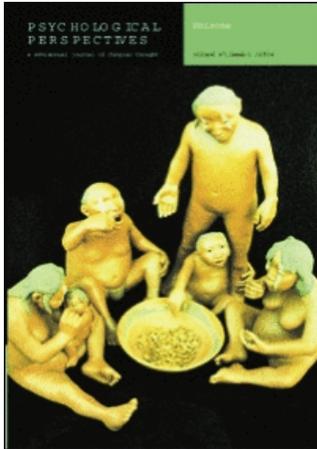


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Seven Paths of the Hero in *Lord of the Rings*: The Path of Opposites

Robin Robertson

One of the most important lessons in Jungian psychology is that we each have to contain the tension of opposites within ourselves, long past the point of comfort. Early in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien tells us of the natural antipathy that Dwarves and Elves have toward each other, an antipathy that goes back millennia. The representatives of both can hardly stand to be in the company of each other at the great Council of Elrond in Rivendell, the Council that begins the initially awkward Fellowship of the Ring. Yet, over the course of this greatest of all quests, Gimli the Dwarf and Legolas the Elf grow from uneasy allies to inseparable friends, offering all of us an example of the reconciliation of opposites that has to take place in each of our souls.

In some way, all growth involves the reconciliation between opposites. As humans, we are constantly pulled between body and mind, instinct and spirit, that which connects us to the earth, and that which connects us to the universe. We are both animal and god stuffed into one uncomfortable package. In *The Lord of the Rings*, we see that contrast drawn most clearly between two characters who each represent one side of that polarity: Gimli the Dwarf and Legolas the Elf. Gimli is short and squat and powerful, each step so solid he seems almost rooted in the earth. Legolas is tall and fair and seems to float over the earth as he moves. Earth and air, instinct and spirit. If *they* can find common ground, *we* can find that common ground inside ourselves.

FIRST MEETINGS

We first meet Legolas at the Council of Elrond in Rivendell, where the Fellowship is formed. After Gandalf tells the story of the Ring and Gollum's part in it, Legolas reveals the bad news that Gollum has escaped from the Elves. When Aragorn wonders how the Elves could have failed in such an important

responsibility, Legolas says that it wasn't that they didn't watch him closely, but that they couldn't bear to keep him forever shut up in dungeons beneath the earth (which we should note is exactly where Dwarves, in contrast, choose to live). Gimli's father Glóin, who had himself once been imprisoned by the Elves, immediately reacts with anger, saying, "You were less tender to me" (I, p. 282). Gandalf is forced to remind them that they have to set aside past differences between Dwarves and Elves in order to fight a common enemy.

COMMENTARY: We immediately see the opposition between Dwarves and Elves. Within our own personalities, we often feel an opposition between our conscious personality, the person who we think we are, and our unconscious personality, which carries shadow qualities that we reject in ourselves. Someone with a bigger perspective could see that those shadow qualities complement the traits we acknowledge, and that the union of both is what we need for a fully three-dimensional personality.

Soon after the company is formed, we see the contrast between Gimli and Legolas even in their battle gear. Gimli wears a heavy vest of steel rings and carries a large axe for a weapon. Solid and heavy. Legolas wears no armor and carries only a knife, bow, and arrows. Light and airy. Over the course of their many battles together, we see just how well both can use these characteristic weapons.

Just before the Fellowship of the Ring departs, Elrond tells the members that they are free to leave the quest at any point. When Gimli responds firmly that "faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens," we get the feeling that when Gimli says something, his word is as solid and substantial as is the Dwarf himself (I, p. 309). Gimli will never fail in his commitment, no matter what happens along the way.

CARADHRAS THE CRUEL

Two weeks out from Rivendell on their quest, the company sees the mountains in the near distance, which confuses Pippin. When Gandalf teases Pippin that he probably never looked at the maps in Elrond's house, Gimli interjects that he doesn't need any map to know the land of his forefathers. The art and music and literature of the Dwarves are filled with images of these mountains. "They stand tall in our dreams" (I, p. 312). As he continues, he eloquently names each of the mountains, and the love of his race for them shines through his words—though one mountain's name sounds less than lovely: "Caradhras the Cruel." And it is through the Redhorn Gate, a pass next to Caradhras, that they must travel.

