

Borodred

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Borodred

by [what_katy_did_1234](#)

Summary

Boromir is annoyed when his younger brother wakes him to tell him of a prophetic dream, but is quickly convinced of its importance. When he and his brother go to tell their father, the usual conflict arises: why can't his brother and his father get along? Meanwhile, Faramir is adamant that he should go to Imladris, and Denethor wishes Faramir did not remind him so much of his late wife.

When it is decided that Boromir must go, he's excited: he'll have to stop over in Rohan, and he gets to see Théodred, one of his favourite lovers. But all is not well in Rohan, and Boromir wonders when he will next be able to tarry there. It's time to continue the quest to find Imladris...

(Seriously I wrote this solely to annoy a homophobic acquaintance. No. I am not kidding. I told him about it but I don't think he has read it.)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Lord of the Rings](#) by JRR Tolkien

The Prophetic Dream

Boromir was wakened in the early hours of the morning by insistent knocking at his door. He was confused; he had not made any arrangements with anyone. He thought that it must be a mistake, and put his pillow over his head, but the person (whoever he was) was persistent. Eventually, with a groan, he rose and opened the door.

He was surprised to see his brother there, looking pale and anxious. Of course, it was not unusual for his younger brother to look pale and anxious, but he did not usually bother his older brother in the small hours of the morning. He had much more sense than that.

“Hullo Boromir,” said his brother, peering down at him. “I am sorry for awakening you so early.”

“Hullo.” Boromir yawned in his brother’s face. “Sorry, Fara, I am only half awake.”

His brother peeked in the door. “Are you alone?”

“Aye, presently I am, little brother.” Boromir paused. “‘Tis not like you too visit at this hour?”

“I had the dream again. The one I had before the assault on Osgiliath.”

Boromir could see that there was nothing for it but to invite Faramir in. His brother was not going to go unless Boromir spoke to him. He was utterly incapable of letting go of an issue once he had decided it was important. Boromir was surprised more people did not appreciate his younger brother’s qualities. He suspected his brother’s quiet and polite manner fooled many.

“Come in, talk to me. You are obviously concerned?”

“Aye, I am. There is such a sense of urgency in the dream. I feel compelled to follow the instructions.”

“The dream said you had travel, did it not? To some place of which I had never heard.”

His brother’s visage was stern. “*Imladris*, Boromir.” He paused. “The dream said that the Blade that was Broken can be found there. That can only be Narsil, the sword borne by Elendil, no?”

Boromir had concluded that his brother was at least several times more intelligent than he was many moons ago. He was not jealous. As far as he could see, it was a curse for Faramir rather than a boon.

He yawned. “Where is Imladris again? I cannot remember.”

“I do not know. This is why I must speak to Father about it.”

Boromir let his brother in and bade him sit in one of the chairs in his room. "Sit brother."

Faramir looked at the unmade bed. "'Tis only you tonight?"

"Aye, only me." Boromir was quick enough to see an expression of relief flit across his younger brother's face.

As soon as he sat, Faramir said, "Boromir, how can we convince Father that it is necessary to act upon my dream?"

Boromir was not sure that he liked the answer. "I think Father will only accept it if I tell him about the dream. I shall say I had the dream, just the once."

"Nay, you cannot! I will not allow it."

Boromir said, "I would do it for you, when I would not do it for anyone else."

His brother's face constricted with pain for moment. "I will tell Father if you lie."

Boromir shrugged. "What happened in the dream again? If you would prefer me not to lie, I am happy to relay it to Father for you."

His brother explained the dream several times over. Boromir squinted at him. "What was the poem again? Can you write it down for me?"

His brother wrote the poem down in his quick, neat cursive hand.

Boromir looked at it. "What think you Isildur's Bane is, Faramir?"

"I do not know. But it is clear that it is necessary to go to Imladris to avoid doom for us all. I do not want all of Middle Earth to be overrun like Osgiliath." Faramir brightened. "Father cannot object if I go; he might even be happy to be rid of me."

Boromir put his hand to his chin. "You really think it is important, brother?"

His brother looked offended. "Would I bother you in the early hours of the morning for something I thought was unimportant? Our world depends upon it."

Boromir thought for some time. "You would not bother me with something unimportant, dear brother. Now, let me get back to sleep for an hour or too. I will tell Father tomorrow."

His brother embraced him roughly. "You are the best brother."

"I am your *only* brother, Fara."

"Still, you are still the best brother I have. You cannot argue with me when you are the only one."

He chuckled, and tucked the poem under his pillow. "Go back to sleep. I will deal with it tomorrow."

Denethor's Sons Tell Him of the Dream

Denethor had not slept well. This was not unusual. He had taken to sleeping girt with mail because there was no point wearing anything comfortable.

He flicked a finger at a servant. "Get me some wine."

The servant bowed. "Yea, my Lord Steward."

When the servant returned, he handed Denethor some watered red wine and said, "Your sons are waiting outside. May I admit them?"

Denethor looked at the servant. "Both of my sons? That is unusual. I suppose you may."

Boromir strode in, followed at a respectful distance by his pale shadow, Faramir.

"Father!" said Boromir in a booming voice. "How do you fare?"

Denethor smiled fondly at his older son. "Well, my son. And you?"

Boromir shook his head and glanced at Faramir. His voice fell. "Something uncanny has happened—"

Denethor sharpened his gaze with surprise. His elder son was the least likely of any person in Minas Tirith to have an uncanny experience. "What do you mean, Boromir?"

"Well, Father, I had a dream, like to a dream Faramir has already had several times—"

Faramir glared at his older brother. "Nay, Boromir, that is not what happened!"

Out of interest, Denethor probed Faramir's mind to see if he was telling the truth, but he was deflected. His younger son's mind was closed to him; this was one of the many reasons why Denethor did not trust him.

"You cannot say that I did not have the dream," said Boromir, smiling charmingly at his brother.

Faramir drew himself up and stared down at his brother. It was easy to forget otherwise that he stood half a head taller than Boromir. Something in Faramir's bearing as he pulled himself up reminded Denethor uncomfortably of his own father, Ecthelion. Denethor did not want to see it. He put up his hand.

