

“Coming of Age”¹

February 10th, 2002 – Philip Siddons

On a day not long after the knights of the Round Table flourished, there was an aging wizard and his young apprentice walking through a meadow on the edge of a village. It was Spring and the hood of the cloak of the tall wizard was thrown back, revealing his long gray hair and even longer white beard. At a glance, his beard



could have been mistaken for a sash for it flowed down his chest, and comically around his left hip, across the small of his back and its end was tucked into the front right pocket of his cloak. His face was bronze and with his bushy white eyebrows, he looked as if he had walked through many ages.

His apprentice was a young woman of twenty with long hair, black as a raven, which flowed gracefully over and down her shoulders. Her cloak matched that of the old wizard's, gray with silver and reddish lines woven through it.

“Tell me Galadriel,” said the wizard, his name was Ondag, “have you been able to achieve the disappearance spell lately?”

“No but I think I'm as close to it as I've ever been” she said looking at him with a smile and a sparkle in her eyes.

Ondag paused in the meadow and looked into Galadriel's young and beaming face. His own face was a weathered sea of wrinkles and gaiety. Looking intently into her eyes, as a gentle wind began to toss her hair, he continued: “Yes, I think you are close to having that one” and with that, he swept his arm ahead, slightly bowing, saying: “perhaps this field?”

Galadriel turned her head slightly at an angle, as if pausing in a conversation to reflect, looking at the field of heather and gorse, and exhaled evenly, quietly



repeating the spell: “*lamma ta farleo uhmdello rah.*” But immediately the meadow turned completely red and the nearby houses red as well. Everything became surreal.

The wizard chuckled and uttered: “*lamma la farleo uhmdello fah*” and the field vanished and the two appeared to be standing in thin air, near the houses of the village.

Galadriel slowly tapped her fingers into her head in self disappointment but Ondag put his arm around her shoulder and gently said in his cheerful way: “Those who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try to do nothing and succeed. Try it backwards.” So she perked up and as she swept her outstretched hand back toward her chest, she said, “*sheendo triumph*” and the field was instantly as before. They both laughed and walked on, approaching the village of thatched roofed homes and other buildings.



Nearing the first house, they saw a woman carrying a sack going into her home. From within the home came a young voice. “Mother, where is my dinner?” To which the woman responded as she began to open the door, “Why don't you get it yourself.”

Next, without going in, the woman quietly closed the door and sat down on a nearby bench against the house with her bag. She just stared vaguely in the direction of the village.

Ondag and Galadriel, as if they had the same thoughts, stopped in their tracks in hearing the words. Fortunately they both were not in the line of the woman's vision and when her tall young son came out the door, he did not notice their presence either.

The young man said, “I can't understand why you're so irritable, mother. All I asked for was my dinner.”

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Ondag turned Galadriel and himself aside when he saw her coming forth with a comment. Further away, Galadriel said, "With insensitivity like that, it would be a wonder the boy ever found happiness."

"I agree," said the old wizard, "but which one do you judge as insensitive?"

"Well of course the woman cares nothing for her son or she would not have snapped at him so. She may have had a difficult day but the fellow did deserve a better answer, . . . didn't he?" Galadriel asked in earnest.

Ondag looked over at the house with curiosity in his eyes. "Let me show you a spell I haven't tried for years" he said. Next, he held both of his hands before him, as if holding an invisible object and uttered the words. "holio metra summa quinnos."

At first Galadriel saw the young man walk backward into the house. His speech was rippling and meaningless, also backward. The woman stood up from the bench, went to the door and after an indistinguishable utterance, closed it and walked backwards away from the house with her bag as she had come.

The sun swept over their heads like a shooting star. Nights and days flashed by speedily and all scenery before them became blurring, filled with random humming and whirring.



Finally Ondag uttered, "Stop!" and the scene stopped. The houses were different. They seemed to be in another part of town. With somewhat different clothing, unknown people were walking about in the village.

Suddenly a cart loaded with hay was coming toward them but Ondag did not move, even after Galadriel tried to tug him away. The cart went right through him. They were as ghosts, invisible.

"Where are we?" asked Galadriel after collecting herself. "Is this a vision spell or a dream spell?"

Ondag responded, "Neither. This is a time change spell, taking us back into the past and we don't exist in it. At least you are not born yet and I'm living, in this time frame, in another country. I could go there if I looked over my shoulder but I will stay with you. This is thirty years ago." Pausing to point to someone approaching them, he continued, "Do you see that woman in the blue shawl?"

Almost skipping down the street was a younger version of the woman who had, only moments before the spell, just returned to her home and son. "Yes, and she seems happy" Galadriel said. "Why is she so happy now, compared to how serious she is, I mean, how she seems to be in the future?"

"You shall see" said Ondag and they followed her down the street.

The young woman entered a home and there to greet her was a handsome young man, only a few years her senior. They embraced.

"This is her husband" Ondag said. But the couple could neither hear him nor see the two wizards.

Ondag and Galadriel listened to the couples' talk. He spoke of his work at the local jousting fields. He told of the latest combat practice trials and the newest war ponies. The woman spoke of the village and would ask her husband for permission to buy this or that. And so the conversation went for some time.



"They seem happy enough" Galadriel said, looking at Ondag with a questioning look.

