

Unleashed
An Alternate Point of View
By K. M. Shea

Benjimir grimly stared at the virtual sea of bandits that surrounded him and his men. As rough and tumble as the bandits appeared to be, none of them, he noted, would meet his gaze. *Cowards.*

He badly wanted to spit the words at them, but the gag in his mouth kept him silent—and his tied hands also kept him from displaying any rude gestures he had in mind as well.

He shifted his gaze to the shell of putrid yellow magic that encompassed the bandits. *This is despicable—and the surest sign we’ve seen yet that this is politically motivated. No bandit would snatch a royal—at least no half-intelligent bandit. No matter if this ends with my death or not, this will bring the wrath of the army upon them.*

He snorted, surprised he was able to view his own death with such cynicism. As a child he had made peace with the idea that—as a royal—there was a chance his end would be a bloody and unexpected one.

Unbidden, a memory of Gwendafyn scowling at him surfaced. *She’d wallop me for thinking such a thing...but there’s no way out of this. Even if we could break our bindings, our small group could not possibly hope to fight our way through this mob.*

Benjimir glanced at Thad. The soldier was standing placidly, never uttering a word—as they had been ordered by the bear-like men surrounding them. But his eyes never stopped moving, and instead his gaze roved across their little group.

A snuffle here, a cocked head there, a scuff of a boot every now and then...the signals were unobtrusive but certain: Thad was communicating silently with his men. And all of them listened, their chins lifted slightly, their expressions staunch.

Do they believe the Honor Guard will attack? It’s unlikely Arion and Father would make such a brash decision. They’ll likely try to wait it out and see if they can get a mage or wizard here in time.

Tari and Seer Ringali will not save us, they cannot. And Gwendafyn...

Benjimir’s throat tightened, and pain swept through his heart. *Gwendafyn. I can’t remember the last words I spoke to her. I haven’t had a chance to tell her I love her.* He shifted slightly and was unable to help the smirk that played on his lips. *I am certain her expression would be priceless. And then she would likely deny my feelings on my behalf. I’ll need a meticulous battle plan to sway her.*

He blinked in surprise when he realized that in the span of a few moments he had gone from not being terribly upset with the idea of his death, to the sudden decision that it wasn’t going to happen—it *couldn’t* happen—because for the first time in his life, he really had something worth fighting for.

And perhaps what is most surprising of all, is even if she doesn’t feel the same, Gwendafyn will fight for me, too. She must be enraged with this turn of events.

Briefly, there was a murmur of unease that swept across the bandits.

Faintly, Benjimir heard a man shout. “I said get *back!* Since you failed to listen, one of your little *soldiers* will be slain!”

Shouts sounded from the bandits’ front lines.

Benjimir exchanged looks with Thad, who nonchalantly maneuvered closer.

Just as Benjimir wondered if they should risk talking, a brilliant bolt of lightning tore through the blue sky and struck something at the edge of the barrier.

Thunder roared on the lightning's tracks, and *something*—a foreign source of power—rolled over the meadow with nearly enough force to send Benjimir to his knees.

Gwendafyn.

He didn't know how he knew it, but with not even a shadow of doubt, Benjimir knew Gwendafyn had come for them.

Though several moments had passed, the lightning hadn't dissipated. Instead it sparkled and cracked outside the magic wall.

She has to be there. Even if I can't see her over all these clods, she's there.

Magic that fizzled and hissed like lightning shot up the side of the barrier, slicing straight through it while an accompanying peal of thunder tolled like a bell.

A slice of the barrier evaporated—snuffed out like a candle.

The bandits began shouting in terror.

Benjimir craned his neck, trying to see over the wall of bandits that surrounded him. He could just barely see a flurry of movement at the far end of the formation—where Gwendafyn was, no doubt.

The bandits jostled against one another, and Benjimir, Thad, and the other Calnorian Honor Guards that had been captured with them were pushed backwards.

“What is going on?” one of the Honor Guards managed to ask in the bandits' fit of fright.

Benjimir nearly managed to smirk around his gag. *That's my wife.*

Thad listened thoughtfully. “That must be the Princess. Only she'd raise panic like this.”

A particularly weaselly looking guard winced. “A thousand times, yes,” he grumbled.

“Quiet!” snapped one of the nearby bandits.

“Defend, you imbeciles,” someone howled from the depths of the bandit's formation as the bandit forces finally stopped scrambling backwards.

Thad cleared his throat and returned to exchanging secret signals with his men, while Benjimir watched for any sign of Gwendafyn.