"Peace, Faramir, and let your brother speak."

Faramir stood back, and Boromir described the dream. Denethor was astonished. There was no way in which Boromir or even Faramir could make up a dream with those details.

After a lengthy pause, he said, "Can you relay the verse again, Boromir?"

Boromir glanced for an instant at his silent, fuming brother, and faithfully recited the verse.

Denethor said, eventually, “Imladris is the old Elven name for a far northern dale where Elrond the Halfelven dwells.”

His elder son’s brow creased, while his younger son’s eyes widened.

“Rivendell,” said Faramir, his eyes shining. “That is the place of which the verse speaks.”

Boromir turned to his brother. “What are you talking about?”

“The modern name for Imladris is Rivendell,” said Denethor. “Elrond the Halfelven is the greatest of lore-masters.”

Faramir turned to Boromir. “He is one of the Edain, Boromir.”

“What does that mean?” said Boromir, and Denethor wondered why he had spent so much on his elder son’s education. He was critical of his younger son in many aspects, but he was secretly proud of his knowledge; it vindicated Denethor’s decision to hire the best tutors.

Faramir sighed. “Elros chose to be a Man and a King of Númenor, while his brother Elrond chose to be Elvish.”

“I do not recall a King Elros,” said Boromir, narrowing his eyes at his brother.

Faramir shook his head. “His name as King was Tar-Minyatur, brother.”

“Faramir is, in fact, correct,” said Denethor drily.

“What is Isildur’s Bane, then?” Boromir asked.

Faramir shrugged. “I do not know everything—”

Denethor smiled sourly. “You are so modest!”

“It is clear, in any case, that we must seek Elrond’s counsel to avoid doom,” said Faramir, ignoring his father. “I think it is not chance that the dream first came to me the night before the Enemy’s attack on Osgiliath.”

“I do not understand what is meant by ‘the Halfling forth shall stand’,” noted Boromir.

“It may refer to a Dwarf?” said Faramir.

“I have never heard of a Dwarf being called a ‘Halfling’,” said Denethor. Then he sat back. “I am reluctant to take this puzzle any further. I am not minded to give either of you permission to leave. You will be needed here.”

Both sons began to protest. “What if Isildur’s Bane is a weapon—?” said Boromir. “Should I not fetch it for Gondor?”

At the same time, Faramir said, “Our doom hangs over our heads by a thread, Father. Let me go and seek counsel, please—”

Denethor put up his hand for them to be quiet, and they both subsided. He thought for some time about it. Then he said, “I cannot decide on such an issue without consulting others. Boromir, you have my permission to bring this matter before the Steward’s Council when we convene in a week.”

“But—” said Faramir.

Denethor shook his head. “Leave me. I will speak to you later.”

Faramir made to speak again, but his elder brother restrained him. “Leave the matter.”

Both sons bowed and left silently.

The Steward's Council

As they stood outside the meeting hall of the Steward's Council, Faramir was increasingly frustrated. "No, it has to be me who goes, Boromir. It cannot be you. You did not have the dream—I know this to be so."

His brother shrugged and smiled. "I do not see that it matters, little brother. Whether you go or I go, I have accepted that it is important to you." He paused, and said gently, "I know that thou seest things I do not."

Faramir frowned. "Do not remind me."

"I do not understand why you are dismayed," Boromir said.

"It is a curse," Faramir said. "To know what others are thinking, to know imperfectly what may happen—I care too much."

Boromir smiled. "Aye, you have always been sensitive, little brother. Do you remember the time you tried to punch me for teasing Amrothos?"

Faramir sighed. "Teasing Amrothos is like teasing a dumb animal, Boromir. Our cousin does not understand how, but he knows you are making fun of him."

Boromir laughed. "Amrothos is an odd fish. He cannot blame me if I tease him."

Boromir's laugh was like a stab to his ribs. "I am an odd fish too, brother—"

His brother slapped him on the shoulder. "Aye, true, but you are a *good* odd fish. Brave and dutiful."

The guards motioned to them that they could enter. Faramir quickly scanned the room to see who was sitting on the Steward's Council as he took a seat. To his dismay, Prince Imrahil was not present; he must still be in Dol Amroth. Faramir had been counting on his uncle's support.

"Captain Boromir," said his father, his eyes glinting, "You have leave to speak to the Council."

His elder brother spoke to the Council of the dream, saying he had had it once and his younger brother had had it repeatedly. Faramir had to give Boromir some credit: he sounded utterly convincing. But the lie bothered Faramir like an itch which could not be scratched, and he shifted in his seat uncomfortably. He saw his father eye him with a frown, and with effort, he sat still again.

"Consequently," said Boromir, "I seek to go to Imladris to find out the meaning of this dream."

Faramir leapt up before he could think. "No! 'Tis I who must go!"

His father glared. “Sit, Faramir! I remind thee that thou wert not given leave to speak before this Council.”

Faramir slowly lowered himself back into his seat; his father’s use of informal language was a clear rebuke. He stole a piece of paper and a spare pen off one of the scribes, and wrote, “Boromir, I must go,” and then passed it to his brother.

His brother glanced at it and said, “If you will not send me, then send my brother in my stead. Either of us will happily go.”

Their father gestured to Boromir to sit. Faramir was so angry with Boromir he could not look at him.

“I do not think it is worthwhile wasting time or effort to find out the meaning of this dream,” said Denethor.

“Whatever the Lord Steward says is correct,” said Lord Barahir in oily tones. Faramir tried to keep his expression neutral; he had always disliked the man intensely.

“But what is ‘Isildur’s Bane’?” said Lord Belecthor, Lord Barahir’s main toady. Pity and dislike warred in Faramir. Belecthor was a short man who sought to cover his insecurity by blustering; but on the other hand, this was not a reason to behave badly.

“I deem it is a weapon of some kind,” said Boromir. “It may be useful for Gondor against the Enemy?”

Faramir’s heart sank when all the men around the table suddenly looked more interested, apart from the Chief Justice, Lord Mandos, who was gently snoring, and the Lord Treasurer, who appeared to be doodling patterns in ink on his sheet of paper.

