forward as well. "And my ax."

Samantha couldn't help but smirk looking at Legolas and Gimli. They were so obviously uncomfortable standing next to each other. She thought back to last night and realized elves and dwarves don't get along. Gimli and the other dwarves gathered many foul and sour looks from the other party goers.

Boromir stepped forward as well. "You carry the fates of us all, little one. If this is indeed the will of the Council, then Gondor will see it done."

Everyone was a little startled when a voice yelled out, "Hey!" They all turned and saw another hobbit run right past Samantha to stand beside Frodo. "He can't go anywhere without me!"

Without a pause Lord Elrond responded, "No, indeed it is not possible to separate you, even when he is summoned to a secret council and you are not."

The hobbit hardly had time to look sheepish before another shout came from the opposite direction. "You'll have to tie us up in a sack to stop us!" Two more hobbits came running out to stand beside Frodo.

The second of the two said, "Anyway, you need people of intelligence on this sort of mission... Quest... Thing."

"Well that rules you out, Pip." The first said, nudging his friend in the side.

Samantha had to chuckle at that and felt a smile spread on her face.

Elrond looked over the group, "Nine companions. Although..." There was a pause and Elrond looked at Samantha, as did Gandalf with a knowing gaze. Everyone else followed suit, their eyes calculating and confused. Samantha's own eyes widened. The smile was gone from her face as that sinking feeling was back in her stomach. Elrond continued, "a tenth companion will join on this quest."

There were murmurs of surprise and for a second Samantha was too shocked to speak. When she regained her senses a moment later she stood up shaking her head, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on. You want me to go on this quest of doom? Why?" She wanted to hide the panic in her voice but it was hard to. Her eyes were frantic, resembling a cornered animal.

"This quest is no place for a woman." Boromir said. "She does not know how to protect herself and has seen nothing of war." There was a murmur of agreement from most everyone else.

Even though he had a point, Samantha wanted to defend herself against the accusations he made. Besides, it's not like she had no idea how to fight. She had been a pretty good shot with a bow in her archery club in high school. Using one in combat though, that's different. Plus she hadn't picked up a bow since then.

Before she could say anything, Gandalf spoke, "You forget Boromir, the hobbits are the same. They have lived their life in the Shire, free from the horrors of war and violence. Saying she should not join for her lack of experience would suggest you feel this way about the hobbits as well."

Boromir said nothing.

"But Gandalf," Samantha stated again, "Why?"

The wizard walked over to her and put a hand on her shoulder, "It is by the will of the Valar that you have come to us. It is your fate that you accompany us on this journey." He paused, "But, do not be afraid, we will guide you, and watch over you." He gestured to the rest of the company and she looked at them all with wide eyes as they nodded in agreement with the wizard.

She couldn't believe this. This was a death sentence. Her stomach tied itself in knots. Bile threatened to rise but she willed it down. The cold and clammy feeling reverberated through her as she thought of her fate.

Elrond gave them his blessing but she did not hear him. '*So, I am going to accompany these guys on a journey to Mordor, which according to Boromir is like hell on Earth. If you can't do it with ten thousand men then how would anyone expect us to do it with ten? This is insane! Not to mention I have no idea how to* really *fight, and I don't think the hobbits do either. Oh I'm fucked. I am so completely and utterly fucked. Lord sweet baby Jesus take me now.'* Samantha didn't even realize that she had sunk back down into her seat and hugged herself as she rocked back and fourth thinking of all the possible deaths she could endure.

Gandalf looked at her with pity. Her world must be very different from theirs. No dangers such as this and now she was being thrust into a journey against her will. Much like Frodo,

her fate was tied to the Ring. He hoped that she would be able to endure the hardships to come. He made a mental note to check on her later and went to speak with Lord Elrond and a few members of the newly formed Fellowship.

Legolas followed Gandalf and the others but looked back at Samantha as she sat with a petrified face rocking back and fourth slightly. He thought it odd that a woman who randomly appeared would be sent on this journey. The chance that they would live was slim, and she must know that. His eyes went back to Gandalf and he wondered what the man knew and was not telling them.