Perhaps we might see Dwarves as the engineers of their world. Nothing airy-fairy for Dwarves: They deal with solid things such as

metal and stone, but they make something beautiful out of those solid objects. Though rooted in the earth, they also create songs and tales, and they dream!

When they arrive at Caradhras, hoping to get across before the first snow of winter, snow starts falling immediately, as if the mountain were aware of their presence and resented it. As the snow drifts mount, the way becomes increasingly difficult, until both Gimli and the Hobbits are barely able to move. When Boromir boasts that “the strongest of us must seek a way,” he and Aragorn struggle mightily, trying to force a path for the others through the snow (I, p. 321). Legolas smiles at their futile effort and says: “The strongest must seek a way, say you? But I say: let a ploughman plough, but choose an otter for swimming, and for running light over grass and leaf, or over snow—an Elf” (I, p. 321). He then runs on top of the snow as easily as if it were hard ground, and is soon lost to their sight, as he seeks for some place of refuge for the company. Frodo notices that Legolas doesn’t bother to wear boots, like the rest of the company, simply light shoes. After an hour, he returns, running as lightly as ever, to say that he was able to find a place where the snow drifts, although high, are not very deep, so that Aragorn and Boromir can force a pathway down the mountain for the others.

We begin to see more of the contrast between Dwarves and Elves. Whereas Dwarves are solid and stable, bound to the Earth, the natural element of Elves is the air. They move so lightly that they leave not a mark running over snow. Though we need solidity and stability in our daily life, there comes a time in all our lives when we become too solid, too stable, and threaten to sink beneath the weight of our hard-won identity with its mundane responsibilities. At such times, we need a light, airy part that can float above the day-to-day minutia, that can get us past our stuck place, in order to see what lies beyond. We need both Gimli and Legolas—stability and imagination.

THE MINES OF MORIA

Defeated by Caradhras, the company is now forced to go through the mines of Moria. Though the mere mention of the name brings fear to all (including

**We need both Gimli and
Legolas—stability and
imagination.**

Gandalf and Aragorn, who are the only ones who have actually passed through the mines), these caves hold no fear for Gimli. For him, Moria represents the peak of the Dwarves’ achievements,

and he is eager to find if there are still Dwarves living there in splendor. Legolas the Elf is hardly as enthusiastic, saying simply that he doesn't want to go there. But it is Frodo who is the Ringbearer and Frodo who decides that this is the path they must take.

None of us wants to go deep into the darkness that lies within us, but sometimes we arrive at a point when this is the only way to progress. We can't move any further without finding out who we really are and who we are intended to be. And that inevitably means going into the darkness inside our soul.

When they arrive at the gate, Gandalf explains that the West-door was made in a time when there was friendship between all races, even Dwarves and Elves. Gimli immediately insists that it wasn't the Dwarves that caused the friendship to end. And Legolas responds that it certainly wasn't the Elves' fault. And again Gandalf has to remind them that they need to remain friends on the journey, as they are both needed.

In the early stages of reconciling the opposites, there is often more quarreling than peace. It is difficult for either side to appreciate its opposite.

Meanwhile, Gandalf struggles to find the right magic word to open the gate. The directions seemed simple enough: "Speak, friend, and enter" (I, p. 336). But Gandalf tries every magical password he knows and the gate remains unmoved. Finally, a thought occurs to him and with a laugh he says simply "friend" in Elvish and the doors open. Truly this was in a simpler time when the races of Elves and Dwarves and men trusted one another.

Sometimes we reach a place where we can't seem to find an opening, a doorway. We exhaust all our conscious resources and, when we are tired enough to give up that struggle, we find that the answer is right before our eyes.

Once inside the caves, everyone but Gimli is unpleasantly overwhelmed, feeling as if they were suddenly reduced to ants inside a giant ant hill, an ant hill filled with endless corridors branching into enormous halls, each so high that the ceilings fade from sight. Nothing they had ever heard could match the fearful majesty of Moria. Still, Gimli's presence, along with Gandalf and Aragorn's leadership, gives courage to his companions. But even Gimli finds that the Mines of Moria are far too intricate for him to do little more than follow along with the others behind Gandalf's lead.