“It may be deadly,” said Faramir, glancing at his brother. “Do not forget that no one knows how Isildur died, but that this Thing, whatever it is, was the cause of it. And the weapon that is mentioned in the verse—the Sword that was Broken—is Narsil, Elendil’s blade, but that was not Isildur’s Bane.”

“Indeed, Boromir, a weapon may be useful for Gondor in the war that is to come,” said Denethor, ignoring Faramir, and steepling his fingers. Faramir was filled with a horrible dread, but he could not fully process it, because his father stared at him and said pointedly, “I am minded only to send someone I trust completely. If anyone goes, it must be Boromir.”

The Chief Justice, Lord Mandos, sat up and opened his eyes suddenly. “The difficulty with letting your oldest son go is that it removes our doughty Captain of the White Tower, Lord Steward?”

“Faramir can take on Boromir’s duties as Captain while Boromir is abroad, Chief Justice,” said Denethor. “At the very least, he should be capable of that, if nothing else.”

“More than capable, I should think,” said the Lord Treasurer, glancing at Faramir.

“True,” said Lord Mandos, his brows knitting. “And we are not quite at open war yet—?”

“When we go to war, be assured I will be prepared, Chief Justice,” said Denethor tartly.

“How long does it take to get to this strange place in the dream?” said fat old Forlong, curiously.

Denethor shrugged. “Mayhap four months.”

“It is better that I—” said Faramir, despite knowing that it would just irritate his father. A strange anxiety was goading him unbearably.

“Silence!” said his father, and the scribes and several Lords flinched at his tone. Then he spoke to the Council. “Are we resolved that Boromir shall go to Imladris?”

“Aye,” said Lord Barahir and his cronies. After a long pause, and what was almost an apologetic look at Faramir, Lord Mandos said, “Aye.”

The Lord Treasurer said, “There is no sense in me dissenting if everyone else agrees, although I do think ‘tis strange to be doing anything on the basis solely of a dream, no matter how compelling it seems to its audience—”

“That is because you only do things on the basis of numbers,” said Lord Mandos, in his rumbling bass.

The Lord Treasurer shrugged and gave a small smile to his main ally on the Council. “That is my job, Lord Chief Justice.”

“We are resolved then,” said Denethor. He looked at his sons. “You may leave now.”

Boromir rose swiftly, Faramir less swiftly. As he left the room he heard his father say, “Now onto the item of the provisioning of the garrison in Osgiliath—”

He gave his father one last look, then left the room.

Faramir is Anxious

Boromir barely wanted to admit this to himself, but he was becoming irritated with his younger brother. Faramir had been nigh on hysterical since the Steward's Council meeting.

He called for his man to get them some wine. "Some of that fine red!" The man bowed and came back with a bottle and two glasses.

His brother took the glass. "Please. Let me go, brother. Please. Pretend that you will go, and I will go in your stead."

Boromir poured the wine in both their glasses. "Father would kill us. He would probably string us both from the gallows. You know we cannot disobey his direct order like that."

Faramir looked away. "I know. But I have a feeling of dread. You do not know what it is like."

Boromir felt a twist of pity in his gut at the look of misery on his younger brother's finer features. "Drink some wine, my little brother and thou shalt feel better." Then he grinned. "Go out and find a nice whore, and thou shalt feel even better still!"

Faramir glared at him. "I shall drink your wine, but I shall not do the latter. I would not enjoy it."

Boromir shook his head. "Aye, more's the pity, you probably would not. I have never met any man more in need of getting laid who is less likely to take any opportunity to do so. You could have your choice of partners if you showed willingness."

His brother's mouth was tight. "I do not have any interest in *that* at all." He put the wine glass down with force and stared at it. "With anyone, if you must know."

Boromir looked at his brother sadly and sighed. "I am serious. It might help you."

His brother looked up. "Does it help you?"

"It does, for a short while." Boromir shrugged, and felt irritated by the tinge of judgement in his brother's eyes. "At least I do not mope around the corridors like a wet rag."

His brother's eyes flashed, but then he looked away. "At least I do not leave a trail of broken hearts behind me, Boromir."

Boromir felt guilty. He knew on some level that his brother cleaned up any messes his relationships created, but he did not like to hear about it. "What did you have to do with the latest one? I forgot."

"Transferred," said his brother in morose tones. "Moved to Ithilien. I thought it best to put as much distance between the two of you as possible."

Boromir grimaced. "I forgot to tell you: I still get letters. I burn them without reading them; I would rather not think about it."

Faramir stared at him, his mouth slightly agape. "Really? I do not think I could do that—burn a letter without reading it."

Boromir laughed. "That is because you have never found anything that you will not read. You had your nose in a book as soon as you could figure out what letters were."

To his relief, his brother smiled and looked more like himself. "Aye, 'tis true."

"Do not worry, little brother. This expedition shall be a fun one! I shall journey to lands beyond those either of us have seen before. And I shall bring back great glory." Boromir was struck by a thought and he grinned with happiness. "Why, I can tarry in Rohan a while on the way, 'tis always fun!"

His brother's eyes narrowed. "Boro—"

Boromir opened his eyes wide. "The Rohirrim are fun, Faramir. You ought to go there, once I return. It would do you good. They love to drink, make merry and hunt."

"They sound like my nightmare—"

"You are in a bad mood tonight. I am not putting up with this any more. You can get out of my room if you are going to be a wet rag again."

His brother stood, drained the glass and patted Boromir on the shoulder. "I am sorry. Father makes me glum. You are still the best brother I have."

Boromir stood and hugged his brother tightly. "Think on what I said about hiring a whore, eh?"

As Faramir left, he was shaking his head and muttering. Boromir could not understand how his brother could be so similar to him, and yet so different.

Faramir speaks to his father

Denethor stared up at his younger son and enunciated his words very clearly, so there was no misunderstanding. "I. Am. Not. Prepared. To. Discuss. This. Further. I cannot fathom, my son, that you have the insolence to come to me here and reopen this matter."

To his surprise, Faramir knelt in front of the Steward's seat in the Hall of Kings. "Please, Father."

As Faramir's mouth twitched with emotion, Denethor was disquieted to see in his son's face the shade of his wife Finduilas, weeping and begging him to be allowed to go back to her family in Dol Amroth.