The hobbits exchanged worried looks toward her. "Should we say something?" Sam asked the others quietly. She didn't even notice.

Merry shrugged, "I think she's panicking, don't they say not to bother people who are panicking?"

Frodo shook his head, "You're thinking of sleepwalking."

Merry's mouth formed the shape of an O and he nodded. Yes, he was thinking of sleepwalking.

Pippin walked forward and placed a small hand on her shoulder. Making her head snap up to look at them. "You alright?" he asked simply.

She covered her face with her hands and let out a stressed sigh. She could feel her head grow light from the returning oxygen. She had started to hyperventilate. "Yeah, just nervous. This whole thing has me out of my comfort zone."

The hobbits nodded, "We're in the same boat, miss. We've never even left the shire until recently!" Sam said, trying to connect with her on some level.

Samantha nodded, "We're all a bit out of our element in this, aren't we?" She gave a small dejected laugh before looking at them again. "I know Frodo, but what are your names?"

Sam puffed out his chest, "Oh, I'm Sam. Samwise Gamgee. Nice to meet you!" Samantha smiled at the name, funny how they shared a nickname.

"I'm Meriadoc, but call me Merry, please."

"And I'm Pippin. Short for Peregrin."

She nodded, "Nice to meet you all. I'm Samantha."

Sam laughed now, "I hope we don't get confused too much."

Samantha shook her head, "We'll call you Sam, and me Samantha. That should help a bit, right?"

"Yeah, don't be worried about it, you two are very different after all." Pippin stated.

"Oh, I thought we were plenty alike, twins even!" Samantha joked. "I mean look at the resemblance!"

She got a laugh from the hobbits and even Frodo joined in. Samantha then asked them about the Shire. She was curious to hear about it from the people who lived there. She enjoyed listening to the stories of themselves in the Shire. It sounded like a great place to live.

After a while of talking the small group was interrupted. Gandalf walked over and was happy to at least see them getting along. "Forgive me, but I must snatch Samantha for a talk of sorts. You four, gather your things, we leave shortly." The group shared glances and the Hobbits said their goodbyes to their new companion. Gandalf could just barely hear them talk about how it would be interesting to have her along. He smiled, it would seem that Samantha had made friends with the hobbits.

Samantha looked around and noticed that her and Gandalf were now the only ones left in the area. He sat down in the chair next to her and sighed, letting the silence hang in the air as she looked at him blankly. Finally he spoke, "Forgive me for rushing you out yesterday. I had information that needed Elrond's immediate attention. I did not think you were ready to hear it. And still are not, in fact."

"Gandalf, please can you tell me what you know, if anything at all? This is all so strange to me and anything to help make sense of it would be appreciated." She needed to at least know *why* she was there. She knew he had to know something!

The wizard sighed, "It is the will of the Valar that brings you here. But, the Valar themselves did not bring you."

"What do you mean?" She asked, now curious as well as anxious.

Gandalf turned toward her and his eyes peered into hers with a fierce intensity. "You were brought here for your knowledge of our world. Dark forces hope to use it for their own gain. So they have bewitched your memory. Everything you once knew about our world is locked away in your mind" He pointed to her forehead. "You are as important as the One Ring in all of this. If either you or the Ring fall into their hands, I am afraid all would be lost."

Samantha sat there, dumbfounded. "You're telling me... they brought *me* here? Why *me!?*" She stood and began pacing in frustration, "It could have been anyone! There are millions of people - *millions* - that have read this story! Why did it have to be me!? It could have been anyone! It could have been one of my brothers, my father, my mother! *Anyone*!"

Gandalf nodded, "This is why it is by the Valar. Out of everyone, you were the one to be brought here. And a purpose you will fulfill. I understand, young one, that this is a painful experience for you. But there is no time to be thinking of what could have been. There is only now, and the future."

She could feel tears sting her eyes, "Gandalf, please tell me something."

He nodded.

"Can I ever go home?" She sounded like a child then. Her voice was small, and even though she wanted to be hopeful, she didn't think she could be.