Only someone who has passed through the darkness within his or her own personality can really guide us. Such people are often

termed “wounded healers” because in dealing with their own inner wounds, they acquire the wisdom to heal others.

When Sam wonders how anyone could have created all these corridors and why they would want to live in such “darksome holes,” Gimli defends his ancestors, insisting that Moria was the greatest achievement of the Dwarves (I, p. 346). In its heyday it was “full of light and splendour” (I, p. 346). Then he chants an ancient song about these halls as they were in the days when Durin, the great founder of the Dwarf race, lived.

We don't have to fear the darkness within us. It is quite possible to shed light on it and see it as lovely and splendid.

But that was long ago. As they proceed further, they come to a chamber holding a large tomb, the tomb of Balin—the last Dwarf leader to return to Moria. At this discovery, Gimli hides his face so that the others won't see his distress. Gandalf finds a journal left behind by the Dwarves and reads out loud of the last days of the Dwarves, slain either by Orcs or by something worse. Toward the end of the journal the writer says, “We cannot get out. We cannot get out.” And “they are coming.”

From time immemorial, we all come to a place where we feel under siege and we cannot get out. So it was in ancient times and so it is today.

As Gandalf finishes reading, the company hears the sounds of horns and drums and running feet coming toward them. Unconsciously repeating the words of the journal, Legolas cries “They are coming!” and Gimli adds that “we cannot get out” (I, p. 353–354). Set upon by Orcs, we see for the first time that both Gimli with his axe and Legolas with his bow and arrow are truly fearsome warriors. But then something much worse than Orcs appears, a creature of some earlier, viler time: a Balrog! But the story of how Gandalf's self-sacrifice enables the company to escape from the Balrog is better left for the chapter on the Path of Wizards.

LOTHLÓRIEN AND GALADRIEL

From the dark gloom of the Mines of Moria our heroes come to the shining light of Lothlórien, the Elven kingdom ruled by Lord Celeborn and Lady Galadriel. As they enter Lothlórien, Legolas tells his companions tales of this forest kingdom, still remembered by his fellow Elves in Mirkwood. At the musical sound of a nearby waterfall, Legolas explains that it is named after the legendary Elven maiden Nimrodel. He sings her story, a tale of love found and lost, then finds himself stopping in sadness. He says that this is only part of a much longer tale, much of which he has forgotten: “It tells how sorrow

came upon Lothlórien, Lórien of the Blossom, when the Dwarves awakened evil in the Mountains” (I, p. 372). When Gimli reminds him that “the Dwarves did not make the evil,” Legolas grants him that, a small sign that perhaps their antagonism is becoming somewhat more muted (I, p. 372).

Soon afterwards, the party is captured by wood Elves, who come upon them so silently that even Legolas is taken by surprise. Legolas explains who he and his companions are and asks for a place to rest on their journey. The Elves have no trouble with anyone except Gimli—the idea of a Dwarf in Lothlórien is repellent to them. But when Legolas reminds them that Gimli was selected by Elrond himself, they reluctantly agree that he can come, too, but only if guarded by Aragorn and Legolas. They proceed deeper into the forest, but when they come to the Naith of Lórien, its inner core, the Elves insist that Gimli must be blindfolded. When Gimli bristles at this and grasps his axe, Legolas complains, “A plague on Dwarves and their stiff necks!” (I, p. 380).

Aragorn resolves the problem by insisting that, if Gimli must be blindfolded, then the whole company must be as well. Whereas Gimli finds this solution humorous and says that he’ll be satisfied if only Legolas is blindfolded. It’s Legolas’s turn to bristle; he doesn’t see the humor in having to be treated like a prisoner by his fellow Elves. But Legolas gives way and the whole company enters the Naith blindfolded.

Though this scene provides humor and shows how uneasy the relationship still is between Legolas and Gimli, there is a hidden meaning as well. In order to enter the holiest places, we must be “blindfolded”; that is, cut off from our normal sensory view of reality, so that we can open our eyes to deeper meanings that lie beneath the surface. Only by doing that can we find an inner guide like Galadriel.

