The Light Bearer

by lindahoyland

Summary

The Lord of Pinnath Gelin asks a favour of Aragorn.

The Light Bearer – Linda Hoyland

These characters all belong to the estate of J.R.R. Tolkien. This story was written for pleasure and not for financial gain.

Summary- The Lord of Pinnath Gelin asks a favour of Aragorn.

With thanks to Virtuella.

"The local militia is at full strength and we can call on the local farmers if need be. All our young men are required to learn how to use sword and bow," Thingol, lord of Pinnath Gelin droned on, repeating himself for at least the third time that afternoon.

Aragorn and Faramir maintained expressions of polite interest. King and Steward were in Pinnath Gelin to inspect the troops, and were seated on a platform beside Thingol while his green clad men performed endless drills, led by musicians who were playing at a deafening volume.

"Everything seems in good order," said Aragorn. "Maybe we could partake of refreshments now?" He was satisfied that all was well at Pinnath Gelin and was eager to set off first thing in the morning to return to Minas Tirith and his beloved wife and children.

"There is a favour I would ask of you, my lord," said Thingol and proceeded to outline in great detail what he desired.

"A naming ceremony?" Aragorn had to shout to make himself heard above the cacophony of the drums.

"They are popular in these parts and the parents would be greatly honored if you would perform
the ritual," said Thingol.

"I would be happy too," said Aragorn. He stood up and applauded the men before he and his Steward could be subjected to another three hours of drills. His ears were ringing and his head was starting to ache.

"I have not heard of a naming ceremony," said Faramir as the two left the field proceeded by their host.

"They are apparently a local custom here," said Aragorn. "When a child is born, it is considered good luck if the local lord enters the house bearing a candle at sunset. We have something similar in the North, but there the parents invite their friends and kin to their home and light a candle and evoke Lady Elbereth to bless their child."

"A charming custom," said Faramir. "Maybe we should observe it in the City and in Ithilien?"

"Why not come with me tonight?" Aragorn suggested. "You could see what you make of it."

"I should like to," Faramir replied.

Shortly before sunset, Aragorn and Faramir, discreetly followed by their guards, found themselves making their way along a row of dilapidated cottages. Aragorn had with him a fine beeswax candle and his tinderbox.

"I am surprised that Thingol should know folk in such lowly surroundings," said Faramir.

"Well, this is Sailor's Row where he told us the infant was," said Aragorn. "I enjoy meeting folk from all walks of life." He did not say so in front of the guards, but he was secretly delighted that he was not visiting some fawning minor noble as he had expected.

One of the guards laughed.

"What amuses you so, lieutenant?" asked Faramir.

"That a street should be called Sailor's Row so far inland."

"Many folk in these parts claim descent from the folk that sailed with Elendil," said Faramir. "They are proud of their lineage and it lives on in place names."

"Lord Thingol said the baby was born in this street," said Aragorn. "He did not tell me which house, though. It should not be too difficult to find the infant as there are not many cottages."

"I will ask that woman," said Faramir, espying an elderly lady with a basket at the far end of the row. He strode towards the old woman and asked, "Pardon me, mistress, but could you tell me if a baby has been born here?"

"That would be my great granddaughter," the old woman replied with a beaming smile. "I am on my way to see them now and take some provisions to my granddaughter. The birth was a difficult one and she needs building up, so the midwife says."

"I have been invited to perform the naming ceremony," said Aragorn, who had joined the Steward.

"One of the village elders usually does it," said the old lady. "You'll do just as well, I assume. You look respectable enough, though your clothes are rather gaudy!" She disapprovingly eyed the embroidered and jewelled emblem of the White Tree that adorned Aragorn's tunic.
Faramir opened his mouth to tell the old dame whom she was talking too, but was silenced by a look from Aragorn. The King always desired to put humble folk at their ease in his presence.

"The hour of sunset approaches," said Aragorn. "May we accompany you to your granddaughter's house?"

"I suppose so," said the old lady. She knocked on the door of one of the cottages. It was opened by an anxious looking young man with only one arm.

Aragorn and Faramir exchanged knowing looks. Obviously, the new father was a former soldier who had been wounded in battle. With Lord Thingol's devotion to all things military, it would explain his interest in the family. The King took out his tinderbox and prepared to light the candle.

