Before it was Broken

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Summary

Arwen has a difficult letter to write

Notes

Title: Before it was Broken
Rating: G
Theme: Letters
Elements: Thank you letter
Beta: Raksha and Virtuella. With grateful thanks.

Arwen could delay the dreaded task no longer. Eldarion was asleep, watched over by his nurse, Estel was at a meeting of the Council, she had no engagements that morning, and for once, no one was desiring an audience with the Queen of Gondor and Arnor.

Sighing, Arwen sat down at her desk and dipped the quill in the ink. She had told Estel of her dilemma over breakfast that morning, but her husband had simply laughed. "It cannot be that bad," he had said. "A simple note of thanks will suffice."
"But the Peredhil do not lie!" Arwen had protested. "It is truly hideous! Yet, I would not hurt the feelings of two kind and well meaning friends."

"You excel at diplomatic skills," Estel had assured her. Then with a kiss on her cheek and another on Eldarion's dark curls, he was gone, leaving Arwen with the object of her nightmares.

The Queen studied the vase again. 'Hideous' was only one way to describe it. 'Garish' would be an equally apt description. About a foot tall, the vase was decorated with a clashing array of purple irises and yellow tulips, far too lavishly embellished with thick bands of gold leaf, under the rim and at the base, which overshadowed the flowers and made it glitter so brightly that it would hurt sensitive eyes to look upon it for long. Estel had told her that gold was highly prized in Southron lands, which meant that the ugly vase was a gift betokening great respect. This only added to Arwen's dilemma. She must thank Lord Tahir and Lady Adiva properly, but how could she without lying?

Her eyes wandered across the room to where a beautiful vase of silver, inlaid with pearl, stood holding a few sprigs of evergreens. The cherished heirloom, which had belonged to her grandmother, was exactly what a vase should look like, elegant and understated, so that the eye was drawn to the greenery or flowers and not the container they stood in.

But then, the Elves had dwelled for centuries in temperate climes where abundant flowers and foliage flourished, unlike the Ambassador from Harad and his lady.

Arwen took a deep breath and began to write

My dear Lord Tahir and Lady Adiva,

It was kind of you to think of us this Mettarë

That much at least was true; the Haradrim had no similar festival, their desert clime having little variation in seasons or length of days.

How thoughtful that you should remember how much I love flowers.

Another sincere sentiment, Lady Adiva had noticed that the Queen's sitting room was never without a vase of whatever flowers were in season. She was not to know that of all flowers Arwen liked irises and tulips the least, considering them stiff and formal. Tulips originated in Harad and were much prized there as a rarity that flourished only in the cooler highland regions. Irises, too grew in the region, and as for the hue, Arwen made no secret that purple was a favourite shade of hers. Who was to know that she much preferred the humble violet to the haughty iris?

I will think of you both whenever I behold your kind gift.

Arwen paused. Much as she would like to, she could hardly consign the vase to the back of a cupboard, or donate it to be sold for the poor. Tahir and Adiva were fairly regular visitors. But the thought of using such a monstrosity to display flowers when she had such beautiful vases made her cringe!

"Naneth!" A miniature whirlwind burst through the slightly open door as Eldarion toddled towards his mother.

"My apologies, my lady, I could not catch him!" the breathless nursemaid gasped as she vainly pursued her charge.

"He can stay with me for a while. He is almost due to be fed." Arwen dismissed the girl with a
smile. She handed her son one of the quills off her desk to play with. His chubby little legs exhausted, Eldarion started to crawl around the floor, brandishing the quill in a manner reminiscent of the way his father held Andúril.

Arwen returned to contemplating her letter, but something, maybe a mother's instinct, caused her to look up after a few moments. Eldarion had crawled towards the table where the precious pearl inlaid silver vase stood and was about to pull off the cloth.

"No, Eldarion!" Arwen cried sternly, leaping to her feet. Reaching a decision, she called for her maid.

An hour later, and after a full and sleepy Eldarion had been returned to the nursery, Arwen returned to writing her letter. On the table a vase full of greenery still stood, but instead of her cherished heirloom, it was the gift of the Harad Ambassador and his wife. Better that she should endure this monstrosity for a time in order to still enjoy something of nature that meant so much to her kind, rather than have Eldarion shatter the heirloom that had been cherished in her family for centuries.

She picked up the quill and concluded.

*The vase will most useful for my sitting room, as I love to always have flowers about me. It was just what I needed this winter.*

*I hope you will both visit us very soon and look forward to seeing you and hearing all the latest news about your children. Maybe your youngest would like to play with Eldarion?*

Arwen smiled as she signed and sealed the letter. Maybe as a mother of five, Adiva knew that treasured processions had to be locked out of the way of lively young children and had considered something that she had not?

'Perhaps the vase was not such a hideous gift after all?' Arwen mused. And was not an even greater gift that former enemies could now be good friends? She gave the letter to a servant to deliver, inwardly congratulating herself that every word was true!