When finally they are brought before Celeborn and Galadriel, Celeborn greets each of them by name, clearly already knowing who they are and why they have come. Unlike the Elves who captured the company, he is as courteous to Gimli as to the rest of his companions, and expresses the hope that his arrival, together with the Elves’ willingness to break old rules and welcome him, marks the beginning of a new friendship between Elves and Dwarves. Gimli bows graciously in response to his kind words, but it is when Galadriel looks at him and smiles that his life is forever transformed. He looks up and sees her sweet smile and hears her speaking in the ancient Dwarf tongue, which falls from her lips as if she were born to it. Instead of enmity and hatred he feels love and understanding. Something melts inside Gimli. He smiles back, bows, and looking into her eyes, says that “the Lady Galadriel is above all the jewels that lie beneath the earth” (I, p. 390).

It is hard to overstate the importance of Galadriel's impact on the company. As we will see in other articles dealing with other paths, because Galadriel is able to see into the deepest part of each person's soul, each is affected in a different way. For some—Boromir, in particular—this is a source of deep discomfort. For Gimli, it is a revelation, because Galadriel is able to see past his gruff exterior to his pure heart. It is significant that he feels loved by this apotheosis of the feminine. To this point in the story, we see only masculine values in Gimli: courage and pride, steadfastness and loyalty, but no tenderness or empathy, and certainly no love. Galadriel changes all that and makes it possible for Gimli and Legolas to find a friendship that bridges their differences.

This same process can also occur within ourselves. The opposition between the person we have come to believe ourselves to be, and the shadow within that is equally us, can only be overcome through a gentle, feminine touch. It is only the feminine that can fully reconcile inner oppositions. Often we experience this reconciliation through tears that melt away the hard places inside us and create a "solution" in which all the essential parts remain—but now ready to be recombined into someone new. The resolution is neither the person that we already think ourselves to be, nor the person inside that we reject, but someone new who is a combination of both.

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and silver brooch (a brooch that Pippin treasures yet later sacrifices, hoping—rightly—that Aragorn will find it). They are given three small grey boats to take them down the great river Silverlode (also known as Celebrant). In each boat are coils of light yet almost miraculously strong rope (which will come in handy for Sam and Frodo more than once in the times to come).

Each also receives a personal gift from Galadriel. For Aragorn, a beautiful sheath made perfectly to fit his famed sword Andúril, as well as the Elfstone

After receiving the rest and succor they need, the time comes for the company to continue on their quest. The Elves give each of them *lembas*, Elven wafers of bread that provide more energy than any human food. Each also receives a hooded cloak made of a wondrously light material that blends with their surroundings to form camouflage. Each cloak is held at the neck by a green

of the house of Elendil, to mark him as the rightful king of Gondor. There is a belt of gold for Boromir, silver belts for Merry and Pippin. Legolas receives a very practical gift: a new bow and quiver of arrows. Sam receives a very great gift: a tiny plain wooden box containing earth taken from Galadriel's own garden, which she has blessed. Only near the end of *The Lord of the Rings* do we learn the full powers of this earth. Frodo receives a crystal phial in which "is caught the light of Eärendil's star," a light that will shine when all other lights fail (I, p. 411).

But when Galadriel turns to Gimli and asks gently what gift he would have from her, he tells her none at all, for the mere sight of her and the sound of her words have been sufficient gift for him. Galadriel is clearly touched and begs him to ask something of her. Timidly Gimli asks if he might have a single strand of her golden hair "which surpasses the gold of the earth as the stars surpass the gems of the mine" (I, p. 410). Everyone but Galadriel is taken aback by this request; she merely smiles and asks what he would do with this strange gift. Gimli says that he would treasure it, and if he survives he would take it home and have it set in crystal as a sign of goodwill between Elves and Dwarves. At that, Galadriel cuts three long golden hairs and gives them to him, saying that "your hands shall flow with gold, and yet over you gold shall have no dominion" (I, p. 411).