"The more you plead, the more I turn against you," he informed his son.

Then he recalled to his horror that he had said the same thing to his wife before she died. He had to swallow the acid which rose in his throat at this memory, and felt angry at his son for reminding him of it.

His son was stronger than Finduilas, at the least: rather than weeping and retreating to his room, he looked up and met Denethor's eyes.

"Boromir is not telling the truth. He did not have the dream. It was only me who had it. If you read him you will see. Send me."

"I do not need to read Boromir," said Denethor. "I know I can trust him. He does what I bid. You, however—I do not. Why do you close your mind to me? Do you have secret lovers?"

To his surprise his younger son laughed bitterly and stood. "You sound like Boromir, except that he wants to procure lovers for me to make me feel better." His face went blank. "I say the same to you as I said to Boromir: I have no interest whatsoever in such pastimes, Father."

Denethor snorted. "Pity. It might make you more human if you did."

Faramir shrugged. "If that is what you truly think of me, would you not prefer to risk my life with this ... Thing ... rather than risk Boromir's?"

Denethor pretended not to know the target at which Faramir aimed. "Of what do you speak?"

His son lowered his voice. "This Isildur's Bane, of which I dreamt. I know not what it is, but 'tis dangerous. I speak to you only because I have a ... bad feeling."

"You feel too much," said Denethor.

"Better than too little," said Faramir.

"Aye, I am aware that I am not a father up to your standard," said Denethor. "No doubt you wish to go to Imladris because you dream that Elrond the Half-Elven was your sire instead."

Faramir did not deny it. Instead he said, "I am aware that I am not a son up to your standard, Father. But I do my best."

"We shall see how you perform in your brother's role," said Denethor. "Go. I think at the least you should be able to command Osgiliath and Ithilien until his return."

Faramir's eyes narrowed, and he stared at his father. "Nay, do not say 'tis so? You do not seek this Thing for your own benefit, Father? Verily, I hope you have not charged Boromir with bringing it to you?"

Denethor kept his face still. Faramir was far too shrewd for his liking, but had nonetheless missed the mark entirely. "Nay, I would not use it for my own benefit! You should know that I would only ever use it for the good of Gondor."

"You will not listen if I say that is a froward path, will you?"

"At least you understand that," said Denethor.

Faramir bowed. "Farewell, Father. I will do as you bid, but the day may come that you will regret that you did not listen."

Denethor watched him stride out, and a chill went over him. His gut cramped.

"I shall go up to the Tower," he said to his guards. He wanted to know what his younger son had seen that he had not.

Boromir leaves Minas Tirith

Faramir watched as his brother rode off. His brother had embraced him roughly and patted him on the back. "Fear not, little brother! I will be back before you know it! And we shall laugh on this together!"

Faramir had tried to ignore the whispering voice which said in his head, Too late, too late, the die is cast.

"Aye, big brother, I will see you again. Make sure to give me a full report on Elrond Half-Elven, no?"

Boromir had frowned. Then he had rolled his shoulders, smiled, put up his chin, and said, "Nay, a passing foolish thought. I shall do my best for Gondor, as always."

He had then formally embraced their father and been kissed on the forehead by Denethor. "You have my blessing on this journey, as always, son," Denethor had said fondly. "Go well, my son, and advance the interests of Gondor and its people."

"Always," said Boromir. Then he blew the horn of Vorondil as he exited the city, as he always did at the beginning of a journey, and the people of Minas Tirith cheered.

"See," Denethor said to Faramir as they walked up the hill. "Nothing bad happened."

Faramir was not so foolish as to answer his father. He nodded, then said, "I must look to the garrison of Osgiliath."

"Aye, keep it well until your brother returns," said Denethor.

"Yes, Lord Steward," said Faramir and saluted his father.

"Do not mock me!" said Denethor.

Faramir sighed. "I do not mock you, Father. I honour you as my liege. Can we not try to work together in Boromir's absence?"

Denethor snorted. "Very well, son."

Faramir bowed and left his father, and then went back up to his chambers, and called for a glass of red wine. He stood, sipping his wine, and looked over the Rammas Echor surrounding the city. He loved his realm so much, and he wished the biting fear which gnawed at his heart would leave him.

He could no longer see his brother, and could not shake the awful feeling that he had farewelled Boromir for the last time. He reminded himself that he had been anxious about his brother in the past and his fears had come to naught. Moreover, his father was equally far-sighted and had seen nothing of woe.

He drained the glass, and resolved to do well in his brother's absence, no matter how hard it was to fill Boromir's shoes.

Edoras

When he reached Edoras, Boromir felt a sense of relief. He liked the homely little town with its funny rustic thatched huts, and its fierce people.

At the gate of Meduseld, he was greeted by a gray-eyed doorwarden. The man was tall, and well-built, with broad shoulders, and long blond hair. The Rohirrim were an attractive people. He essayed a smile at the man. "Tell King Théoden of Rohan that Boromir of Gondor is here."

The man looked at him unsmilingly. "I am Háma, the doorwarden of these Halls. You must leave your weapons at the door, my Lord."

"What policy is this?"

The man shrugged. "Gríma Wormtongue has commanded it."

Boromir glared, but handed over his sword and bow. "Is Gríma Wormtongue the King then?"

Háma's face tightened, and he looked away. "A warning, my Lord. I would not say such things in Meduseld now, my Lord." Then he turned, and after taking Boromir's weapons, led him into the Hall.

Inside it was dark and stuffy. Boromir peered at the ancient-looking man perched on the throne at the end of the Hall and wondered what ailed the king. Théoden was younger than Boromir's own father, but looked thirty years older, at least. On the steps in front of the King stood a pale-faced man with heavy-lidded eyes and, on the other side, behind the throne, stood a blonde woman. He could not remember her name, although he recalled that she was the King's niece.

He approached the throne and said, "Hail, King Théoden, Gondor sends greetings."

Théoden roused himself. "Lord Boromir! It is a pleasure to see you in these Halls. It has been too long." His voice was cracked and breaking.

The man with the heavy-lidded eyes stepped forward. "What brings you here to Rohan, man of Gondor?"