Gandalf closed his eyes, "There have been others in the past who fell into this world, from their own actions or someone else's. I know not of anyone who has left." He knew this was not what she wanted to hear, but she deserved the truth. He doubted there was any way she could return to her home.

Samantha stared at him, her heart broken. Her knees buckled and she fell to the ground as tears began to fall and her shoulders shook.

He watched her as she grieved. Gandalf looked upon her with pity. In one moment she had lost her home, her family, everything she once knew. The wizard left his seat and got onto one knee in front of her and gripped her shoulders gently. "Look at me."

Samantha obeyed, wiping her tears as new ones fell.

"You may not have come here of your own accord, but there is always hope to be had. While you experience great loss, you will gain just as much should we win this war. Be strong, Samantha. Fight for the future, it is yours to make."

She took in his words but couldn't take them to heart. She didn't know if this pain would ever leave her. Gandalf let her cry a little more before helping her up and ushering her off to prepare for the journey. As she walked to her room her mind was filled with thoughts of her family. She would never be able to see them again. Never laugh with them. Never listen to her older brothers rants of politics, or her younger brothers go on and on about video games and anime. Never hear her father's laugh again. Never hear another I love you from her mother.

She forced herself to stop crying. Maybe she *could* get through this. She needed to focus on the task at hand and that was not dying a horrible death at the hands of orcs and who knows what else. She sighed and came to the decision. She would not think about it. Push it all back. Live in the present. Samantha had always been one to look to the past and rarely look forward, but she could try and live in the present. The past was too painful and the future too uncertain. It was the best idea she had to not be bedridden with grief.

When she arrived at her room she found Penneth preparing supplies for her. She looked up from her work of folding and gave a small smile, "Hello, Samantha, Lord Elrond sent me to help prepare you for your journey. He said to have everything prepared by midday."

Samantha nodded numbly, too tired to really care or pay attention. She sat as Penneth explained to her how she should bathe once a week if possible. Samantha forced herself to pay attention and she cringed at the news, she was used to bathing every other day. Once a week or less was going to feel disgusting. She showed her strips of cloth that Samantha was supposed to use for her period, and a few other things she had packed away in her bag.

Next she gave her traveling clothes to change into. A cloth band was used as her bra, and she wore two layers. A thin cotton undershirt and pants to help with sweat, and then dark brown trousers and a dark blue long sleeved top. The leather boots given to her were uncomfortable,

Penneth told her that they would mold to her feet better within a day. She handed Samantha a belt to help keep the pants over her waist, as well as give her a place to hold small objects outside of her pack. Lastly, she was given a dark cloak. Samantha looked at herself in the mirror and thought she could actually pass as a person from this world. She looked like someone straight out of a larping group.

By the time Penneth had explained everything about traveling and answered any random questions Samantha had along the way, it was only a short time before they were set to depart. As a last favor, she asked Penneth for a journal and something to write with. Penneth seemed intrigued by her request and she told her she planned to write everything she could down on paper. She had never had much success in a diary before, but she was sure as hell gonna try this time. When Penneth presented it to her, she shoved it into her pack.

Once she had everything packed and ready to go, she said goodbye to Penneth. Samantha hugged her and Penneth seemed a little startled at first, but returned the embrace. Samantha told her she would miss her and she hoped to see her again one day. After all, she would spend the rest of her life in Middle Earth.

Samantha set off in the direction the Fellowship would meet. As she came to a corner, she nearly ran right into someone. She gave a quick apology before looking up and seeing who it was. Boromir. She looked up at him, why was everyone she met so far towering over her? She was average height for a woman dammit! Five foot four inches wasn’t tall by any means, but it was well within the average range. Boromir, as well as every person not a hobbit or dwarf, towered over her. Had any of them even been below six feet tall?

Boromir looked startled and coughed, "My apologies, are you alright?"

Samantha nodded and the two began walking in an awkward silence until she decided to break it, "So, any hangover this morning?" He gave her a strange look. "You know, sickness from drinking too much. Headache, nausea, all the good stuff that makes you love life!" She finished sarcastically.

He knew now what she was referring to and he paused in his walking. She took a few more steps before stopping and turning to him. "I regret my actions last night. I was not representing my people as I should have been."