"What is the child to be named?" he asked.

The young man looked at him questioningly.

"He's come to perform the naming ceremony," said the old lady.

"Oh, I see," said the young man, running his fingers through his tousled dark hair. "You had better come in then. My wife wants the bairn called Arwen after the Queen. I will tell her that you are here."

Aragorn smiled at the man, pleased at the compliment to his lady. He followed him inside, Faramir at his side. They studied their surroundings by the light of the candle Aragorn was holding. If anything, the cottage was even more wretched inside than the exterior. It was clean and tidy, but cold and sparsely furnished. Buckets were dotted around the room, obviously to catch water from the leaking roof. From the inner room, a baby's hungry cry could be heard, followed by a woman's frustrated groan and low voices talking, but not low enough to prevent Aragorn's exceptionally sharp ears from overhearing the conversation.

"The poor mite is so hungry and I don't have enough milk!"

"Isn't there a local woman who would act as wet nurse while you recover?"

"Where would I find enough coin to pay her, grandmother? It took all our savings to give the midwife her fee. We do not even have enough to pay the rent to Lord Thingol."

"I've brought you some chicken broth, Idril, my dear. That should help you regain your strength."

The King coughed loudly to remind the cottage dwellers of his presence.

"Oh, the naming ceremony!" said the young man. "Come in, sir, I fear my wife is not well enough to rise to receive you."

Aragorn entered the inner chamber. On a bed covered by a moth-eaten blanket and a much darned shawl, lay a young woman. She may, perhaps, have once been pretty, but her skin was deathly pale and her dark hair lay limply around her shoulders. In her arms, she clutched a wailing bundle. A single log burned in the hearth in front of which stood a wooden crate lined with another moth-eaten blanket.

The young woman smiled wanly at her visitor. Her husband took the child from her arms.

Aragorn held up the candle so that it illuminated the infant's face. He then handed the light to the mother and took the child in his arms. He intoned solemnly. "I name thee, Arwen. May Elbereth's blessing be upon you and her stars forever light your path!" The baby ceased wailing as he gently
rocked her in his arms. She was a pretty little thing with a shock of dark hair and large for a newborn. He gently handed her back to her mother and placed the candle on the table. The infant resumed her hungry wailing.

Aragorn reached inside his tunic and took out a handful of gold coins. "It is the custom where I was born that whoever performs the naming ceremony brings a gift for the child," he said. "It brings good fortune to the giver."

"I cannot take your coin," the young man said stiffly.

The young woman started to weep. "Our baby is starving!" she sobbed.

"Are you a man or a donkey, Minalcar?" the grandmother snapped. "I shall take it if you won't! This coin will mean life for the child and my granddaughter too most likely. I'll not have them perish to save your pride!" She almost snatched the coins from Aragorn's hand. "Thank you, sir!" she said, her eyes glistening. "This will pay for a wet nurse and good food and warm blankets for my Idril."

"I'll go for the nurse," said Minalcar. He swallowed hard. "Thank you, sir." He hurried off.

"It has been hard for him since his accident," said the old woman as soon as the door had closed behind him. "Idril supports them both by taking in washing, but her pregnancy was a difficult one."

"Accident?" Aragorn was puzzled. "I thought Minalcar was wounded in battle."

"Would that he had been! Lord Thingol gives a pension to wounded soldiers," said the old woman. "No, Minalcar's arm was badly injured when he was scything hay with his fellows and the healer had to amputate it."

"I am sorry," said Aragorn.

"He's a good husband, but he finds it hard to not be able to provide for me," said Idril, as she rubbed her eyes. "At seeding time he finds work, but they will only hire able bodied men for the harvest."

"I will take my leave," said Aragorn. He fumbled in his pouch of healing supplies that he always carried and took out a packet of herbs. "I am a healer well versed in herb lore," he told Idril. "These herbs should help you recover and produce milk for your babe. Make a tea with them thrice daily. You need to rest and drink plenty as well as partaking of nourishing broths and fruits."

"Thank you, sir," said Idril. "You are most kind."

"Farewell," said Aragorn. "It is my pleasure to help you."

"I will show you out," said the grandmother.

Faramir was waiting by the threshold. He took out a good number of gold coins from his own purse and said to the old woman. "Please take this to buy comforts for your granddaughter and her babe."

