

To Lady Éowyn of Ithilien, greetings!

Your husband is still alive, although his condition has improved only little. He has not regained consciousness yet, and has been suffering from high fever for the past three days. Twice we thought he had died, because his heartbeat was almost indiscernable and he had stopped to breathe. But he seems determined to see it through. If he survives the fever, his chances are good, the healer says. By the end of the week we will know.

Yesterday, finally, a healer from Umbar arrived. Despite treating him with the antidote, nothing we did would improve your husband's condition. But now things look brighter for him. The healer's name is Zinizigûr. She is famed for her skills in Umbar and the Great Desert. I do not know why she agreed to travel here, though. Not for my master, because they greatly dislike each other. I can only surmise he offered her ample recompense for her troubles, or else your husband has another friend in the south. She even had him banished from your husband's room, after a fierce discussion which included her threatening to poison Marek. It astounded me that he suffered this. Had anybody else, including me, uttered anything half as sharp, we would be dead by now. But this old woman (for she must be at least 80 years of age) treated him like a naughty boy who had stolen fruit from an orchard, and he dared not resist.

I was not able to write earlier. I have been under close supervision from my master lately. Apparently he does not trust me anymore. In fact, at the moment he does not trust anybody. Because his initial plan has gone awry, he is deeply unsettled, and the fact that Zinizigûr is completely in charge of the prisoner's welfare now does not improve his mood.

You may wonder what made him change his mind about your husband's death. I know he wanted to kill him. He would have succeeded, had he not received a message from Gondor that very evening. I delivered it, not knowing what it said. I assume your husband told you I was sent to Gondor to hunt for the rat Carandil. Near Pelagir I was intercepted by men who I suspect to be in the service of your king, or indeed some of his mysterious kinsmen. At first I thought they wanted to arrest or simply slay me, but then they handed me a message for my master, and sent me on my way. I was told to return to Barad Gwaelin immediately to deliver the letter. Which I did, and apparently arrived just in time. I have not read it yet, because Marek keeps it locked away. But I watched my master as he did so. It dealt him a shock, so much is certain. His face lost all colour, then he rushed to your husband's room. His relief at finding him alive was obvious. Since then he has been highly nervous, as if expecting an attack every moment.

For now this is all I can tell you. I do not know in what terms your husband has described me, but from what I have learned of him so far, he is an honourable man, and not easily swayed by prejudice. So I hope he gave you a fair description. I told him once I have no love for the Gondorians, and I still hold to that. Nevertheless it angers me that he has been treated so miserably here. Whatever troubles he caused my uncle in the past, he did not deserve what he received in return.

Azrahil