Samantha watched him for a moment and made a judgment call. Boromir was not a bad person. "Yes, I expect your people flirt much better than you." she teased as she continued walking.

Boromir stood still for a moment, mouth hung open in shock. He caught up to her and insisted, "I will have you know, that I am very popular with the ladies of Gondor. Very rarely do I fumble and humiliate myself as I did last night."

Samantha laughed, "So you say. It doesn't matter. I forgive you for your... boorish behavior." She didn't want to call him a dick, he probably wouldn't get it. Boorish sounded like a word he would understand.

He nodded, "I will act far more honorably in the future, I can assure you of that."

"I'll hold you to it," she nodded in return. "For now, let's do our best to get along and get to know each other, huh?"

He smiled at her, "Then let me tell you of my grand city-"

The rest of their walk to the meeting spot was filled with Boromir talking about Gondor. She enjoyed hearing him describe it in detail and tell her of his father and his younger brother Faramir. He sounded like a very nice man, honorable too. Boromir laughed when she poked fun at his brother being more honorable than him.

Finally the two arrived and helped Aragorn and Legolas load the last few supplies onto a pony named Bill. As Samantha put the last pack on the horse she turned to Legolas and was going to ask him a question but she fell silent when she saw the look he was giving Boromir. His eyes were like daggers and she thought it best to not approach. This was going to be one hell of an adventure indeed.

Chapter 5

The fellowship traveled for many days and it was apparent after the first few that Samantha had never done anything like this before. While she had stood in place all day being a cashier, and she would take walks, that didn't come close to the miles of terrain they walked through day after day. Eventually, her feet became used to the constant aches and pains. She was eventually able to keep up with the fellowship with relative ease. She had to, she didn't want to be left behind! It took over a week for her feet not to be in pain.

Without the constant pain she could actually look around and appreciate nature more. The rolling hills, the dense trees and foliage, the fresh clean air. And her favorite part was at night when she could stargaze. She couldn't find constellations like the Big Dipper of Orion and it was disheartening.

One night just a few days into their journey everyone had settled into their spots for the night. They had managed to find a clearing in the forest and so they had an open view of the sky. The hobbits were talking amongst themselves and Samantha listened in as she looked up at the stars. She looked for a familiar star alignment but yet again she found none. She sighed heavily, saddened at the reminder of how far from home she was.

Pippin heard the sigh from their female companion and saw her gazing longingly into the sky. He laid down near her and also looked up. "Do you see those stars there?" He pointed into the sky at a set of stars. Samantha looked to where he pointed and nodded. The other hobbits were now intrigued and watched. "That there is Little Hand, and that right there" He pointed to a different set of stars, "is Fosco. He was a hobbit who left with the elves, and they immortalized him in the stars."

Merry gave his friend a look, "Where did you hear that, Pip?"

"Farmer Maggot. He's actually pretty nice once you get to know him."

Legolas couldn't help but overhear. Gandalf, Gimli and Boromir had already fallen asleep, and Aragorn was trying to. Legolas had the first watch and he walked out from his spot to look up at the stars as well. The small group looked at him. The hobbits were still in awe that they were traveling with an elf, especially Sam. Though none of them could work up the courage to speak to him. He had an intimidating aura around him, but they knew he was friendly by how he would help Samantha and them over rough terrain.

The elf looked into the night sky, "They say, when the first Elves awoke, the stars were the first thing they saw. The Valar Orome looked at them and called them, the People of the Stars."

The hobbits were intrigued by this piece of Elvish lore. It was all new to them and Samantha as well. Sam spoke up, "Makes sense, after all elves are just as beautiful as stars." He said looking up to the sky. He had dreamed all his life to meet the elves. When they came to Rivendel, he couldn't believe their beauty. In fact, he would bet that they were even more beautiful than stars.

Samantha then became curious, "Who are the Valar? Is it like God?" Gandalf had mentioned them a few times but she had no idea who or what they were.

Legolas was silent before answering. "Some worship them as such, but they are more like guides. Watchful over the world and they hold more wisdom than even Gandalf I would wager."