"Have you stopped to wonder why she has to ask permission so often?" Ondag replied. But without pausing for an answer, Ondag snapped his fingers and the scene began to change as it had before.

Just when everything, again, seemed to be in a blur and whir, he again said "stop!"



It was a different home this time. The couple had aged ten years and they were in the midst of entertaining a houseful of people. They were apparently workers and families from his jousting club. Some of those in attendance were eating, others were arm wrestling or filling beer steins – most all of them salubrious from the vintage.

In one bedroom were two sleeping children. A boy about four and a girl about six.

“Theirs?” Galadriel asked.

“Yes” Ondag replied. It was well into the evening and the woman stood at one corner of the table, picking up dirty dishes, ignored by her husband. Further down the table he was laughing at a story that wasn’t funny, told by one of his superiors from work sitting across the table.

Ondag snapped his fingers several times now, causing scenes of the woman’s life to appear with six to twelve months elapsing each time. There were glimpses of vacation travels of the family. They were seen in cathedrals, fairs, market places and the jousting arena. But Galadriel noticed a growing distance between the woman and her husband. She saw that talk came more freely between the woman and her children than with her husband.

As various scenes passed before them, the children grew older, as did their parents. Whether by chance or circumstance, the husband was more and more absent. The woman’s facial expressions were more often downcast and there were more occurrences of her being alone than with her husband.

Ondag snapped his fingers once more and waited for an indeterminable number of moments as things changed. During the change, Galadriel commented with concern, “She seems to have grown increasingly sad. Their marriage has been disappearing.”

Ondag, also moved, added, “Yes, she was a wife and mother but she lost some of herself in it all. Because while he thought she should be in charge of the house, he never seemed to understand that she should be able to be in charge of herself.”



Time stopped at Ondag’s command. They found themselves within the house they first saw earlier that day. It was modestly but pleasantly furnished, only in the middle of the main room was a pile of dusty bags and other items showing a return from a journey. Laying in the corner of the room was the young man Galadriel had first seen coming out of the door asking for dinner.

“Where’s the husband and the daughter?” Galadriel asked, looking around from room to room.

Ondag said, “The woman lives with her daughter, who is cleaning homes to earn bread. Her husband left two years ago and has not been seen since. Perhaps I skipped over too much, too quickly, but alas, the woman must struggle to earn her living.

Her son, here, has just returned from a holiday. The woman has had difficulty making ends meet but still manages on her meager earnings.”

“Where does she work?” Galadriel asked the old wizard.

“I thought I saw her working for the town healer. She washes his bottles and does his bookkeeping” Ondag summarized.

“How lonely and tired she must feel” Galadriel said but with distraction she looked out the window and said, “Look there. She is returning home with a sack on her shoulder.”

The woman was turning in from the street, obviously tired from the day’s work. But the young man, also seeing this, got up and went to the nearby window. He called out, “Mother, where is my dinner?”

“Well the nerve of him,” cried Galadriel. “He is of age” she continued. “He ought to...”

“That is where you are mistaken” interrupted Ondag, who stroked his beard as he kept his eyes on the scene.

The woman’s voice was heard at the door, “Why don’t you get it yourself” she said with the



days fatigue in her voice. And as the young man went out to voice his complaint, Ondag spoke again.

“He is not of age nor is his sister. But you can now see the scene was not as you first judged.”

Galadriel, with an unsettled look, said, “Yes, but I suppose I should have guessed that. But when, Ondag, will her children come of age? Though she is a strong woman, she most certainly could benefit from more support and understanding by her children.”

Ondag responded, “The scenes of what is to come are unknown. I have neither the power nor the desire to know the future. There was only one Wizard, around Whom time is measured, Who knew the future. But from the past, I have found time to yield patterns to one’s coming of age.

At that moment the young man was beginning to walk away down the street, while the woman again sat wearily beside her home. Tears were in her eyes.

“The pattern is seen,” Ondag continued, “when a young one looks away from self and looks eye to eye with parents from a distance.”

“You do not mean that when one grows as tall as one’s parents and leaves the home, do you?” asked Galadriel.

Ondag, for the second time that day, put his arm on Galadriel’s shoulder and said, “Only when children cease to make their own needs central, can they look away from themselves. At the point when they can look at their parents as other equal adults (with needs of their own), then is when they have come of age. It is then that they can make any place in their sojourn their home.”

As Ondag finished, Galadriel’s face became jubilant and radiant – the likes of which Ondag had not before seen in her. He again looked deep into her eyes and saw that she had grasped his words.

Galadriel and Ondag were distracted by the return of the young man to the house. He was rushing past them and awkwardly brushed by, apologizing to them without his eyes meeting their faces. He turned to the side of the house,

where his mother was still sitting and without saying a word, slowly took the sack from her hand and sat beside her. He put his arm around her and pensively looked at the ground before them.

As minutes passed, they talked. Smiles appeared on their faces and they even began to laugh. In a few moments he stood to his feet and started toward the door carrying her sack. As the door opened he said, “What do you want me to make for dinner?” And with that, Ondag and Galadriel walked on their way.



At the far end of the town, the wizards choose different paths. From having been apprentice and mentor for five years, they now parted as friends, eye to eye, from a distance. For on that day two had come of age – a young woman and a young man and in doing so, the future held magic for them and for all who would be close to them. ♣