Though none of the company will ever forget Galadriel, none will sing her praises higher than Gimli! As the company rides away, down the river, Gimli—this hard-bitten Dwarf who has never previously shown any soft emotion—openly weeps. He tells Legolas he had no idea when he began this quest that the greatest danger would be seeing such beauty, then having to leave it, probably forever. Legolas, touched, tells him that he is a brave and true companion and he will always have this memory in his heart. Gimli thanks Legolas for his kind words, but tells him that memory is different for Dwarves and Elves. Whereas Elves can live in a memory as if it were reality, for Dwarves (as for men) a memory is only a mirror reflecting reality. As they pass out of sight of Lothlórien, their joint experience of Galadriel has made them fast friends forever.

CHASING THE ORCS

In the previous article on Merry and Pippin, we witnessed Boromir's treachery, redemption, and death. With Frodo and Sam off on their lonely quest, Merry and Pippin captured by the Orcs, and Gandalf seemingly dead, all that is left of the original company are Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas. They consider the situation and decide that their best course of action is to chase the Orcs in order to try and rescue Merry and Pippin. The Orcs have quite a head-start, and Aragorn points out that Orcs move swiftly and don't tire. When Gimli answers proudly that "Dwarves too can go swiftly, and they do not tire sooner

than Orcs,” Aragorn replies that “we shall all need the endurance of Dwarves” (II, p. 22).

Once on their way, we find that Legolas has skills that surpass both Gimli and Aragorn. At one point he spots an eagle high in the sky, far beyond even Aragorn’s keen eyes. Time and again throughout the rest of the tale, Legolas’s incredible Elf vision is demonstrated. And, despite Gimli’s proud claim, Legolas proves to have an inhuman endurance that exceeds that of both Dwarves and men. After running from dusk of the first day, through the night, then on through the day to the next dusk, with only brief rests on their way, Aragorn calls a halt, both because Gimli is exhausted and for fear of losing the trail at night. Legolas, seemingly tireless, would go on, but agrees that the others need rest. Gimli and Aragorn drop to the ground and fall asleep almost instantly.

When Aragorn wakes before dawn, he sees Legolas standing, looking off in the distance. The two wake Gimli, then again run all the next day, bolstered only by the Elven *lembas* that they eat on the run for energy. As before, they are forced to stop at darkness from the weariness of Man and Dwarf. Again when they wake in the morning, Legolas is already up, if he has ever slept at all.

As they run for still another day, both Gimli and Aragorn are weighed down both from the effort of the chase and from their fear that they are too late to save their friends. Only Legolas remains unchanged, still running so lightly that no mark of his passing is left on the earth. As he runs, his consciousness is split between his outer surroundings and his inner world. That timeless dreamlike world of the Elves sustains him as sleep refreshes his comrades. That night, Aragorn and Gimli sleep restlessly. Whenever they wake briefly in the night, they see Legolas either standing nearby or walking back and forth, singing softly to himself.

We saw earlier that the company had to be blindfolded in order to enter the holiest core of the Elven realm. We can only see the inner world with “inner eyes.” But eventually we have to come out once more into the mundane world and view the world with our normal senses. The rules for the two worlds are as different as are Legolas and Gimli. The ultimate goal is to be so comfortable in both inner and outer worlds that we learn, like Legolas, how to live in both worlds at the same time. As Joseph Campbell says: “Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and back—not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master” (p. 229).

THE RIDERS OF ROHAN AND THE REAPPEARANCE OF GANDALF

We again see proof of Legolas's remarkable vision when Aragorn spots riders approaching on the horizon.

Legolas notes their exact number, the yellow color of their hair, the brightness of their spears, and the fact that their leader is tall. When Aragorn smiles and remarks "Keen are the eyes of the Elves," Legolas demurs and says that they're only five leagues away (about 3 miles!).

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Éomer, the leader of the riders of Rohan, asks them to identify themselves and explain their purpose. When Aragorn mentions that they have come most recently from Lothlórien, Éomer makes a disparaging remark about the feared "Lady in the Golden Wood." Gimli will have none of that and tells him that "you speak evil of that which is far beyond the reach of your thought, and only little wit can excuse you" (II, p. 35). When Éomer prepares to fight, Legolas immediately draws his bow, telling Éomer that he would die before he could touch Gimli. Clearly Legolas and Gimli are now friends to the death. While everyone pauses in shock to see an Elf defending a Dwarf, Aragorn mends the situation with soothing words.