She nodded. These beings thought it okay for her to be taken from her own world and placed into theirs. It sounded to Samantha like the Valar needed to get their wisdom checked.

"Why don't they help us in this war?" Frodo suddenly asked, his hand resting on his chest where the ring hung on its chain.

"They do not meddle where it is not needed." They all turned to Aragorn who was now laying on his side propped up on his elbow looking at them. "This conflict is between the races of Middle Earth. The Valar can only do so much without impeding the free will of others." There was a long pause before he laid back down. "Now you should all rest while you can, banter can continue in the morning."

The hobbits all settled in and that night was peaceful. The same routine began to unfold over their days of travel and Samantha was happy to have some new form of normalcy. She would generally go out with Merry and Boromir to help look for firewood when they stopped for meals and such. She had become very good at deciding what wood was good for burning, and what wasn't.

One day as was going through the brush looking for wood and kindling, she heard a sound. A strong thud. Something had been hit with a great force. She stood and looked around, hearing the sound again and again. She slowly and cautiously moved closer and closer to the noise until she saw the familiar form of Legolas. He was firing into the trees. *'Odd way to use your arrows.'* She thought to herself.

She walked up to him, "What'cha doing?" She asked inquisitively.

Legolas let one last arrow fly before turning to her, "Keeping up my skill of course. Practice is needed to keep skills pristine." He turned to her and offered a soft smile, "Is there something I can help you with, Samantha?"

Her head shook, "No, I just heard the thudding while I was looking for more firewood and was curious."

Legolas looked at her and thought more into her answer than she probably had intended him to. Was she always so curious? Perhaps he should have told her about the noise. If it had not been him and it had been something else she could have put herself into danger. Curiosity was not always a good thing. He hoped that it didn't get her into trouble one day.

Samantha paid no mind to his silence. She had become accustomed to it. It usually meant that he was observing or thinking of a good thought out response. Although that wasn't going to stop her from continuing on, "Practice is good, but you're wasting your arrows. Won't you have to make more if they break?"

A smirk danced across the elf's lips as he slung the quiver of arrows off of his back. He held the quiver up to her, "Take one."

She looked at him with an odd expression before placing her gathered wood onto the ground. *'This better not be like Pull My Finger or something.'* Samantha reached out and took one of the arrows out of the quiver, expecting something to happen. She stood there for a few silent moments before looking at him, "Okay, now what?"

"Look," he nodded to the quiver and right before her eyes another arrow seemed to grow like a weed from the bottom of the quiver.

Samantha was dumbfounded for a few minutes and Legolas' smirk grew larger and larger the longer she stayed silent. "That," she began after a minute, "is *amazing!*" She held up the arrow in her hands, "So you have a magical quiver of arrows. Is there some sort of black hole at the bottom? How did you get this? Can I get a bowl that does the same thing, but with food instead of arrows?"

Legolas chuckled at the last question. So odd. Legolas plucked the arrow from her hands and returned it to the quiver before putting it back onto his back. "It was a gift from my father several decades ago. I had run out of arrows protecting someone dear to me. My father spent many years trying to retrieve this for me."

She wanted to ask about this person he couldn't protect. But she could see the thinly veiled regret and chose a different question. "Are magical items like that really rare?"

He smiled gently. He didn't know why he decided to share the information with her, but he knew he could trust her. Most humans would want to know more about his past and become nosy, but he respected her for not giving into that urge. Perhaps in the future he would share more information about it with her. "Extremely. My father will still not tell me where he acquired it."

Her eyes wandered to the bow he held in his hand, "Anything fancy about your bow?"

Holding up his bow he stated, "Not in the way my quiver is special."

"Can I try it?"

"Of course," he said to her.

Samantha took the bow from his hand and notched an arrow. She made an attempt to pull the string back, but failed. Legolas watched as she tried, and tried, and tried again to pull the string back but to no avail. An amused smile spread over his face.

He chuckled and took the bow back from her, "I am not surprised, the draw weight is nearly one hundred pounds."

Her jaw dropped for a second. '*I thought most didn't go over sixty!*' It had been a few years since archery club, but she remembered that much. Her eyes looked at his arms and wondered

for a second the muscle tone that had to be hidden by that tunic. "Holy crap, how far can you shoot that thing?"

