

Dearest Faramir,

It is a relief to know that you are well, and may even have someone looking out for you there at Barad Gwaelin. Your words do bring some comfort, but they cannot completely ease me while I know you are so far away and in such a dangerous position. Yet I will try to take your advice and rest and enjoy the wonderful things around me, like our children. You are right: they are a great solace to me. Elboron is looking like you more and more every day. In fact, he needs a haircut soon or else he will not be able to see at all. He acts like you too, when he's out playing in the garden. He will find a pretty flower or stone and will not settle until he is sure I have seen it too. But, even as dear to me as he is, he isn't you, and that's a gap in my heart that only you can fill.

This morning I convinced Teherin to let me out of bed (on the condition that I behave myself) and walked down to the walnut grove. With the rain we have had recently followed by sunshine, the trees have almost fully leafed out. I did not have any of the boys with me because this was one of the rare times when all three were asleep at once. It was nice not to have to keep an eye on an ever-curious toddler. I watched a pair of finches tease each other, and it looks like that family of squirrels is again nesting in the hollow tree. I could not find the old owl, though. Hopefully he has just moved to a different grove, one where we will not disturb him with archery practice. (Which I do not cheat at!)

While I was there, Khorazîr met me. A message from Aravôr had arrived, much to my surprise. The tale of our plight is known throughout the South-lands, and Aravôr fervently hopes that we come out the better for it. He says that there are some people keenly studying Gondor's reaction. He echoes thoughts I have had many times by saying that this is setting precedent. Were it not for Aiglos, I am sure I would be feeling much of the same concern and anxiety he expresses. There is a rumor going around, he says, that Al-Jahmîr pitted you against that Corsair with the extravagant name in a swordfight and that you came out worse for it. I shall use some vague terms to tell him I seriously doubt this is true.

Khorazîr tells me his son's anxiety is not solely based on your capture but also on the fact that it is less than two months until he becomes a father. He says that he has never seen Aravôr so nervous before. Apparently his son asked for some advice, but upon saying this, he looked away and grew quiet. "Who am I to give advice about being a proper father?" he said softly after a long moment. I did not know how to answer him. What could I tell him? He knows well enough his past faults. Were it not for the rustle of birds leaving their perches, I do not know how long the uncomfortable silence would have lasted. At this, he stirred and changed the topic. He had spoken with the messenger and apparently the rider had received more harassment than usual on his journey through the fief. I am not entirely surprised by this, though I had not expected it with someone who has been here many times before (Jairizîr.) I will be sure to send word to the proper posts to make sure that this does not continue.

Then Khorazîr chided me for wandering this far. "It is not safe for you to be alone like this," he said.

"It is not any more safe in the house when a spy is around," I replied, somewhat annoyed that he was scolding me as though I were a wayward girl.

"Indeed, it is not," he said, "but despite what your husband thinks about Al-Jahmîr's strategy, it was foolish of him to irritate the Umbarian the way he did. I would not be surprised if the first strike comes here, and soon. It has already been several days since he received your letter."

He clearly understood from my look that I did not want to discuss that then. The spy still has our regular guard to get past, and while the Rohirrim are there it is even more difficult. The fact that the twins look like their northern kin has completely won them over. There is almost always one of Éomer's guard around when the twins are with someone other than myself. I heard some of them talking the other day about how they were doing a better job at guarding us than even the White Company does. I did not want to remind them that they have not had a chance to prove themselves (and I hope they will not have to.)

Khorazîr's words have unsettled me, though, especially now that I have thought about them. You may be safer there at Barad Gwaelin than we are here at Dol Arandur. Al-Jahmîr will not sacrifice you until he is sure that he has run out of possibilities. He won't reach that point until something has happened to what's weighing the other end of the scales: the children and me. But you are right; he is risking the wrath of the Rohirrim if he tries to hurt us. What they would do to the spy would only be a taste of what awaited the snake. As for finding the spy, the trail has gone cold. Beruthiel continues to prowl, but apparently she has found nothing else. Or at least Lordel has not told us anything else.

I must end this for now. It is almost time for supper and I can hear the twins waking up from their naps. They will probably want their supper before they let me have mine. You need to teach them some manners before they get older and become entirely unmanageable! Do not worry too much about me. I have kept my word to Teherin and not done anything over-exerting. I must admit that I am feeling better than I was a few days ago. But I will not be completely happy until you are home with us again. I hope that day comes soon. Until then, be wise and safe, my love.

*Love always,
Eowyn*