He still couldn't see her, but he knew her location due to the sparks of magic and screams of pain. As she carved a path through the bandits—clearing spaces around her—Benjimir could even hear the impact of her blows as she struck out at her deserving targets.

The bandits around them shifted in concern and crowded around Benjimir and the others.

When a number of men were *flung* into the air like ragdolls—smoke trails wafting in their wake—Benjimir tested the strength of his rope bonds.

A bandit—his hands slick with sweat—dragged Benjimir to the back of the group as the men around them shouted in panic.

In only a few heartbeats, Gwendafyn emerged above the heads and shoulders of the bandits. Her dark hair swirled around her, and she clenched Benjimir's sword in one hand as she perched on a bandit like a queen sitting on the finest throne.

Her magic sparked and popped around her—a moving embodiment of deadly power—and her expression was cold and dark.

Her eyes are glowing, Benjimir realized as he watched her. Little lightning bolts of magic snapped up the length of her sword, and the purple of her eyes seemed darker and more severe than usual. When she glanced at him and they briefly lock gazes, Benjimir had a hard time breathing. It was like falling into a river in winter—but not so dangerous. Just...*overwhelming.*

Gwendafyn briefly dipped from sight, and when she popped upright she held a dagger. “Thad! Catch!”

She threw the dagger and slipped from Benjimir’s view.

The dagger embedded itself in the ground near Thad’s feet.

A raider whirled around and lumbered for it, but the weaselly-looking Honor Guard headbutted him.

Thad snatched up the knife and cut through his rope ties, then set about freeing those closest to him.

The bandit who had hauled Benjimir around earlier roared as he unsheathed a sword. “Drop the weapon!” he ordered Thad.

Thad paused in the middle of freeing a guard. He started to pull his fingers from the dagger’s hilt when Benjimir struck.

He ground the heel of his boots onto the bandit’s foot, then rammed his skull into the bandit’s jaw, and finished him with a knee to the groin.

Thad returned to cutting the men free before the bandit flopped to the ground.

Benjimir strained against his gag as Gwendafyn’s magic whirled just past the rim of bandits that guarded Benjimir and his men.

Bandits shouted in pain as her lightning-like powers crackled, filling the air with the scent of smoke and blood.

It created the perfect atmosphere for their escape. With the bandits running scared, the Honor Guards were able to fall back into formation and help untangle one another from their bonds.

Thad finally reached Benjimir and removed his gag. “Are you injured, Your Highness?” he asked.

“No—how could I be when my cute wife has come to rescue me?” Benjimir asked with an arched brow.

Thad wore an insincere smile as he started to cut through the rest of Benjimir’s bonds. “You and her are certainly a match that *deserve* each other,” he grumbled—most likely unaware Benjimir could hear him. “Both of you are mad in the head.”

Benjimir grinned as Gwendafyn rammed through the bandits encircling them.

He nodded politely at her, noticing with some smugness how her shoulders relaxed when she saw he was free. *Confessing to her might be an uphill battle, but it won’t be impossible. Also, how pathetic am I that I am pondering such a thing now of all times? I have grown soft.* He shook his head slightly as he took the dagger from Thad once fully freed.

“Don’t move!” Gwendafyn shouted as she whirled her sword—*his* sword—and swung it up to hold it aloft above her head.

Answering her summons, an enormous lightning bolt—paired with a deafening peal of thunder that made Benjimir’s teeth chatter—struck. It broke through the barrier as if it were made of paper and hit Gwendafyn, making her glow as brightly as a star as it flooded the area with enough power to make Benjimir’s hair stand on end.

Benjimir smiled as he swiped a sword from a nearby bandit and watched Gwendafyn’s magic—as white and bright as it was—form the shape of a heart.

It’s fitting. No matter how terrifying and powerful she is, in the end it’s because she’s all heart.

Her magic burned brighter, and Benjimir had to shut his eyes against the sight.

There was a musical crack—like glass breaking—and her magic unleashed. Men screamed and shouted as Gwendafyn’s magic snapped, flooding the area with raw power that invaded and overwhelmed.

When everything stilled—except for the cries of fallen bandits—Benjimir risked opening his eyes.

Gwendafyn’s magic had cleared the area, giving the Honor Guards—many of whom had fallen to the ground—the time to scramble to their feet and snatch weapons off the unconscious bandits piled around them.

Gwendafyn, Benjimir was relieved to see, seemed fine. She turned towards him with a slight smile.

Benjimir’s heart stopped in his chest. There—not three paces behind Gwendafyn—a bandit lumbered to his feet, a wicked-looking axe clenched in his hands.

No.

