A Night of Storms Chapter 1

by lindahoyland

Notes

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Chapter 1

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With grateful thanks to Deandra.

Warning - This story mentions sexual matters, though not in an explicit manner.

The rain fell in sheets, so heavy that even the two mighty warhorses flinched when it stung their flesh. Lightning streaked across the sky while thunder boomed overhead. The two cloaked and hooded riders could hardly see where they were going in such conditions. Suddenly, the lights of an inn loomed out of the darkness.

One of the men reined his horse to a halt. "I think we had better seek shelter here for the night," he told his companion. "Much as I had hoped we would be at home with our wives and children ere sundown, this weather is against us."

The other nodded his agreement. The two had spent several enjoyable days in the wild, reliving their time as Rangers, catching their own food, telling tales by the campfire and sleeping side by side under the stars. Now they were eager for the joys of hearth and home, but after several fine, clear days, a fierce storm had suddenly broken overhead.

The older man dismounted and opened the door and called out to the innkeeper. "Do you have a room for the two of us this night? The inclement weather has forced us to break our journey."

"Indeed I do, masters, come within," said the man, giving them a conspiratorial look. He looked to be in his middle years and was well dressed for the keeper of a small tavern. "What names shall I call you by?"

"I am Beren, and this is my son, Dior," replied the traveller.

"Your every wish is my command, Masters Beren and Dior!" The man gave them a knowing wink as if travellers with such unlikely names frequented his premises on a regular basis. "I trust you can afford to pay?"

"We have sufficient coin," said the one who called himself Beren.

"I will see the horses are cared for," said 'Dior', unwilling to entrust the faithful beasts to a stranger to rub down and feed.

'Beren' took their packs from the horses and followed the innkeeper inside. The surroundings were far from inviting. Several men sat round a table in front of a small fire staring into their mugs of ale. They were surprisingly well dressed for patrons of a country inn. They wore their hoods concealing their faces and spoke neither to the stranger nor to each other. 'Beren' thought longingly of some of the better taverns he had visited during his travels also under assumed names. It seemed he was destined rarely be able to use his own without causing a commotion he preferred to avoid. The atmosphere at this inn was far from convivial, but on a night like this, any shelter
would have to suffice. They would avoid their unfriendly fellow patrons by asking that a meal to be sent to their room and leave this place at first light.

The former Ranger was shown to a room with an unexpectedly large bed for a small inn. Two robes were spread across the bed. The rest of the furniture comprised a table and two worn looking chairs. A low fire burned in the grate. "Will you have hot water sent up for us to wash in?" he requested.

"Certainly, master," said the man. "Is that all?"

"Yes, for now." As soon as the man had gone, 'Beren' rummaged in their packs and drew out a mercifully dry change of underwear for each of them together with their towels.

He laid the fresh clothing across the bed, hoping fervently the blankets were not infested with fleas. He nodded his thanks to the subdued looking girl who brought the water, noting idly she appeared to originate from Rohan. As soon as she had gone, he secured the door. Thankfully, he peeled off his sodden garments, laying them by the fire to dry, splashed warm water over his goose pimpled flesh, and towelled himself dry. He donned his dry shirt and drawers, then after a moment's hesitation, drew the robe around himself. It looked far from clean, but it was better than spending the evening wrapped in a blanket. He was just tying the sash around his waist when 'Dior' returned.

"There was no one to help care for the horses," said the younger man, his teeth chattering as he spoke. He walked over to the meagre fire and chafed his hands in front of it. "I have rubbed them down well and given them some hay. I do not like this place. It has a strange feel to it."

"We will keep our swords to hand and leave at first light," said 'Beren'. "Now change out of those wet clothes! You look frozen and soaked to the skin!"

"I am," said 'Dior', peeling off his sodden cloak, closely followed by his tunic and shirt. He shivered as his hands fumbled to unfasten his belt.

'Beran' brushed his hand across the other's shoulder. "You are freezing, ion nín!" he exclaimed. "I will go and see if they will prepare some hot drinks and soup for us, and send up more wood for the fire." He snatched a blanket from the bed and put it by the fire to warm. "Wrap this around you once you have changed into dry clothing."

"Thank you," said 'Dior'. "A plague upon this weather! I hoped to be beside my lady tonight, and be able to tell my little one a bedtime story ere we retired."

"We will be with our beloved ladies and children tomorrow," said the older man. "I will return soon." He belted his sword around his waist before leaving the room.

'Dior' swiftly shed the remainder of his garments and vigorously dried his damp body and sodden hair. The water was already almost cold, so he simply washed his hands and face before donning his clean underwear and the remaining robe. He was still cold, so he settled himself on a chair by the fire, the blanket draped around his shoulders. It was not long before he began to feel drowsy, and he hoped his companion would hurry with the hot soup so they could eat and climb into bed.

A knock on the door roused him. He was surprised when a timid female voice begged admission.

Unfastening the door, 'Dior' was surprised to find a pretty girl, whose dark skin and hair proclaimed her to be a native of Harad or Rhûn.

"I have come to see what master requires," she said in heavily accented Westron.
"I am rather cold," said 'Dior'. "Maybe more fuel for the fire?"

"I can make master warm," said the girl. Her tone was seductive, but her eyes held an expression of abject misery.

"I do not know what you mean!" he replied.

"I know many ways to please, master," said the girl. To the man's horror, she slid her gown from her shoulders and started to unfasten the sash that secured his robe. "There is no need for shyness, master," she said, obviously puzzled that the object of her attentions was wearing his linens beneath the garment. "I teach you new delights of love!"