Boromir eyed Gríma Wormtongue narrowly; there was something slightly insolent about his tone. But he responded politely and vaguely. "I am on a mission for my father the Steward, just passing through to Northern lands. I will tell the King more once I am rested."

The King turned to the woman. "Éowyn, sister-daughter! Fetch some food and drink for our honoured guest."

The woman bowed her head and left to fetch food. If past experience was any guide, she was unremittingly sullen and silent. Meanwhile the King bade Boromir sit and asked him after

matters of the realm and the health of his father. The woman came back with meat and mead, and placed it before Boromir.

“Thank you, my Lady,” said Boromir, giving her a charming smile. “You look more fair every time I see you.”

He would have received a better response from smiling at an ice floe. The woman stared at him expressionlessly, her blue-grey eyes like steel, and then retreated to her place behind the throne again. It was a pity, because she was otherwise quite beautiful. Even Faramir could not manage that extreme level of misery. Suddenly Boromir was struck by an entertaining thought: if the two of them met, who would smile first? Or would they just stare at each other miserably? He buried a chuckle by sipping his mead, and wondered if he could engineer a meeting between the two of them when he got back from his quest.

“Gríma, call Théodred and Éomer for me,” said Théoden. “They will be glad to know Boromir son of Denethor is at these Halls again, and will want to hear his news.” Gríma rose from his seat in front of the throne and bowed obsequiously to the King. Then he went and spoke with one of the door guards.

Éomer arrived first, and Boromir embraced him and greeted him. He had forgotten how tall Éomer was; as tall as Boromir himself. Éomer was as handsome as his sister was beautiful, but far more friendly and pleasant. Boromir spared a moment to regret the information Théodred had shared with him last time he visited: “Nay, do not bother asking my cousin on a hunting trip; he prefers farm girls with big breasts.”

“It is a pleasure to have you in our Halls again,” said Éomer. “What brings you here?”

“‘Tis strange, Third Marshal Éomer. But I will wait until Second Marshal Théodred arrives to tell you fully.”

Éomer sat on the other side of the table. Boromir noticed that Éomer seemed ill at ease, and that Gríma watched Éomer with a calculating expression. He wondered if Éomer realised the man was a snake; his father had formed a very poor impression of Gríma son of Galmod and had briefed him fully on the man before Boromir left. He decided to talk to Éomer privately later to warn him.

Théodred entered, saw Boromir and grinned. “Boromir, my friend. It is good to see you.” Boromir realised he had been holding his breath, and tried to breathe normally. They embraced, and Théodred slapped him on the back, then sat next to Boromir.

Théoden croaked, “Boromir is on a quest by his father to the North.”

Boromir sighed. “‘Tis a strange story, and involves a dream. My brother had the dream multiple times, and I had it once.” He had recited the dream so many times that it was almost as if he had had it himself: he had ceased to think of it as a lie anymore.

He recited the words of the verse, and said, “My father has charged me to go to Imladris, in the North, and speak to Elrond the Halfelven who lives there. We think the Sword that was

Broken is Narsil, the sword borne by Elendil. We do not know what 'Isildur's Bane' or 'Halflings' are—"

Théoden sat forward. "The Rohirrim have myths of Halflings or hobyta."

Boromir sat up with interest, wishing he had known this earlier. "What manner of creature are they, King Théoden?"

Théoden stroked his beard. "Our legends say they are a small people who live sand-dunes, far, far away in the North, we know not where, whence our ancestors came. Their voices are said to resemble the piping of birds."

"Do you know aught else?" said Boromir.

"They vanish when Men approach—" said Éowyn. Boromir was surprised to hear her speak: her voice was low, sweet and pleasant.

"I do not think they exist," said Gríma Wormtongue.

Boromir frowned and crossed his arms. "That may make them difficult to find? Nay the less, I will seek the wisdom of Elrond."

Next to him, Théodred shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "What does it mean to be Halfelven?"

"His mother was an Elf and his father was a Man. My brother says he was given a choice, and chose to be an Elf, whereas his brother chose to be a Man."

Éomer shuddered. "What manner of being would choose to be an Elf?"

Boromir sighed. "I do not know. I suppose I shall find out."

Warnings of Wormtongue

Éomer stared at Boromir as they ostensibly toured the fields outside Edoras to look at the new foals. “In the pay of whom?”

“Father is unsure,” said Boromir in a low voice. He stopped and pretended to look at a horse.

“I have never liked the man; nay, not at all, but a traitor?” Éomer shook his head, and gave a carrot to one of the horses who approached him. He felt ill as he said, “There is naught I can do about it, my Lord. He has effectively ruled our realm for the last four years at the least. If I say aught, ‘tis I who will be a traitor—”

“I am sorry, Marshal Éomer. But I thought you should know. I will tell Théodred as well, so you need not raise it with him.” Boromir’s face grew grim. “That is not all. There is a particular matter I wanted to raise with you.”

Éomer’s heart sank. “What matter would that be?”

“Father said that your sister should look to her safety in regard to—”

Éomer had to close his eyes, as he clenched his fists. “Thank you for the warning, but I know that, my Lord, as does my sister. I have given her a spare sword to keep by her bedside.”

Boromir stared at him. “A sword, Marshal—?”

Éomer laughed at the look on Boromir’s face. “Do not be deceived by her fair face: she is a shieldmaiden, my Lord, trained in the art of the sword and the bow. She can defend herself handily.”

Boromir raised an eyebrow. “Ah. That I did not know. Does this mean she will not wed, then?”

Éomer patted the horse’s soft, velvety nose as she lipped another carrot from his hand. “I do not know. We do not talk about such things.”

“She reminds me much of my younger brother.”

Éomer looked at Boromir, confused, and wondered if the younger brother was the same as the elder. If it was the case, it would create interesting problems for the succession of the Stewards of Gondor, problems with which Rohan was already familiar. He still hoped that Théodred might have a change of heart and wed, despite the disaster of his cousin’s previous engagement to a woman from the Westfold. Éomer had no desire to be King after his cousin.