Gwendafyn took a step towards Benjimir. “Ben, are you injured—”

The bandit started to swing his axe at the back of Gwendafyn’s head. *How could she not hear that!*

Benjimir tried to shout, but his mouth was glued shut in horror. He could only hear the pounding of his heart as he flung Thad’s dagger at the bandit, hitting him in the shoulder.

It wasn’t until Gwendafyn spun to face the dagger that Benjimir could finally breathe again.

I almost lost...no. Benjimir doggedly shook his head and refused to even ponder such a thing. Still, a strangled “Fyn!” escaped his lips, and he embraced his impulse to hold her close.

Gwendafyn squirmed, and for a moment Benjimir feared she was trying to get free of his grasp, but all she did was turn around so she could embrace him with one arm.

(She still, Benjimir was happy to see, had not released her sword. His sword? No, her sword. After fighting with it like this, she had the greater claim to it. If she wanted it. *Perhaps that is one way to her heart...giving her a bundle of swords.*)

When she rested her head on his shoulder, Benjimir hoped that if her superior elf ears did pick up on the erratic beat of his heart, she would attribute it to the fight and not to the fright he was still recovering from.

I’ve got to come up with some kind of plan to aid her in fights. Magic or not, no warrior—no matter how talented—can watch himself at all times in a fight like this.

“You’re uninjured,” Gwendafyn said.

Benjimir buried a hand in her hair. “Unlike you. You *idiot!*”

Gwendafyn squinted up at him. “What did you say?”

Benjimir frowned—mostly to keep himself from wrapping her in an even tighter embrace. “How could you risk yourself like that?”

“You were captured,” Gwendafyn said as Thad and the other Honor Guards shifted their formation so they surrounded Gwendafyn and Benjimir in a circle.

“So? You should have sent Arion.”

“Oh, yes, because Arion possesses secret, hidden skills that let him bust down magic barriers. There was no other way—we didn’t have any wizards or mages in our pockets that we could conveniently pull out at a moment’s notice,” Gwendafyn scoffed.

Oddly, her sarcasm made Benjimir feel infinitely better. But he narrowed his eyes as he prodded her arms and waist, checking her for injuries. “There is *always* another way.”

“Quiet—the rescued doesn’t get to vote on or criticize the method in which they are rescued,” Gwendafyn complained. “And *what* are you doing? I am not a cat to be stroked!”

“I’m checking for wounds.” Benjimir eyed a tear in her sleeve. *That better not be a puncture wound...* “Because apparently you can’t be trusted to think of your own welfare.”

He was vaguely aware that Gwendafyn stared at him, but he was too preoccupied with checking her over to give it much thought. *If she’s hurt I’m going to kill someone.*

“I should break your nose,” she said reflectively.

That finally broke Benjimir out of his focus. He scowled and was about to reply when Thad interrupted.

“Your Highnesses, I realize the both of you are having a charming reunion,” Thad said.

“In what country does this constitute as charming?” Gwendafyn asked.

Benjimir scoffed as he angrily stared at her bleeding calf wound. *Yes, this is unacceptable. I’m not going to keep her from fighting—I don’t think I could if I wanted to—but something has to be done about this.* “Next time if you come with a squadron of men and a calf that is *not* bleeding so heavily it’s dying your whole boot red, I’ll be positively charismatic.”

“There shouldn’t have to be a NEXT TIME!” Gwendafyn shouted.

“Your Highnesses!” Thad said in a voice that was one pitch away from a wail. “We really ought to leave!” Despite his upset tone, he whirled his blade with expertise, dispatching a bandit with ease.

Benjimir reluctantly removed his hands from her waist. As little as he liked the *reason* for the check over, he was never going to complain about touching his wife. “This is not over,” he warned.

“I agree.” Gwendafyn twisted away from him, lunging into a jump-slash and pouncing on a bandit.

Benjimir mourned the lack of a dagger as he eyed their surroundings.

The bandits were no longer even pretending to hold a formation. They ran around the walled in area, tripping over one another and shouting in fear.

When Gwendafyn blocked a strike from a fearful rogue and shoved him off balance so he flung his arms wide open, Benjimir darted in and kicked the bandit with all the irritation and anger he had been harboring since being captured, sending the man flying.

Overhead, the yellow barrier sputtered, then rippled before imploding. Magic fell from the sky—though it faded before it reached them.

“Did someone take out the mage?” He nearly smiled when he found a wooden spear. He twirled it above his head before jabbing at a bandit that was lunging for an already fighting Honor Guard.

“I never came across him as I fought my way through,” Gwendafyn said.

Thad ducked a spear, then slashed a man across the shin. “Do you hear that?”

Benjimir could make out faint shouts, but little beyond that. (The bandit’s fearful shouts and yells were too overpowering.)