TBC

A/N This story was originally written in response to a birthday prompt for my friend Raksha who wanted a story about angry Faramir. I then revised it for the Teitho "Disguises" challenge.
Justice, and only justice

Chapter Notes

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Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue.- The Bible: Deuteronomy 16:20

With grateful thanks to Deandra.

Warning - this chapter contains non-explicit references to matters of a sexual nature.

"Stop that at once!" 'Dior' said sharply, averting his eyes from her shapely curves and securing the sash tightly around his waist again. "I have a beloved wife I am true to. You should be ashamed of yourself!"

"Master downstairs says I must please you," said the girl. "You share pleasures with me that nice wife no like! If girl with dark skin no please you, my friends, Frieda and Hilde, they pretty and fair. You choose one of us, your friend the other." She gestured towards the bed. "You see, bed plenty big enough!"

Appalled, 'Dior' grabbed her arms and yanked her gown back in place. "What do you take us for?" he demanded. "We do not demean ourselves by consorting with women of low morals, neither would we betray our wives!"

To his surprise, the girl burst into tears. 'Dior' sensed the tears were genuine and blessed his ability to read human hearts. "I no slut!" the girl protested. "I come here when I promised good job as maid, but innkeeper say I must please gentleman customers."

"Why do you not go home?" 'Dior' asked, gesturing for the girl to sit down.

"Innkeeper says he will tell soldiers we girls Harad spies if we try to leave," said the girl. "He tell Frieda and Hilde bad things happen to them, too!"

'Dior' had heard enough. It was time to cast aside his disguise. Utterly outraged that any Man of Gondor should so abuse women under his protection, he snatched up his sword, which lay propped in a corner of the room. "Stay there!" he told the girl.

Hastening downstairs, he espied the innkeeper talking to a man in the corner of the room. Drawing his sword, he confronted him. "I arrest you in the name of the King!" he said sternly, his grey eyes alight with fury.

"Are you mad? Whatever for?" the innkeeper blustered, though he looked afraid. The men sitting at the table fled out into the stormy night, trying to cover their faces as they ran.

"For corrupting and enslaving young women, and running a bawdy house!" said his captor.
The innkeeper laughed nervously. "I'm simply giving men what they want," he said. "They come here from miles around! As for the girls, they are nothing but whores!"

'Dior' gazed at him for a moment, cold fury in his eyes. "These girls were innocents, seeking honest employment. You made them into what they have become!" He slapped him across the face. The innkeeper yelped in pain, and then looked away, unable to endure his gaze.

"Whatever is happening?" 'Beren' emerged from the back room.

"This fool hit me! He claims he can arrest me in the name of the King!" said the innkeeper, regaining his composure.

"And what makes you think he cannot?" 'Beren's' tone was chilling. "He is the Steward of Gondor, while I am the King!" He drew himself to his full height, revealing a hitherto concealed majesty, despite his less than regal attire. With one swift motion he unsheathed Andúril. "Behold the sword of the King!" he cried.

Terrified and white faced, the innkeeper fell to his knees at the sight of the legendary Flame of the West. "Mercy, my lords, mercy!" he cried.

"That is for the court to decide," said Aragorn. "We will take you with us when we depart on the morrow and you shall be brought to trial." King and Steward swiftly bound the man and locked him in the cellar.

"The Valar must have led us here tonight," said Faramir, spooning some rather tasteless soup in his mouth a little while later. They had searched the establishment and locked the servants in the cellar with their master, and sent the girls to their rooms, reassuring them that they were safe now.

"I have never seen you so angry before, ion nín," Aragorn remarked, grimacing over his own watery soup.

"A Man should protect women, not enslave them and put them to shame!" said Faramir vehemently.

"I shall punish the innkeeper, or should I say slave trader, with the full weight of the law," promised Aragorn grimly.

"What kept you so long downstairs?" Faramir enquired.

"It seemed that, as this establishment is not what we assumed it to be, they were taken aback when I asked for soup and hot drinks!" said the King. "It took all my powers of persuasion to get the fair haired girl to make some. I should have suspected something was very wrong. I simply assumed she was lazy, poor girl. After the trial, I will see the girls are either given sufficient money to travel home or found honest employment in Minas Tirith. Dame Ioreth can examine them to see if what they suffered has left them with any injuries. Alas, the mental scars may never heal"

"I am not an angry man, but some matters are worthy of fury," said Faramir.

Aragorn nodded his agreement. The two friends stared thoughtfully into the fire. "It shames me to find such an establishment in my kingdom!" Aragorn said bitterly. "I have several times closed down taverns where the wenches were willing to offer more than refreshment in exchange for sufficient coin, but this place is infinitely worst! I shall send men throughout the land to inspect remote country establishments to ensure no other young women are abused in my kingdom, and make it known should any of my soldiers frequent such places, they will be dismissed immediately."
"How could we have been so blind as to not notice what this place was?" Faramir mused, finishing the last of his soup. "I know we are neither of us familiar with such establishments, but surely...?"

"We were drenched, exhausted and our heads filled with thoughts of hearth and home," said Aragorn. "We will know better in future." He yawned. "Come, let us rest. We shall leave at dawn and deliver this so called innkeeper to prison where he belongs. I will send guards to collect his accomplices and escort the girls to the Houses of Healing."

"Then we shall see our beloved ladies," said Faramir, checking the door was secured before rather reluctantly getting into the bed. "Whatever will they say about where we have spent the night?"

"That we cannot be trusted not to get into trouble when their backs are turned!" Aragorn said wryly, joining Faramir, and leaning back against the lumpy pillow.

His anger purged like the elements of their fury; Faramir soon fell into a contented, dreamless sleep huddled for warmth beside the man he regarded as both father and king.

The moon rose overhead illuminating the sleepers' noble features through a crack in the shutters. All was silent save for Aragorn's snoring.

The End

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