After things calm down and Aragorn explains more of their mission to save their friends, Éomer is stunned to hear that they have run 45 leagues (about 135 miles) in less than 4 days, and he tells Aragorn that his name should be Wingfoot, not Strider. Éomer then describes his men's battle with Orcs, but says that they saw no such creatures as the Hobbits described by Aragorn. The reader knows that this is because Merry and Pippin have managed to escape and are already on their way to meeting Treebeard.

Now that peace is restored, Éomer agrees to give them horses, but one of his followers argues against loaning one to a Dwarf. Gimli, as usual, bristles at this and insists he would rather walk. But this time, rather than cursing the stiff back of Dwarves, Legolas solves the problem by suggesting that Gimli ride behind him, so he won't have to borrow a horse. From this point on, the two are inseparable, joined in friendship much like Merry and Pippin, with both the implicit trust and the friendly teasing that goes with such a relationship. But in this case, it is a joining of opposites, not similarities.

Later that night, after leaving the company and, for a change, riding instead of running, a strange old man appears mysteriously, then disappears

again just as mysteriously. In the process, their horses run away. When Gimli complains at the loss of their horses, Legolas teases him that only a few hours before he didn't even want to sit on a horse. The three try to sort out who or what the old man was, and why the horses ran away, without reaching any firm conclusions.

The next day, they continue on, once more on foot, until they come to the site of the battle between the Orcs and the riders of Rohan. As they move outward from the battle site, looking for traces of Merry and Pippin, Aragorn finds both pieces of cut cord and a mallorn-leaf from Lothlórien with crumbs of *lembas* on it. When Gimli spots the Orc knife that cut the cord, Aragorn interprets the evidence to mean that one of the Hobbits was carried to this spot by an Orc, who was later killed by the riders and his body dragged away. The Hobbit managed to use the Orc's discarded knife to cut his bonds, then sat and ate the Elven waybread. Aragorn also realizes why the Orcs were content to take Merry and Pippin after Boromir was killed, rather than continuing the hunt for Frodo: They must have thought that one of the two Hobbits was the Ringbearer wanted by Sauron.

The mood of the trio lightens immeasurably, now that they know that at least one of the young Hobbits is still alive. Continuing their search for signs, they discover light footprints of Hobbits, whether one or two is impossible to judge, leading into the dread forest of Fangorn. As they enter the forest, Gimli immediately senses evil. To Legolas, more sensitive to the moods of trees, the feeling is not evil but watchful and angry, an anger caused by suffering. He tells the other two that the forest is so old that "almost I feel young again, as I have not felt since I journeyed with you children" (II, p. 95). He says he could have been happy in Fangorn if he had come there in a different time.

By this point, after seeing Legolas's more than human (or Dwarf) abilities and endurance on their unbelievable run, we begin to fully appreciate that Elves are a race apart from the others: immortal beings who neither tire nor die. Legolas's quiet reference to Aragorn and Gimli as "children" emphasizes just how ancient Elves are, and how tiny are the life spans of even long-lived Dwarves or Dúnedain like Aragorn, in comparison with that of Elves. Though living by choice in Middle Earth for thousands of years, the Elves clearly regard this time as but a sojourn. We need to recognize that there is such an indestructible, immortal part in each of us. The difficulty in life is to find an accommodation between that transpersonal element and our all too mortal self. But if two so opposite as Gimli and Legolas can form an indissoluble bond, it is possible for all.

Soon afterwards, they once again see the mysterious old man, who reveals himself to be Gandalf. The horses were called away by his steed, the great Shadowfax. The story of how Gandalf survived the Balrog and was transformed from Gandalf the Grey into Gandalf the White

will be told in the next article: The Path of Wizards. After everyone shares their adventures, Gandalf takes his friends with him to Rohan, where he persuades King Théoden to rise from his doldrums and help defeat the forces of Sauron. Again that story must be deferred.

The difficulty in life is to find an accommodation between that transpersonal element and our all too mortal self.