Then he wondered what the position in Gondor would be. He could not immediately recall who the nearest relative in the Steward’s line would be, and whether Gondor let sister-sons inherit, or even if there were any sister-sons. He had not been very interested in those classes

in his youth, much to his sister's disgust. For reasons Éomer still did not understand, she had attended his classes, despite no requirement for her to do so.

"Your brother will not wed either?" Éomer asked delicately, as they began walking again, back towards Edoras.

"Well, 'tis true that he is unmarried; but 'tis more that he is very serious and unsmiling, and thinks only of his duty."

Éomer sighed. "Well then, I pity you, Lord Boromir, for having the burden of a serious sibling who thinks only of duty. Éowyn has ever been so, particularly since our mother died when we were young."

To Éomer's surprise, Boromir laughed heartily as they headed back across the fields to Edoras. "Faramir is the same, right down to the death of our mother." He grinned at Éomer. "We should introduce them."

Éomer blinked. "I have never met him, but I suppose your brother is a martial man?"

"Of course, Marshal," said Boromir, with pride. "He has my role until I return."

Éomer laughed. "Well then, my Lord, that would indeed be interesting. Because my sister would likely attempt to kill or geld your brother, and then do the same to us for even having this conversation."

Boromir stopped, slapped his knees and laughed uproariously. "Let us try this, simply to see the sport of that confrontation." Then he shrugged. "Of course, if my little brother knew we were having this conversation, our lives would also be in mortal danger, so that makes the sport even more interesting—"

"This does not seem a good idea," said Éomer, unsure whether Boromir was serious. "Let us keep both ourselves and our serious siblings whole and hearty."

Boromir looked thoughtful again. "On another matter: do you think your Uncle would be prepared to loan me a horse for my quest? I borrowed courier horses to get here."

"Now on that, I have a happier answer," said Éomer. "I have no doubt that Rohan can loan you a horse to get to Imladris." He paused. "I do not envy you having to speak to the Elves."

Boromir frowned and looked away. "My brother would have been happier than I to speak to them, but Father insisted I go instead. I do as my father commands, for the good of Gondor."

“It could end any one of three ways”

Théodred wondered where Boromir had gone. He went out to the back of Meduseld to look for him, but instead he found his cousin cornered by Wormtongue in a corridor. Éowyn stood against a doorway, and Wormtongue was speaking to her, his face disturbingly close to hers. She had backed away as far as she could and had her arms folded across her body.

“Éowyn!” said Théodred, pretending to be oblivious to the dynamics of her situation. “Have you seen Boromir?”

Éowyn gave him a look of supplication, and said, “I saw him walk out earlier with my brother.”

Théodred took Éowyn’s arm and extracted her from her position in the doorway. “Come show me where you saw them, cousin.”

“Farewell, my Lady,” said Wormtongue.

Éowyn said nothing, and Théodred drew her away down the corridor by the arm. To his horror, he realised her arm was shaking, and he decided to take her out of Meduseld.

“Come with me down the hill for a walk,” he said, and she followed him.

Once they were a way away from Meduseld he said, “Are you well?”

Éowyn’s face was set and pale and her jaw was clenched. She took several deep breaths, and then said, “I thank you, cousin. I should get back to your father.” She turned and went back to Meduseld.

Théodred felt ill. She had been a sweet, happy little girl when she and Éomer had first come to Edoras; she had been the delight of everyone. He could not fathom when his beloved cousin had become so cold. Then he saw Éomer and Boromir coming through the large gates, their faces serious. He went down the steps to them.

His heart leaped when Boromir looked up and smiled at him. It was always difficult to know whether things would be the same the next time they saw each other.

“Theo,” said Boromir. “How goes it?”

Théodred sighed. “I had to rescue Éowyn again from Wormtongue; this becomes insupportable. But I do not know what I can do to make Father see reason—”

Éomer and Boromir looked at each other, and Boromir said, “I see at least some of my news is belated. I have just been talking to Éomer about the same, among other things.”

Théodred shook his head. “I do not know what the solution is.”

Boromir looked at Éomer again. “She could be married off to someone—?” Éomer rolled his eyes, and Théodred wondered what had been said.

He said, “To whom would she be married? And would she want that anyway?”

Éomer sighed. “I do not know.” He laughed. “Erkenbrand suggested that *you* marry her, Théodred—”

Boromir’s eyes widened and he stared at Théodred. Théodred gave a very small shake of his head to Boromir, and said, “Nay, I would not wish that fate on any woman whom I love, Éomer.”

He did not want to think too hard on how unhappy his late fiancée had been.

Boromir shrugged. “I did mention she could be introduced to my brother—?”

Théodred shook his head. “First, Boromir, your father would never agree to such a thing! He would not sully his High Númenórean blood with such a match, never. That is a foolish plan.”

They walked a little further, while Théodred considered Boromir’s plan.

“Even if the Lord Denethor were to agree, any meeting would likely end badly—” Théodred paused and thought of the times he had met Captain Faramir “—well, actually, it could end in any one of three ways.”

“What are those three ways?” said Boromir curiously.

Théodred extended his index finger and said, “First, they could just stare coldly at each other and never speak, which, knowing them both, is the most likely possibility.” He extended a second finger and said, “Secondly, they might try to kill each other. Thirdly—” He stopped, with the third finger outstretched.

“We thought of icy stares and attempts to kill each other as well,” said Éomer. “But we did not think of a third option. What is it?”

Théodred smiled. “That they would swyve each other stupid and maybe have some fun in life for once. It would be good for them. I have never met two people more in need of a good swyving than those two—”

Éomer choked.

Boromir, on the other hand, laughed hugely, and winked at Théodred. “Theo, that is my estimation of them too. If only they could get laid, they would be much happier.”

Éomer frowned. “This is my *sister* of whom you speak!”

Théodred grinned. “I knew that you would not like it, cousin.”

Éomer shook his head. “I am not continuing this conversation. I shall leave you to conjecture further.” He stalked off up the hill back to Meduseld.

“What were you talking to him about anyway?” said Théodred.

Boromir sighed. “I should tell thee privately.”

Théodred raised an eyebrow and one corner of his mouth turned up. “Privately?”

Boromir smiled. “Well, that kind of privately could be arranged too, if thou wert minded—”

Théodred could barely breathe. “I have thought of nothing else since thou didst arrive—”

“I was wondering whether thou wouldst still—” said Boromir, looking him in the eyes for a long moment.

