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### Tangled Webs Chapter 1

by [lindahoyland](https://archiveofourown.org/users/lindahoyland)

**Notes**

**Title:** A Woman's Touch

**Author:** Linda Hoyland

**Characters/Pairing:** Aragorn, Halbarad OMC

**Rating:** G

**Warnings:** none

**Book/Source:** LOTR book-verse

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**Dedicated to Nath with grateful thanks for the idea**

**Thanks to Raksha for editorial assistance.**
The three Rangers sat round the fire scowling over their task.

"I miss my mother," said Halbarad.

"So do I," said Aragorn.

"I mean to get married soon," said the youngest.

"As chieftain I will be happy to perform the ceremony," said Aragorn. "I did not know you had a sweetheart, though. You are very young yet to wed, Gilavir."

"Who is the fortunate maiden?" asked Halbarad.

"I've no idea," said the lad, frowning as he dropped a stitch. "She can be young or old, fair or homely. All that matters to me is that she can knit socks!"
Arwen regarded the cloak her small son was wearing with dismay. The garment was finely woven, but well worn. "Why is Eldarion wearing this old cloak?" she asked his nanny.

"The King desired that he should wear it," the woman replied.

Later that day Arwen said to Aragorn. "Our son has fairer cloaks by far. It surprises me that you
chose such a shabby one for him to wear."

"I spent many a happy childhood hour playing out of doors in that cloak," said Aragorn. "I recall my mother weaving it for me."

Tears pricked Arwen's eyes. She said no more.
Wrought with love Embroider

May the stars light his path!

Arwen carefully selected more gems to adorn her work.
May Elbereth protect him!

She skilfully stitched the emblems of Elendil.

May the Valar keep him from harm!

Her love would carry this banner into his greatest battle soon, and with every stitch she embroidered was a prayer for his victory and a blessing to protect him. For long years Arwen had waited and wrought this banner. If hopes and prayers and dreams were warriors, Aragorn would surely have an army vaster than grains of sand upon the shore. By love's power he would triumph.
At first they had beheld her in bewilderment. "Why do you need to spin?" they asked "Are there not materials enough in Imladris to clothe you and Estel?"

Gilraen nodded sadly. These kindly Elves would never understand that only by concentrating on the spindle in her hand could she quiet the endless fears that would otherwise torment her every waking hour. Fears that her child could never be safe,

Sometimes Gilraen feared she would go mad. Instead, she spun, creating a web of inner security. Her thread would never be Elven fine, but by spinning it, Gilraen could smile serenely.
Arwen grimaced at the worn green cloak. "Why do you keep this?" she asked.
Aragorn took it from her, a faraway look in his eyes. "Every stitch is full of memories," he replied, "My mother patched it here. Behold her neat stitches! See the rent there, mended in coarse thread? Halbarad stitched both cloth and flesh after an encounter with an Orc blade. The neat darn near the hem; a tear mended by a kindly woman in Bree. Now I am required to dress in velvet and silk, this old cloak reminds me of the man the King once was.
Eldarion felt dreadfully thirsty. His mother had insisted that he visit the dyer's house with her, but it was hot and he was bored. There was nothing to see bar rolls of cloth and vats of dye. Suddenly he espied a beaker of delicious looking red juice. "May I have a drink?" he asked.

"Yes," Arwen said absently.

Eldarion drank from the beaker. "It's poison!" he cried, his mouth dripping scarlet. "Help, naneth, I'm dying!"

"You shall not die," said Arwen. "I hope, though you have learned a lesson in caution."
That "juice" was a dye made from squashed beetles!

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