"Thank you, sir," said the old lady. "I will."

"Will the mother and child live?" Faramir asked as they made their way back to Lord Thingol's castle.
"I believe so now they should have sufficient to provide for their needs." Aragorn's expression was grim. "The Valar be praised that we were sent there so we could aid folk in such need!" He exchanged a look with Faramir, not wishing to say more in front of the guards. Several years ago, the King, supported by his Queen, Prince Imrahil and his Steward, had issued a decree ordering that the poor receive assistance. He had also decreed that landlords properly maintain their properties for the tenants. It seemed that Thingol was ignoring the law. It was strange indeed, though, that he had sent the King and Steward to a place where they could discover his negligence. If he had not asked Aragorn to perform the naming ceremony, he would have been none the wiser.

The King had intended to speak to the Lord of Pinnath Gelin immediately, but when they returned a servant informed them that the banquet in their honour was about to begin. Aragorn and Faramir had to make haste to wash and change into their best garments as not to insult their host.

Lord Thingol's hall was illuminated with hundreds of beeswax candles and decorated with exquisite tapestries and garlands of flowers. The tables were piled high with sumptuous food. Aragorn wondered if Thingol gave the leftover food to the poor after the feast, as was the custom in Minas Tirith. Somehow he doubted it. It seemed that Thingol had little time for anything save himself and his soldiers. Even his wife and children seemed somewhat neglected. Yet there were worse lords by far he had dealt with during his reign; wicked men who had conspired against their king.

Most of the guests appeared to be enjoying themselves with the exception of one man who sat a few places down the table. He was finely dressed in green velvet, embroidered with silver, and wore a fine gold chain, but his expression was glum and he merely picked at the delicacies on his plate.

"What ails that man?" Aragorn asked Thingol whom he was sitting beside.

"He was most disappointed that you could not perform the naming ceremony," said Thingol, looking reproachfully at the King.

"What?" Aragorn could hardly believe his ears.

"The King performed the ceremony just as you asked him too," Faramir said coldly. "Lord Elessar is a man of his word."

"I named the little girl at sunset just as you asked me to," said Aragorn. "Do you doubt your King?" His eyes glittered angrily in the candlelight.

Thingol gestured towards the melancholy man in green velvet. "Turumbar is the father of a son, not a girl!"

"Lord Faramir and I went to Sailor's Row as you requested and named a little girl," said Aragorn.


"Gondor would have neither King, soldier, nor merchant were there no farmers to grow food their food for them!" said Aragorn.

"It seems there has been a misunderstanding," said Thingol.

Several hours and many explanations later, Aragorn and Faramir were finally able to retire for the
night.

"No doubt they laughing their heads off now in the Banqueting hall!" Aragorn said glumly once they were alone in the spacious chamber allocated to them.

"They ought not to," said Faramir. "Most people become hard of hearing in old age."

"I am in my prime!" Aragorn snapped. "And I am not deaf!"

"I was but jesting," said Faramir. "The band was playing loud enough to rouse up the dead!"

"We are paying dearly for the mistake," said Aragorn. "I had little choice but to promise to name the merchant's child tomorrow, which means we will not be reunited with our ladies and our little ones for another day."

"Maybe as we have to tarry here a while longer we could go tomorrow to see how Idril and baby Arwen are faring?" Faramir suggested.

"A good idea." Aragorn yawned. "What did you think Thingol said while the band was playing?"

"I thought I heard him say Tailor's Row."

"Why did you not say so?"

"Because I trusted your exceptionally sharp hearing! I thought I was mistaken as the music was so loud."

Aragorn glared at the younger man for a moment then a smile lit up his face. "It gladdens my heart you did remain silent," he said. "Otherwise we would have known nothing of the plight of the poor in these parts. I have failed these people for too long. Tomorrow I shall have a serious talk with Thingol."

000

It promised to be a glorious sunset as Aragorn and Faramir made their way to Tailors' Row. The day had turned out far better than either man had dared to hope. Thingol had appeared genuinely taken aback to learn that people in his fiefdom were living in such poverty in properties that were falling apart. Aragorn had reminded him of the law and the penalties for failing to observe it-heavy fines and the loss of his seat on the Council. He had immediately promised to repair his properties and make food, firewood and blankets available to any in want.

