

Faramir,

*I hope you are well and safe. Please forgive the long silence from home. Lordel sent Aiglos, the buzzard, on some errands of his own, which took a few days, then insisted that the bird rest before it was sent out again. During these past days I have wondered how you have been faring, and I hope this letter finds you well.*

*Your children are fine. Elboron misses visiting the toads since Túrin's been gone, but he has a new best friend now, which I will tell you about in a moment. The twins don't care who's here and who's not as long as I nurse them every few hours and keep them happy. They're three weeks old now, and they're beginning to recognize their big brother when he comes bouncing into the nursery. Elboron is getting used to the fact that these two are here to stay.*

*And now for Elboron's new best friend. He is tall, strawheaded, fierce on the battlefield but gentle with the children, and just happens to be the king of Rohan. Yes, Éomer is here, quite unexpectedly too. He arrived early yesterday afternoon, saying he had a double-purpose in this journey: to meet his new nephews and to seek more information about his brother-in-law's disappearance. I doubt Elboron remembers him from his last visit, but the lad seemed to like him immediately. Part of that may be because Éomer let him sit on his horse while he and I greeted one another in the courtyard. His family is well, except for some illness over the winter. Lothíriel is furious (or so he says) that he is making this trip when she cannot come along. (Apparently Elfwine is still recovering from a bad cold right now.)*

*He was obviously concerned about you, but he said he first wanted to deal with happy tidings and to show him to his nephews. He was delighted to see that their looks are from our side of the family. After making sure they were indeed strong, healthy lads, he reached for the bag he had carried in with him. "Since Lothíriel could not come," he said wryly, "she has made an errand boy out of me." Reaching into the bag, he pulled out two Horseys for the boys. Meriadoc's is made of soft white cloth with a light gray mane and tail. It looks much like Stybba did, though I am not sure you ever saw that pony. Peregrin's is light brown with a dark mane and tail.*

*"They don't have names yet, so you will have to name them well," Éomer told the boys. Almost as soon as he finished say this, Elboron appeared, saw the two new horseys, ran over, and tried to steal Meriadoc's. When I scolded him, he had a temper tantrum. It didn't help that he still misses his Horsey terrible and that it was time for his afternoon nap. After he had settled and gone to sleep, I told Éomer about what had happened, and he added a few more descriptive phrases to Al-Jahmîr's long list of names.*

*And now for more serious matters. Túrin returned this morning, joking that the stables seem to be more crowded than when he left, but his weariness showed under his joviality. The tidings from the city are not entirely comforting. So far Al-Jahmîr has not made any contact with the King regarding you, and the Council is divided over the situation. Túrin didn't give any names, but there are some who say you have had this coming for a long time because of your dealings in the South and*

*your stubbornness to listen to others' counsel. Others are saying you are as good as lost, since it is not Gondor's policy to bargain with outlaws and insurgents. Still others question if you are even alive. He said it was difficult at times to keep quiet, considering what information he knows. He went on to say that cooler heads are saying that, "This is more than an attack on Faramir, this is an attack on Gondor. If we allow these brigands to kidnap the Steward, and we do nothing about it, who's to say that they will not strike again, and one by one take down every one of us until Gondor's political structure is in shambles?"*

*When he left, he said the cooler heads were beginning to prevail. His father has resumed his seat in Council now that spring has revived his spirits, which is very good to hear. Túrin also mentioned that another topic that is slowly being whispered about the Council, but has not yet reached the agenda, and most likely won't until further news about your situation is known, is what to do should there be a vacancy in the Stewardship.*

*I must set this aside for a while, since there are two hungry little boys wanting to be fed.*

*There now, they're two fat and happy babies again. Meriadoc went to sleep almost before I could finish burping him, but Peregrin stayed awake for a long time. He seemed to be content just watching me. I told him stories about you, about how you like to cheat at archery, about the time you tried catching the squirrel Berúthiel set free in our bedroom, until he went to sleep. Speaking of Berúthiel, she has been acting very strange lately. I thought she had disappeared entirely, but Mariel looked at me oddly and said that the cat's almost become a nuisance. Apparently she's forsaken her usual haunts, like the kitchen or stables, and is showing up in the oddest places, like the servants' quarters or the guardhouse, and will wander around for hours. Mariel says that the cat's even followed her around, or so it seems. Maybe the spring weather has caused her to prowl around like this.*

*You asked how Khorazîr is reacting to these events. He says he pities you in several ways. He loathes the idea that Al-Jahmîr is holding your family above your head like he is. He says that only cowards use women and children as weapons. And though you don't have the pleasure of staying in one of Al-Jahmîr's luxurious cells, he says from the description of your room, you do have the disadvantage of the poisoning. He agrees with me that it's possible your host thinks you're dangerous enough that common chains and bonds aren't the best way to hold you. He says the poison sounds like a truly awful torture, and wishes you luck in finding the antidote. However, he says, leaving you free to roam may come to be Al-Jahmîr's undoing, especially when you do find the antidote. Another advantage is that he doesn't seem to be working from his usual, entirely familiar territory. If you are indeed on Tolfalas, then there is the chance that Al-Jahmîr does not have all possible problems worked out in advance. He also said he knows the name Azrahil, and it would be better for the poison to kill you than him. That's all I got out of him before he started muttering darkly in his native tongue.*

*Teherin has been working unceasingly to find out what the cursed poison is. Your descriptions have been a great help in ruling out what the stuff isn't, but she says she isn't any closer to identifying what it is. She wants to go to Minas Tirith for a few days and peruse the library and the Houses of Healing for any tips there. There have been times when she's thought she's been close to identifying the poison, but then one or two elements won't match your description or the effects*

*will be different.*

*Lordel is as mysterious as ever. I think he's taken a lesson from Berúthiel and is turning up in odd places at odd times. One night I even found him reading in the window seat in the nursery! I was so startled; he was lucky he didn't end up with a dagger in his chest. He reads a lot, but he doesn't often talk about whatever it is he's studying. He truly is an enigma.*

*I will end this now ere it gets too long, for Túrin wants to add a sheet as well with a more detailed telling of the events in the city. I am also tired and could use some rest before supper. Right now Éomer and Elboron are out racing horses and the twins are asleep, so it is quiet here for once. I miss you terribly and want you to come home soon. Our bed is too big and lonely without you. I miss you.*

*Love always, Éowyn*