“We must needs go somewhere else,” said Théodred.

“Aye,” said Boromir. He reached out and put his hand briefly to Théodred’s cheek. It was all Théodred could do to restrain himself from kissing him right then and there.

“I know an abandoned shed outside town,” said Théodred.

“Let us go then,” said Boromir. Théodred did not think he had imagined the guards’ slightly disapproving look as they watched them, but he did not care.

Borodred

“Dost thou think we might meet up again before thou leavest?” said Théodred.

“Doubtless,” said Boromir, letting go of Théodred. “We must take full advantage of this: it may be some time before I am back.”

They made sure they were decent, then left the shed, and began to walk back up the hill. Without discussing it openly, they switched from intimate speech to formal. Although Boromir was sure that some in Edoras must suspect what was going on, it did not seem wise to flaunt it.

“Your father does not seem well,” he said, delicately. “I would think from the way he looks that he was older than my own sire.”

“You know that we age more quickly than you men of Gondor do,” said Théodred sadly. “I have more wrinkles than you.”

“Nay, this is something more than that,” said Boromir. “Does someone taste your father’s food?”

Théodred looked at him with alarm. “Éowyn does. And she—she is cold, but she is not prematurely aged, like Father—”

“So ‘tis is not the food, then,” said Boromir.

Théodred lowered his voice, and touched Boromir’s arm. “‘Tis something to do with Wormtongue, I deem. I despise him. If I could ensure that he was slain in some way—”

“He will not want you to become King,” said Boromir in a very low voice. “Have a care, my friend. Look to your safety—and to the safety of your cousin Éomer.”

Théodred shrugged. “I do not want to be King.”

Boromir gaped at Théodred. “What say you?”

Théodred kicked a bale of hay as they walked past it, and dust and shred of hay flew up. “If I could give it all up tomorrow and live in Gondor—”

“You must jest with me?”

“Nay, not at all, my friend. It is only duty that keeps me here, and love of my father.” Théodred smiled at him. “If I could come with you on your quest, I would.”

Boromir smiled back. “Now, that would make the quest vastly more acceptable. But—why would you not want to be a King?”

Théodred's blond brows drew down, and he stared at Boromir. "You wish to be a King! I never perceived this before!"

Boromir shrugged. "Father is all but a King in name. I have never been able to understand why we do not rule—the King will never return, whatever that rhyme in the dream said about Isildur's Heir—we may as well rule as Kings than as Stewards? But Father disagrees—it is probably the worst disagreement we ever had—"

"Speaking of disagreement, how do matters between your father and your brother proceed?" said Théodred, as they began to walk back up the stone steps to Meduseld.

Boromir shrugged. "Badly, as always. Faramir cannot help chafing against Father's direction, and it annoys Father—I hope they do not murder one another in my absence—?"

"It is at times like this that I am glad not to have a sibling," said Théodred. "Although I wish my mother had survived my sister's birth."

Boromir blinked. "Sister? You had a sister? I knew not this."

"My sister died at birth; Idis was her name," said Théodred. "I do not recall her; I was only three years of age, and they never showed her to me."

"I wonder how Father would have dealt with Faramir had he been a woman? Would it have been easier or harder?" Boromir had a sudden vision of his brother clad in a dress, and chuckled. His brother, for all his sensitivity, was a man who would look very bad in women's clothing.

"How long will you be gone?" said Théodred as they neared the hall.

"Four months to get there, Father says," said Boromir. "And then I suppose I shall come back via Rohan?"

As they neared Meduseld, Théodred said suddenly, "I fear I will not see thee again, Boromir."

Boromir rolled his eyes at Théodred. "Do not be like my brother. I have fought thousands of battles—"

"It is not those kinds of battles I fear," said Théodred.

Boromir smiled at Théodred and spoke in an undertone. "We must meet again, so I can take these fears away—"

Théodred grinned. "Tonight?"

"Verily," said Boromir, grinning back. "As long as we do not get caught. I like a challenge—"

Leaving Edoras

Éomer watched as Boromir son of Denethor rode off with one of their horses and sighed. “May his quest go well. I fear for our future.”

“There is nothing for Rohan to fear, Third Marshal,” said Gríma. “Gondor may get involved in what it will, but it is no business of ours.”

“Truly,” said King Théoden in a croaky voice, and then limped back to Meduseld, Éowyn supporting his arm.

Éomer said to his sister, “May I speak to you for a moment, sister?”

Éowyn looked at him. “Aye, I suppose, brother.”

Gríma followed them, and Éomer said firmly, “I would speak to my sister privately.”

“Very well, my Lord,” said Gríma with a baleful look.

“What is wrong, Éomer?” said Éowyn.

“The Lord of Gondor bade you look to your safety,” said Éomer in a low voice.

Éowyn stared at him. “I daily look to my safety. I need not an arrogant man of Gondor to instruct me so?”

“Captain Boromir is a good man,” said Éomer. “He means well.”

“He annoys me,” said Éowyn. “He is too convinced of his own peoples’ superiority. I like him not. Also I think he seeks to seduce me—”

Éomer shrugged and chose not to enlighten Éowyn as to the fact that Boromir had surely spent the last few nights in their cousin’s bed. “You would not want to meet his brother?”

Éowyn glared. “Nay. Not at all, Éomer. Do not be ridiculous.”

She strode off.

“What will become of Gondor and Rohan?” wondered Éomer. “What means the dream of Captain Boromir?”

Gríma crept up behind him. “I would set no store by it at all, Third Marshal. They are fools for sending off their most martial Captain at this time—”

For once, Éomer found that he agreed with Gríma. “Verily, Gríma. But there is naught we can do presently.”

“Naught at all,” said Gríma.

Reaching Imladris

It had been a weary and exhausting four months since he had left Rohan. Boromir had been chased by brigands, Orcs and Goblins, and gone through hard, thankless country. He was hungry, tired and sore. He woke in the early morning, looked again at the ancient map his father had given him, and looked again at the sun, bleary against the grey clouds, and the position of the mountains around. If he had his bearings right, he must be almost at the place; it sat in a hollow in the hills. He could see nothing. The scrubby hills were barren and stark. A lone curlew called in the wilderness.