Aragorn accepted his apologies. He did not consider the Lord of Pinnath Gelin to be a cruel or malicious man, but rather an ignorant and short sighted one who knew nothing of poverty and believed only former soldiers might be in need of help. Thingol had always been loyal and supported Aragorn in Council, so the King was willing to give him the chance to implement his decrees, while inwardly determining to pay another visit to the fiefdom soon and send officials to make regular inspections.

That afternoon, King and Steward had returned to Sailor's Row and found workmen had already begun to repair the cottages.

Minalcar greeted them with a warm smile when they knocked on his door and invited them inside. Idril was now covered by warm blankets and a pretty blue shawl. A cheerful fire burned in the hearth in front of which stood a simple but sturdy cradle.

Baby Arwen was gurgling contentedly while her great grandmother changed her napkin. The old
lady told them that the wet nurse was visiting several times a day and had just left.

Aragorn and Faramir gave the family more coins then took their leave, satisfied that Idril and her babe appeared to be thriving and would be provided for until they could support themselves again.

Tailors' Row was in a very different neighbourhood from Sailor's Row. The houses were large and imposing and built of limestone quarried from the White Mountains. Turumbar's Steward was waiting on the steps of one of the houses to greet them. Aragorn felt slightly irritated; these folk had everything and doubtless wanted him to name their child to raise their social status even further.

The Steward greeted them warmly. "Master Turumbar is so happy that you will name his son," he said. "He hopes that the King's blessing might help the little one thrive."

"I am sure the child is already well blessed," said Aragorn as they were led into a hallway decorated with fine tapestries.

"My master and his lady have already lost six little ones either at birth or shortly afterwards," the man said gravely, his smile fading.

Aragorn was taken aback. It seemed that Turumbar was not as fortunate as he appeared to be. He thought of Eldarion and how he had loved him from the moment he had been born. To lose him would be like having part of his heart torn away. The pain of losing one child, let alone six, was indescribable. He replied gravely, "The little one will have all the blessings within my power to bestow."

"I hope this child will long be a joy to his parents," Faramir said. His grey eyes were full of compassion.

Aragorn found he was holding his breath as he followed Turumbar's Steward into the chamber where the child was. All was in darkness save for the single candle he carried. Turumbar and his lady were seated on a couch together with the infant, who in his father's arms. They rose to their feet on beholding the King.

"Greetings," said Aragorn. "I have come as I promised. What is the child to be named?"

"We would be honoured if you would choose the name, my lord," said Turumbar. His wife nodded agreement.

Aragorn thought for a moment. Death had taken six of this couple's children. He would name him for the one man whom Mandos had released from his halls.

He gave the candle to Turumbar's lady then took the child in his arms and said "I name thee, Beren. May Elbereth's blessing be upon you and her stars forever light your path!"

Unlike baby Arwen, this child was small and delicate looking. Innocent blue eyes flickered open and regarded the stranger holding him, but he did not cry. For a few moments, Aragorn studied the baby intently. He placed his right hand upon the child's brow and inwardly prayed. "If the power be within me to give strength to this child let it be so!" He felt strength pouring from his hands into the child who gave a loud cry and then gurgled happily.

Aragorn suddenly felt utterly drained. He swiftly handed the baby back to his parents and sat down on a nearby chair.

Turumbar signalled to his servants and suddenly the room was filled with light as they swiftly lit dozens of candles.
"Are you well?" Faramir whispered anxiously to Aragorn.

"I am." The King smiled reassuringly at friend. "All is very well."

Turumbar called for cakes and wine to be brought for his guests. "Thank you, my lord," he said. "He is a fine boy, is he not?"

"He is and he will thrive," said Aragorn with sudden foresight.

"I have a son!" said Turumbar. "How can I ever convey my thankfulness?"

"Why not help some of the less fortunate children in this town?" Aragorn suggested.

Turumbar beamed. "I will pay for the care and education of six penniless orphans," he said. "They will enjoy some of what I plan to give to Beren."

"A child is like a candle illuminating everything it touches," said Turumbar's wife.

"Indeed, mistress," said Aragorn. "So should we all strive to be."

A/n. This was written for the "Teitho Candles Challenge" where it was placed first. It was inspired by a true life incident which I learned of shortly before writing it.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!