“Sounds like the Honor Guards,” Gwendafyn said. “But where are they?”

Benjimir opened his arms. “Want to take a look?”

Carefully holding her spark-spitting sword away from him, Gwendafyn hopped into his arms. She was light, and clambered up without hesitation, easing herself onto his shoulders with no difficulty.

“Colonel Arion and King Petyrr are leading a charge from the south. Grygg is leading a second charge in the north. The bandits are running scared: they’re no match for them, the guards

are subduing them with ease!” Gwendafyn shifted on his shoulders, and didn’t seem to notice Benjimir when he scowled pointedly at her injured—and *still bleeding!*—calf.

“Can you see the bandit leader?” He finally called up to her. “A pasty-skinned man—tall as a tree and wearing leather armor.”

Gwendafyn shook her head as she scanned the crowd, pausing and cocking her head when she gazed east.

“Fyn,” Benjimir said when she kept staring. “Have you found him yet?”

She resumed scanning for a few more moments, until a smile teased at her lips. “I see him. He’s to the west.”

“I will signal to Grygg,” Thad said. “We must prioritize getting you to safety, Your Highnesses.”

Gwendafyn gracefully swung off Benjimir’s shoulders. “There’s no time for that. We’re the closest force to him, and he’s about to escape.”

Thad frowned. “You two are the future of Calnor. A bandit leader is not worth the risk.”

“I understand your concerns,” Benjimir said to Thad as he watched Gwendafyn adjust her sword belt and her hand position on the hilt of her borrowed sword. “But I don’t believe it matters at all to my wife.”

“It doesn’t.” Gwendafyn blinked as some of the magic still swirling around her sword leaped to her and crackled up and down her body.

We need that bandit leader, or he might make more groups, and Gwendafyn isn’t going to stop until she gets her teeth in him. He weighed his options for a moment as he observed Gwendafyn’s magic. She’s our best choice. She won’t have a problem downing him, as little as I like to send her out alone...

Benjimir sauntered past her, pausing just long enough to murmur to her, “Go. I’ll brow-beat your trainer into following.”

Gwendafyn nodded once, then made a break for it.

“*Princess!*” Thad called in an aggravated tone, but Gwendafyn was gone before he could say more. The bedraggled patrol leader swung around to frown accusingly at Benjimir. “Your Highness,” he said. It wasn’t accusatory sounding, but it was about as close as the Honor Guard had ever come to delivering a scold.

“Did you think she would mildly sit by with us and wait for reinforcements?” Benjimir asked.

Thad scowled, and past him the weasel-lad reflectively shook his head.

Benjimir rolled bandits over, searching for one with a halfway decent sword. “The battle is nearly won. Most of the bandits are subdued, and after her little display at the wall I *highly* doubt anyone here is a match for her.”

“You trust her,” Thad said.

“To an extent.” Benjimir grunted in satisfaction when he found a sword with a blade that was actually cared for and not warped beyond use. “I trust her not to get herself killed. Trusting that she won’t get herself wounded is another matter entirely.”

Benjimir stood and gazed across the battlefield. Enough of the bandits had surrendered that he could see the eastern side of the fight where Seer Ringali, Tari, and that cat of hers played with the enemy mage. “Reconvene with the forces under Colonel Arion and my father.”

“Yes, Sir.” Thad saluted.

“I’m going after Gwendafyn. Tell my father so he won’t worry.”

“Yes, Sir.” Though Thad’s words were respectful there was a slightly reproachful look in his gaze.

You get kidnapped with a man and suddenly he loses most of his fear of you. I’ll have to tell Arion we’ll need to hold some sort of hellish practice or soon my reputation will be entirely tarnished.

It was likely that openly doting on Gwendafyn wasn’t going to aid his cause, but sometimes sacrifices had to be made.

Shaking his head, Benjimir jogged off in the direction Gwendafyn had, moving west.

He skirted a group of Honor Guards from the northern front who were starting to march captive bandits towards the rest of the troops. Wilford was making a beeline for them, but when he saw Benjimir he stopped and saluted. “Sir!”

“We’re in a battle, Wilford, at ease,” Benjimir said dryly as he caught sight of Gwendafyn stalking towards the bandit leader, who was flopped out on the ground and shaking in fear. “Anything to report?”

“The country that organized and hired the bandits has been successfully identified,” Wilford said.

Benjimir blinked in surprise—*he* knew who was behind the mess as the lead bandits had terrible accents, but how had Wilford and the others learned? “What led to this discovery?”

“Seer Ringali and Lady Tarinthali...*intimidated* the mage, who confessed to everything,” Wilford said.