Then he gasped as he turned a corner. A river lay before him, with a shallow ford with rushing, chattering water. Nestled in the hills was a sprawling house. The valley had a strange stillness, and as Boromir urged the reluctant horse of Rohan across the river ford, he felt not so much as if he was entering a different place, as a different time, in Elder Days.

Someone called out in Sindarin, with an unfamiliar accent. “Halt! What is your mission? Why do you come here this grey morning?” The voice was sweet, but Boromir saw no one. He squinted.

“I seek Imladris, the house of Elrond the Half-Elven. My name is Boromir, heir to the Steward of Gondor, and I come on a mission of great urgency—”

“Imladris?” said the voice, with a tinkling laugh. “We have not heard that name for many a long year. But yea, you are come to Rivendell, Man of Gondor—”

Boromir peered around, and the horse shied and whinnied. An Elf emerged as if from nowhere. He was fair as a woman, and tall, with long gold hair. He approached and patted the horse, which quieted immediately under the touch of the Elf’s hand. “My name is Tavarion.”

“Greetings, Master Elf,” said Boromir stiffly, ill at ease, and dismounted from his horse. He did not really like such womanish looks in a man.

The Elf smiled. “Let me lead you to the Last Homely House.”

Boromir looked at the Elf. “Tell me—do you know aught of Halflings—and of Isildur’s Bane?”

The Elf looked alarmed and put his finger to his lips, glancing up at the cloudy sky. “Hush, Man of Gondor. Do not mention these things in the open! Elrond will tell you all—”

The Elf led Boromir up to the house, and then whistled: another Elf came and led the horse away. “Your poor horse is tired,” said Tavarion. “It is a long way from Minas Arnor, as it was.”

“Verily,” said Boromir, then blinked as two bearded Dwarves walked past, talking in the private language of the Dwarves. “Is it normal to have Dwarves in these halls?”

Tavarnon's gaze became opaque. "Nay, nay it is not, Man of Gondor. But these are strange days."

Boromir gaped at all the fair folk around him: men and women were equally fair and tall. He was not used to feeling unattractive or awkward, but the grace of these people was disconcerting. They stared at him gravely, and some whispered to one another. He did not altogether trust them. He was taken into a great Hall, wherein sat a dark-haired Elf, no older than he was.

The Elf turned to him, and Boromir realised, as he met the Elf's eyes, that he had been mistaken. The Elf was vastly older than he was: there was an unfathomable well of experience in those eyes.

"Greetings and welcome to Rivendell," said the Elf. "I am Elrond, master of this house."

"Elrond!" said Boromir. "You are the one I sought—Elrond the Half-Elven—! My name is Boromir of Gondor, Captain of the White Tower. My mission is urgent and I—"

Elrond looked at him thoughtfully and held up his hand. "You were expected, Captain Boromir. We are to hold a Council this afternoon, to which you will be invited. Now go, rest yourself—"

"But Isildur's Bane—and the Halfling—" said Boromir. "I come in great haste! My brother had a dream—"

"Rest yourself and you shall learn of these matters," said Elrond.

"Gondor could be burning!" said Boromir. "My father awaits my return. We need your counsel!"

Elrond looked distant. "Gondor does not burn yet, Captain Boromir. Go wash and rest."

Boromir was led back to his room by a silent Elf woman, where he fumed. He had come all this way through great peril and hardship, only to be told to wait? He was not quite sure who this Elrond was—his father had said only that he was a great lore master—but Boromir was vexed by his attitude. Elrond did not seem to understand the urgency of the situation, nor the import of Boromir's position: he was second only to his father, the ruler of Gondor. The assurance that Gondor did not burn yet was not altogether reassuring; if he was not mistaken there was an inference that it would burn in the future.

Nonetheless, he washed as bidden, and wondered if this whole quest had been a dreadful mistake. He cursed his brother Faramir and his wretched dream again, for the umpteenth time—then he recalled that Elrond had said that his arrival had been expected—and the hair rose on the back of his neck. If that part of the dream had been true, what else?

Then he squared his shoulders: he was a Man of Gondor, not an Elf who dallied. He would take this weapon and he would use it for the good of Gondor, when he discovered what it was.

End Notes

This story written by what_katy_did_1234, but in extensive consultation with another friend. We ended up consulting the appendices in great detail. In the appendices Boromir is described as follows:

“So time drew on to the War of the Ring, and the sons of Denethor grew to manhood. Boromir, five years the elder, beloved by his father, was like him in face and pride, but little else. Rather he was a man after the sort of King Eärnur of old, taking no wife and delighting chiefly in arms; fearless and strong, but caring little for lore, save the tales of old battles.”

Then we wondered what a “man after the sort of King Eärnur of old” might betoken? The Appendices say the following regarding Eärnur:

“Eärnur was a man like his father in valour, but not in wisdom. He was a man of strong body and hot mood; but he would take no wife, for his only pleasure was in fighting , or in the exercise of arms.”

He died at age 122, unmarried and without any children (despite being the sole heir to the Kingship of Gondor) after single-handedly attacking the Witch King of Angmar against the advice of the Elves. Obviously he was headstrong and somewhat foolish.

Then we thought about the speech Faramir gave to Éowyn when he was persuading her to marry him where he says to Éowyn:

“You desired to have the love of the Lord Aragorn. ... And as a great captain may to a young soldier he seemed to you admirable ...”

We wondered whether Faramir was talking about his own experience as Captain. What if he was in fact talking of the way he'd seen young soldiers behave towards his brother?

It's notable that there was another prominent male character, heir to a throne, who was apparently unmarried: Théodred of Rohan. When we get to Rohan he has been slain and—no one really mentions him in any detail—and we never get a sense of him. He is around Boromir's age, has no children, and there's no grieving widow.

We came up with a theory about what a “man after the sort of King Eärnur” might be (bearing in mind the euphemism “he never married”). Everything we've written is consistent with canon.

The story also explains the oddity that Boromir only has the dream about Imladris once, and why Faramir is so very upset by the fact that Boromir went in his stead on that quest.

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