He shrugged, "I've never measured to be honest with you. Though it always gets the job done." Legolas looked at her then, his eyes more serious, "I could perhaps make you a bow. It would not be much, but it would be beneficial if you had a way to defend yourself."

She nodded, "Not a bad idea. It's been a long time since I've used a bow. I was pretty good, but I've never shot at a moving target, or a living thing..." In all honesty she was excited to be able to pick up the skill again. She loved archery and the thought of having her own bow was exciting. Killing on the other hand made her uneasy, but she would need to do it eventually.

Legolas smirked, "I will help you hone your skill once I have a bow constructed. In these woods I should have a good bow in a few days and we can start."

Samantha could have hugged him. The thought of being able to shoot a bow and arrow with speed and accuracy was so exciting. And she could think of no better teacher. Before she could thank him another voice rang out, "Do you not think a sword would be better suited for her?"

The two turned and looked at Boromir. He stood, arms full of firewood as he looked at them in return. Samantha remembered her forgotten task and felt a little sheepish. She was going to apologize to him but Legolas spoke, "A bow allows her to stay out of danger, a sword implies being in the midst of battle." His words were straight and to the point. He refrained from saying blatantly that she would not survive for long in a battle with a sword. He saw how little strength she had, an orc trying to kill her would easily be able to break through her defenses in combat.

"And what if an ambush occurs? A novice couldn't defend themselves in close quarters with a bow."

Samantha could feel the growing tension between the two and looked from one man to the other. "I could always learn both!" She offered. She could only think that Legolas was still upset with Boromir over his drunken escapade. *'They really have to talk it out or get over it...*' She thought. "I guess, I'm going to go back to camp." she said as she gathered up the wood she had put on the ground. She waved goodbye to them awkwardly.

Boromir and Legolas stood there for several long moments and Boromir walked closer to the elf who watched him with a piercing gaze. "I do not mean any offence," Boromir started, "I only wish for her to defend herself, much like yourself." Legolas kept quiet, "I've already spoken with the hobbits and they have agreed to train." Boromir knew the elf didn't like him. He couldn't place why, but it was obvious through his actions. They were in a group though, and they both had the same goal. Legolas would have to listen to reason.

"If her safety is your priority then you know she would surely die in a battle, sword against sword." His words were cold, much like his eyes.

Of course he knew. He also knew that the elf was being stubborn. "Teach her the bow." Boromir said. "But I will train her with the sword as well. Even without strength, she would

be better off wielding knowledge instead of swinging blindly." Boromir turned and left him alone.

The elf watched as Boromir left. He let out slow controlled breaths. He knew she would need to learn the sword as well. He just couldn't bring himself to agree with the man. Legolas still held contempt toward him for his behavior toward Aragorn and toward Samantha. He knew Samantha already forgave him and he found it admirable. The fellowship was learning that she was a kind and forgiving woman who trusted easily. Boromir would have to earn *his* trust though.

Back at camp Samantha had returned with her firewood, "Here ya go, Aragorn." She said putting it down next to where he was working. Aragorn usually started the fire, and Merry was watching with interest, his pile of wood already gathered. Aragorn looked over his shoulder and nodded a thanks to her. It wasn't long before there was a roaring fire going and Sam and Frodo had everything out for their meal.

Frodo looked over at her, "You were gone longer than usual."

"I ran into Legolas. He was practicing his bow."

"Practicing?" Gimli chimed in. He had been unloading Bill the pony and overheard. "So the elf needs practice, he ain't so perfect after all. So much for the flawlessness of the elves."

"Don't let him hear you say that." Aragorn warned.

Gimli laughed, "And what would he do about it?"

Just then a bird flew up from some bushes and startled them. What startled them more was the sudden thunk of an arrow piercing the bird and pinning it to a tree. They turned and saw Legolas, "My apologies," he said as he walked further into camp, "it came out of the brush so suddenly and swiftly, I wasn't sure if I would hit it." He looked at the bird pinned to the tree, "A clean kill, and the meat is intact. A flawless kill, wouldn't you say?" He turned to Gimli, veiled mischief in his eyes.

