

The Wandering Baron

A Tale of Plort

Three years in the past, Eshakhar sat in a nicely, if simply, carved wooden chair in her study at the Castle of Dawn. It had taken magical effort to raise the castle so quickly: two years or thereabouts was very little time, even for the construction of a relatively small castle. Even now, only some of the rooms were furnished, and the west wing was little more than foundations and the better part of the outer walls. Exhausted though giving the magical assistance had made her, however, Eshakhar was extremely pleased with the work she and the people she'd hired had done.

Her desk was some four feet away from the dark wooden chair she sat in; she glanced across the distance, frowning at the letter she had tucked neatly under a paperweight.

“Baron Eshakhar,” she murmured to herself. It sounded foreign to her ears, like words in a language she had yet to properly learn. “*Baron* Eshakhar. Baron *Eshakhar*.”

She could change the emphasis around all she liked: it still sounded strange.

She had been Knight Eshakhar of Plort for some years, having been knighted when she returned to the land as an adult. She had been Kayor-fayre, child of the East, for much longer. In far distant Ye'akkav, she had been a scholar, and sometimes addressed as such.

Never before had she been a baron. Never before had she dared to dream she might become one. And yet now, just as she had begun to think of returning to wandering, she had been gifted a barony.

“What caused this, Than?” she murmured, leaning over the arm of her chair to flick fresh sparks into the fireplace. An untouched bit of birch bark caught fire, producing a bright flame; with a murmured “*hidalek*” from Eshakhar, the fire spread to a thin log and caught. It inched toward the center of the log as she watched. “What was in the letter that called you East and South?”

Baron Thanasius Ampelius had been less than forthcoming with details. He had at least told her farewell, and passed to her the duties of ending some of his unfinished affairs in the land of Plort, but much of his thoughts he had kept to himself. In the end, he had packed a small bag, wished her well, and gone on his way.

She had thought to wander Plort, to relinquish fealty and return to her old life as a knight errant. It had suited her better, she felt, and she had been eager to resume that call once her castle could be left to her people to keep.

A barony changed all that. She could still wander, certainly, but not yet: not when there were unanticipated changes to be made. She would have greater lands, heavier responsibilities...

And yet, as eye-widening as it was, as strange as it felt, this new reality sat more comfortably on her shoulders with every few hours. She had received the letter in the morning; now, in the early evening after dinner, she felt the wild astonishment begin ever so slightly to ease.

She would grow. She would cope.

She would uphold her new duties with honor and dignity—

This will mean attendance at the Baronial Councils, she realized suddenly, and dropped her head to her hands with a groan. She had attended at least once before, as a knight, and had not been eager to return.

(Perhaps she could send a proxy...?)

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In the present day, three years later, Baron Na'Shirah halted her horse on a hilltop overlooking the Castle of Dawn. She had formally taken the new name of Na'Shirah while accepting the barony, feeling that this new chapter in her life deserved a new identity, and there were few now who yet named her Eshakhar. In the Y'ii'diish she now termed herself Zingen-mir rather than Kayor-fayre, to match the change from the Ye'akkavian Eshakhar to Na'Shirah.

Much had changed in three years. The Castle of Dawn was now built. Some rooms yet remained unfurnished, or furnished but sparsely; still, there was room enough for many, and much of the castle was, to its mistress' mind, quite beautiful.

Na'Shirah had also had the opportunity to knight several young hopefuls. The first time had been unnerving; with every one, though, the task grew more comfortable, just as the knowledge that she was now no longer merely a knight had settled onto her shoulders more and more easily as the days and months passed. In three years, it had molded better to her, left her mostly confident in the role she had been honored with.

(The Monastery of Spectacle had sunk back into ruin. This she knew from reports: she had not felt willing to see it for herself, despite knowing the place's fate was not counter to Thanasius' wishes. She preferred to remember it as it had been, that her memories of it might remain warm, as did her memories of her friend. That was as it should be.)

There was much to do, in her home. Many people to see, plans to make, animals to pet; much news to hear, ideas to approve or dismiss...

She would do it all, and more, she decided firmly, and nudged her horse into a downhill trot toward the Castle of Dawn. She had wandered long enough for now: it was time to return home.

Glossary:

In the language of Ye'akkav (RL Hebrew):

Eshakhar (esh+shakhar)=Dawnfire (literally: Firedawn)

Hidalek=light! (on fire, second person, imperative)

Na'Shirah=let's sing/let us sing! (plural first person imperative form of lashir, to sing). The double capitalization is also a minor callback to DawnFire, since Eshakhar didn't have it.

In Y'ii'diish (RL Yiddish):

Kayor-fayre=Dawn-fire

Zingen-mir=we sing/we are singing (poetically reversed conjugation of zingn, to sing, + pronoun)

Disclaimer: *Plort is a wonderful setting that was thought up by Huinesoron.*

Eshakhar/Na'Shirah is Zingenmir's; Baron Thanasius Ampelius was the work of Desdendelle, and is hereby finally retired by his request.