

Nárië 11th

Dearest Éowyn,

I was quite surprised to see Aiglos again so soon. Thank you for the paper. It makes things easier. This time I am using squashed berries for writing. They taste awful, but they make good ink.

Since my last letter there have been ups and downs. The weather has declined; it has turned cold and very windy, with brief showers. My health has declined as well. I can hardly speak because I have caught a severe cold. I fear my temperature is higher than it ought to be, too. In fact I am amazed I can still keep on my legs. Last night was horrible. Al-Jahmír's men were too close for comfort again (they have a hound now), and for a long time I had to hide between some tumbled rocks while they searched for me. It was raining, and I had no real shelter, and when finally they withdrew to get food and rest, I was wet to the skin and barely able to move on. I managed another league or so, walking ever northward, before I collapsed under a large pine-tree on the eaves of a patch of dark woodland.

I woke from the barking of a dog, and my first thought was that they had found me. But the dog standing next to me was of a different kind, much smaller and less ferocious. And its owner looked rather friendly, too. My first impression of him made me think of old Mithrandir, for he appears somewhat like the wizard with his white beard and sweeping grey cloak and ashen staff. Then I heard the bleating of sheep and goats nearby, and understood I had been found by a shepherd.

Which was my luck. Without his help, I would be far worse off now, and would not be having a roof over my head tonight, nor warm clothes, nor decent food. His name is Emru (I think). Right now we are at his ... house (for lack of a better description – but after my recent abodes it seems like a palace to me). He is sitting opposite me, watching me now and again from under his bushy eyebrows in the sheen of the small rushlight while tending one of his dogs that received an arrow-wound yesterday.

He is a curious fellow. He speaks little, and when he does I hardly understand him because he talks with a strange local dialect I have never heard before. It seems a mixture of Westron and Adúnaic, interspersed with words of an ancient language which appears to have been in use here ere the Númenóreans first landed on Tolfalas. But I learned from him that a day's walk from here there is a village of farmers and fishermen. There is brothers live who may be able to help me get a passage over to Gondor. Also he complained about the soldiers who slew two of his sheep and carried them off, and who shot his dog when it tried to stop them. I think 'tis safe to assume he is referring to Al-Jahmír's men. Apparently they encountered him and his flock and questioned him about me, and when he told them he had not seen me they fetched themselves some supper from among his beasts. He has not inquired about my identity and seems content with the knowledge that I am an enemy of the "dog-maimers". In fact, he appears grimly pleased about being able to avenge the loss of his sheep by aiding me with food, clothes, shelter and medicine. Concerning the latter, I have a suspicion he uses the same stuff to cure his animals, but at least it eased the pain in my throat, and stopped the nosebleed (I have been suffering from those frequently of late, and fear they have been inflicted by the poison).

I hope it will be granted to me to spend the night here. I sorely need the rest and the warmth of the small fire. And the food (bread, cheese and tea, and some strawberries from the forest). But I expect Al-Jahmír's men to show up any moment, and I do not want to get Emru into any more trouble. I told him his life (and that of his beloved animals) is in peril as long as I stay with him, but he insists I do, and shows little fear of the men. Fortunately the weather is so rough that I doubt my pursuers are eager to roam the wild looking for me, despite them showing a disturbing degree of perserverance and skill at tracking me. I do not know what Al-Jahmír has promised or how he has threatened them, for definitely they are highly motivated.

The Umbarian himself I have not seen ever since my escape. Most likely he stays upon the ship, ready to flee the moment danger draws nigh. Hopefully Elessar and Imrahil are going to catch him, although even if he man-

ages to escape, what remained of his reputation is utterly devastated now, and he knows it. And for a proud, ambitious man like him this may be the worst punishment he could possibly receive. I can still see his expression when I rushed past him and leaped overboard ...

Well, and this about all I can report. Emru has just asked me how I ended up being hunted by the dog-maimers, and the account is going to take a while, I reckon. So I shall close now. Tomorrow or the day after, depending on the weather, my condition and the question if we are going to have visitors or not, I will try and reach this village. Tell Túrin and Azrahil to look well after my gameset, for I shall get angry should upon my return I find pieces missing. And I am not sure what to think of you spending so much time with the young Umbarian. 'Tis high time I come home!

*Love always,
Faramir*