Gimli glowered, "A lucky strick!" He insisted before storming off and grumbling to himself in dwarvish. Samantha guessed it was not kind words based on the disproving head shake of Aragorn.

Legolas pulled the bird from the tree and brought it to Sam, "Here, I'm sure you can make something with this."

"Oh, you bet I can, Sir!" Sam took the bird and almost immediately started to butcher it.

Samantha looked away from Sam as he continued on butchering. Boromir had returned just as Legolas gave Sam the bird and noticed Samantha's face pale as she turned away. He put away his gathered wood and walked to her, giving her a pat on the back. "Are you alright? Does the butchering of animals upset you?"

She shook her head, "No, not exactly. I grew up with birds and it just made me think of some old pets."

Pippin grew interested, "You had birds as pets?"

Samantha sat down, "I had many pets growing up. Birds, guinea pigs, ferrets, dogs, cats, we even had a horse at one point."

"So many animals..." Pippin mused.

Boromir's head tilted, "What is a guinea pig? I've never heard of such a thing."

Samantha's face lit up at remembering Molly, the guinea pig her family had for almost seven years. "Well, they're a rodent, but very different from rats or mice. Picture a potato, and add fur, with the cutest little face you can imagine!" She began gesturing with her arms as she spoke. "They also make the cutest sounds! When they get excited they wheek. It's a high pitched noise, and when they are curious they make a little rumble kind of noise. People thought it sounded similar to a pig, and that's how they got the name Guinea Pig!"

Most of the fellowship had never seen her talk so excitedly about something before. And about potato shaped rodents no less.

Pippin was smiling, feeling the emotions run off of her, "What kind of birds did you have?"

"Sparrows. We came home on a really windy day and there was a nest that had fallen. Seven baby birdies were on the ground, they didn't even have their eyes open, they were so young. My mom," There was a pause for a second as she forced her composure. While she liked talking about her pets, bringing up her mom was still painful. "My mom is an amazing woman who was able to save six of them. We let them all go once they grew up, but one decided to stay and we kept him until he died peacefully in his food dish."

"What a way to go!" Sam laughed. He felt bad that butchering the bird made her feel a little uneasy, but it was good food!

"She sounds like a great woman." Frodo smiled.

Samantha smiled at him and nodded. She didn't trust herself to speak just then. Pushing her emotions about her mother to the side she changed the subject by slapping Boromir on the back, "So, you're gonna teach me and the hobbits some sword skills?"

Boromir laughed and nodded, "Yes, it would be best for you to learn to defend yourselves." Merry and Pippin shared an excited glance at one another.

"When do we start?" Merry asked, excited to learn properly.

"Might as well start now if you feel up to it." Boromir grinned. The two hobbits jumped onto their feet in excitement and went to go find their blades. Boromir turned to Samantha, "Will you be joining us?"

She shook her head, "I would love to but I'm still not used to this constant walking. I'm sure I'll be used to it in a few more days." He nodded and got up to lead Merry and Pippin just a little away from camp and just told them to attack. It was funny watching Boromir fend off the Hobbits so easily. He really was a skilled warrior. She had really disliked him that first night they met at the party, but now she quite enjoyed his presence. He was thoughtful, passionate, and generally easygoing when not engrossed in the quest of the fellowship. He enjoyed a joke and Merry and Pippin definitely liked him.

Legolas watched everything unfold and a keen eye could see his tense shoulders and clenched jaw. After giving the bird to Sam he had retreated a little further from camp and watched their surroundings. Though he couldn't help but listen to Samantha's excited speech. He quite liked listening to her ramble on about such things, as odd as they were. He also smiled at her love of animals, remembering how she interacted with the goats in Imladris. When she spoke of her mother he could hear pain in her voice. She did well at trying to hide it and it would seem no one else had picked up on it. If they had, they said nothing. He wondered what had happened with her mother to cause such a reaction. It wasn't until Boromir went to train the two hobbits that Legolas became agitated. Samantha watched Boromir with a smile and warm eyes. He could not fathom how one day she disliked the man and the next she gave him such a look.