THEIR “COMPETITION” IN BATTLE

We return to our tale of Legolas and Gimli at the point when King Théoden is ready to lead his men in defense against the forces of Isengard. Gimli impatiently tells Legolas, “Well, at last we set off! Men need many words before deeds” (II, p. 129). At the gate of the city, when Éomer approaches, Gimli is somewhat ill-at-ease after their quarrel over Galadriel at their previous meeting. But he is mollified when Éomer asks him to put aside their quarrel and promises to speak no ill of Galadriel. Gimli somewhat teasingly says he will, but if Éomer ever sees Galadriel, he must then acknowledge her the fairest of all ladies, or suffer Gimli’s wrath. With the quarrel fully mended, Éomer graciously offers Gimli a ride on his horse. Gimli gladly accepts, provided only that Legolas rides next to them. Remember, the two are now inseparable. Legolas then takes his place to Éomer’s left, Aragorn to his right as they ride off.

The company rides five hours until darkness falls, then rises at dawn to ride again. Théoden and all finally come upon one of the soldiers, who had been left behind to defend against the forces of Sauron. At first, he is overcome at the sight of Théoden restored to vigor and leading his men, but then tells them that the enemy now include not only Orcs but also the wild hillmen of the area. The defenders have been overrun; those who remain alive have retreated to Helm’s Gate, a fortress at the mouth of the caves of Helm’s Deep, where most of the old and the young and the women of the area have fled.

By that night, Théoden’s men have joined the forces at Helm’s Gate. On the parapet of Helm’s Gate, Gimli is finally in his element, with firm stone beneath him, whereas Legolas feels ill at ease. The contrast with their relative reactions to Fangorn is marked. But Legolas adds that at least he feels better having Gimli there beside him.

The enemy doesn’t wait for dawn, attacking soon after midnight. Once the battle has begun, we see just what magnificent warriors both Legolas and

Gimli are. They even begin a friendly, though grisly, competition to see who can kill the most Orcs. This competition will go back and forth throughout the battle. Initially Gimli kills two Orcs with his ax, but his triumph is short-lived when he discovers that Legolas has already killed 20 with his bow and arrows. After more fighting, Gimli announces proudly that he's up to 21, but now finds that Legolas has been involved in hand-to-hand fighting with his knife and his total is now up to two dozen.

The two friends are separated during the course of the battle, and Legolas is worried when he finds out from Aragorn that Gimli is nowhere to be found. In the typically low-key manner in which all the heroes in this story deal with worry, however, he tells Aragorn that he wanted to tell Gimli that his count was up to 39. When, at the end of the battle, Gimli emerges from the caves beneath Helm's Deep with a head-band stained with blood, the first thing he tells Legolas is that his score is up to 42. Legolas tells him that 42 beats his total by one, but that he is so happy to see him, that he doesn't mind being beaten. This is the way warriors profess their love for each other. The two friends are never again apart.

THE BARGAIN

When Gandalf is ready to ride on to Isengard with Aragorn and Legolas, Gimli refuses to stay behind, discounting his wound as a mere "Orc-scratch." Legolas and Gimli ride together on one horse, once more inseparable companions. Passing through Fangorn, even Legolas is uneasy with the level of anger he feels in the forest. They are not yet aware that the Ents have gone on their great march to Isengard, raising the emotions of the trees as they passed.

As they ride, Gimli eloquently tells Legolas of the beauties of Helm's Deep. They make a bargain that when all is over, Gimli will visit Fangorn with Legolas, and Legolas will see Helm's Deep. In other words, so deep is their friendship now, each is willing to go into the place that makes him feel the most uncomfortable, simply because his friend values it. And in fact, once in Isengard, Legolas persuades Treebeard to let Gimli visit Fangorn with him later—even though Dwarves and their axes are not normally welcome there.

THROUGH THE PATHS OF THE DEAD TO MINIS TIRITH

After their reunion with Merry and Pippin at Isengard, Legolas and Gimli's next challenge is to accompany Aragorn and his men, the Rangers, through the Paths of the Dead. It is both the shortest route toward the East where they must meet the forces of Sauron, and also the path Aragorn must take in order to fulfill his destiny. We will learn more about this part of the quest in the article on the Path of the King. As they all enter the Haunted Mountain through the Gate of the Dead, even Gimli, a Dwarf who normally loves caves,

is frightened. “The company halted, and there was not a heart among them that did not quail, unless it were the heart of Legolas of the Elves, for whom the ghosts of Men have no terror” (III, p. 57). When their horse refuses to enter the cave, Legolas covers the horse’s eyes, sings some words in his ear, and then leads him in. Gimli stands in terror, angry at himself, then says: “Here is a thing unheard of! An Elf will go underground and a Dwarf will not!” (III, p. 58). Then he forces himself to enter at the rear of the company, where he can see the ghosts of ancient warriors rising from their graves to follow them. As they move onwards, his fear grows stronger, because he alone knows that they can’t turn back, not with the dead behind.