She certainly was an odd one.

Gandalf walked up to the elf, having seen the interactions and Legolas' reactions to them. "Something troubles you?"

Legolas turned and looked to Gandalf, "Is it unwise of me not to trust Boromir?" His eyes wandered back to Samantha who had now moved to sit next to a tree to write in her journal, though she would look up every now and then to watch Boromir and the hobbits.

Gandalf followed his line of sight and understood. "Samantha has a kind heart. Able to overlook the flaws of others to form strong bonds." He paused, "Boromir's heart is in the right place, you can trust in that."

Legolas could only say one thing, "The Ring." He remembered the council and how Boromir had nearly tried to take it.

The wizard nodded, "It is a danger we all face. But, let us worry when the time is right." If they all started wondering who was after the ring the fellowship would surely break apart.

Over the next several weeks Boromir trained the hobbits and Samantha, it became a regular daily occurrence. And, once Legolas had completed her bow, he would instruct her. He was happy to see she already knew the basics. He only needed to modify her form slightly. Legolas became more confident that over time she could become a great archer.

The rest of the Fellowship enjoyed watching Boromir toy with the hobbits. Particularly Merry and Pippin, they were rambunctious and energetic. Aragorn and Gimli would occasionally shout out where the hobbits could improve. Moving their feet, too wide a stance, whatever it may be. When it wasn't her turn Samantha would sit and write in her journal. She would just write about her thoughts and what was going on. She was mindful not to let

anything slip about being from another world, or that she '*knew*' what was going to happen. She feared someone would read it and know everything. So she kept her writings simple.

The fellowship had stopped for lunch at the base of a mountain. The forest was slowly left behind for large rocks and smaller shrubs. Samantha loved the view of the mountain, it was magnificent. She had never actually seen a mountain before in real life. Only in pictures or videos.

Samantha was thankful Boromir let her rest. Since she was being instructed in two forms of combat, Boromir let her train less. The catch though was that her lessons were more extreme. He pushed her harder than the hobbits. She wished that modern life was a little more physically demanding, maybe then she would have been more prepared for the combat training and the one thousand mile hike.

She watched Merry and Pippin take turns against Boromir before her attention was caught by Gimli. "If anyone was to ask for my opinion, which I note they're not, I'd say we were taking the long way round." Gandalf cast a weary glance at the dwarf. "Gandalf, we could pass through the Mines of Moria. My cousin Balin would give us a royal welcome."

Gandalf looked at him and gave an ominous answer, "No Gimli, I would not take the road through Moria unless I had no other choice."

"Gandalf," Samantha said, "what about the Mine's makes you so uneasy?"

Gandalf didn't have time to respond before a shout cut him off. Boromir had been cut on the hand and the two hobbits had taken the opportunity to tackle him. Samantha also noticed how Legolas stood up from his spot on a rocks edge and looked out into the distance. "Legolas?" She asked. He appeared more rigid and it made her uneasy.

Everyone had now noticed his behavior and the tone of the camp quickly changed. "What is that?" Sam asked as he followed Legolas' line of sight.

Gimli brushed it off, "Nothing, just a wisp of cloud."

Samantha could feel a chill come over her, "Something doesn't feel right about it."

"It's moving fast, against the wind." Boromir added, having now gotten the two off of him.

Finally Legolas gave an answer, "Crebain from Dunland!"

Suddenly the whole camp moved in a blur. Sam put out the fire and moved equipment under a bush as others quickly moved to help erase their presence from the land. Samantha suddenly felt Legolas pull her by the arm under a rocks ledge. His arm circled around her shoulders protectively and she held onto him, holding her breath. The anxiety of not knowing made her terrified. Silence fell over the area, and just a few seconds later a swarm of birds that looked like crows flew by. Just as quickly as they came, they left.

Slowly the fellowship came out of their hiding spots and looked around. Gandalf sprang up, "Spies of Saruman. The passage south is being watched. We must take the pass of

Caradhras." He looked up to the mountain in front of them and Samantha groaned. She wished she had put on some winter gear before falling asleep the night she arrived.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!