Of course, those who have no fear, like Legolas, can also never learn to master fear. It is in passing through the Paths of the Dead that we truly see just how brave Gimli is. The inner world, which is beyond life and death, is indeed frightening for the living. But we must all face death inside ourselves and come out the other side.

But they do make it through the Paths of the Dead and engage in one last battle together, the Battle of Pellenor Fields outside Minis Tirith. There is no description in the book of their roles in this battle. Perhaps any such description would be anticlimactic after their competition at Helm’s Gate. But the morning after the battle, when Legolas and Gimli enter Minis Tirith, the people of the city are amazed to see such a pair walking together: Legolas, who like all Elves has more than human beauty and grace, and Gimli, short and squat, who only another Dwarf (or Galadriel!) could see as beautiful.

Gimli’s characteristic reaction to Minis Tirith is that the masonry isn’t bad, but it could be improved by Dwarves. Legolas’s equally characteristic rejoinder is that they need more greenery to make their hearts happy. Both decide to make suggestions to Aragorn for improvements when he becomes king. In fact, before they leave, Aragorn vows that if they finally triumph, he will ask Gimli to lead the Dwarves in rebuilding the great gate outside Minis Tirith, which was destroyed in the battle—which he later does. And Aragorn will plant a new tree in the court of the kingdom, and the kingdom will become even greener and lovelier. But now, Legolas and Gimli continue to talk as friends do in the brief quiet times between battles, debating back and forth whether “the deeds of Men will outlast us, Gimli,” as Legolas says, or whether ultimately men will “come to naught in the end but might-have-beens,” as Gimli argues (III, p. 150). When Legolas sees sea gulls in the distance, he feels the “sea-longing” inside him, the desire to go back to the Havens, the Elven home over the sea. Gimli doesn’t want to lose his friend and tries to persuade him that there is still much to see in Middle-Earth and it would be

a poorer place without Elves.

Again we see that there is a need for both: for good, solid stone work and for lovely growing gardens. There is a need to return to the place of the spirit over the sea, and a need to stay in the mortal world as long as possible.

THE HAVENS

After Sauron's defeat and Aragorn's coronation and then marriage to Arwen Evenstar, Éomer and Gimli have a final debate over Galadriel's merits. When Éomer tells Gimli that now that he has seen Galadriel, he can still not say that she is the fairest of all, Gimli, goes for his axe, though now largely in jest. After Éomer pleads that the only reason he does not choose Galadriel is because he has seen Queen Arwen Evenstar, Gimli excuses him, saying "You have chosen the Evening, but my love is given to the Morning. And my heart forebodes that soon it will pass away forever" (III, p. 257). For he knows that with the passing of Sauron also comes the time when the Elves will soon return to their home over the sea.

And, in fact, Galadriel and the other Elves do soon pass over the sea—save only Arwen, who has chosen to live as a mortal with her husband Aragorn, and Legolas, who still needs to spend time in Middle-Earth with his new friend. And Legolas does remain for a good time, by human reckoning. They travel together and visit both the caves of Helm's Deep and the forest Fangorn. But when, in the course of time, the long-lived Aragorn finally dies, Legolas knows that it is time to return to his home beyond the sea.

But something unprecedented takes place—Legolas takes Gimli with him to the Undying lands! Never before has a Dwarf desired this journey, nor have the Elven lords ever before permitted it. "But it may be said that Gimli went also out of desire to see again the beauty of Galadriel; and it may be that she, mighty among the Elder, obtained this grace for him. More cannot be said of this matter" (III, p. 367).

Certainly I'll say nothing more.

Robin Robertson has written several books on Jungian psychology and is a frequent contributor to Psychological Perspectives.

FURTHER READING

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