“Ah,” Benjimir said. *I’m hardly surprised. Seer Ringali is as pleasant to behold as a poisonous cabbage on his best of days. With the snow cat at their side and their magic swirling, I doubt many would be able to hold out against that pair.* “Excellent work.”

Benjimir watched the bandit leader cry as Gwendafyn approached him. “P-p-please, don’t kill me!”

Benjimir nodded in her direction. “I’m off to watch Fyn turn the leader into mincemeat. Secure the area.”

“Yessir!”

Benjimir hurried after Gwendafyn—who was making her stand against the bandit leader at the edge of the battlefield. She left wisps of smoke in her trail as her magic singed the ground she strode upon, slowly drawing closer to the bandit leader. “Of course, I won’t kill you.” Her sword shed white sparks of lightning as she rotated her wrist back and forth. “If I do, who will carry my message back to your king?” She crouched down next to him and smiled. Her eyes were glowing again, making the gesture frighteningly beautiful—like a massive storm sweeping across the sea.

“I-I-I am of Calnor—”

“Do not lie to me.” Gwendafyn’s voice was as cold and unforgiving as sharpened steel. “You were dispatched with the sole task of harassing the people of Calnor, as I’m sure your little mage friend will confirm when we properly *welcome* her.”

She stood, but the quivering bandit leader remained splayed on the ground. Her voice lofty, Gwendafyn pointed her sword at his chest. “Tell your masters this.”

She drove her sword into the ground just a hand’s width from the bandit leader’s head.

The sword radiated power, flooding the ground with her scorching magic. It ignited, and the ground beneath them exploded sending rocks, clods of dirt, and dust into the air.

Benjimir was glad he stopped when he had—if he had moved closer he probably would have gotten a dirt clod in the face.

It wasn't until a strong wind blew through the meadow that the dust and cloudy air cleared so Benjimir could once again see Gwendafyn and the most likely paralyzed-with-fear bandit leader.

The meadow around Gwendafyn was destroyed, leaving them in a jagged crater at least a foot below the surface that was formed in the shape of a heart. In that crater the ground was gouged and cracked, as if her magic had torn through the earth like an animal. An occasional spark of her magic jumped across the crater, making the bandit leader flinch with every movement.

It seems she is very powerful indeed. And remarkably her drive comes out of the desire to protect—or she wouldn't be nearly so...vengeful. Benjimir noted vaguely—he was mostly occupied with watching Gwendafyn, who was as beautiful as ever even as she planted her foot on the bandit leader's chest.

Benjimir risked drawing closer so he could hear her murmur, "Calnor does not stand alone. And if more forces are sent, they will be greeted by *me*, Princess Gwendafyn of Calnor and Lessa."

The bandit leader squeaked when Gwendafyn stood straight, easing away from him. She yanked her sword from the ground, releasing several more bolts of her crackling magic.

The bandit leader yelped.

Gwendafyn effortlessly hopped out of the crater with a half-smile. "Go," she sternly ordered the bandit leader when he finally rallied enough courage to sit upright. "Warn your king, little man. Your life *depends* on your success."

As soon as the words dropped from her mouth, an explosion of magic made the ground shake and rumble—Seer Ringali and Tari, probably—and Tari's snow cat roared.

The man stumbled to his feet and sprinted to his horse, which had fled Gwendafyn's assault. The bandit leader grabbed it by the bridle and threw himself at its side. The beast snorted and shied away, but the man held tight and scrambled into the saddle.

Gwendafyn watched him go as Benjimir finally moved to stand with her. "You let him go?" he asked. "Father will be so disappointed."

"I wanted to send a direct message." Gwendafyn rolled her head—likely to loosen her neck muscles. "Besides, you've figured out which of your 'allies' is behind this, haven't you?"

"The accents were easy to place given all the traveling I did before we were married," Benjimir said. "But I am honored you think so highly of my intelligence that you thought I would be able to discern such a thing."

Gwendafyn snorted. "If I didn't know you were capable of *that* small thing, you would have eaten me for breakfast when I first proposed."

"For certain." Benjimir agreed. "But we won't have to rely on my word anyway. I encountered Wilford on my way to you. It seems Lady Tarinthali and Seer Ringali have taken it upon themselves to frighten the mage into spilling her guts."

"Ahh, I expect that explosion was them, then."

"Yes. They have an interesting way of *inspiring* a flow of information." Benjimir kissed her temple. He wanted to do more, but this wasn't the time or place, and such a gesture would be selfish as Gwendafyn was clearly tired and preoccupied. "And I do owe you a thank you."

"You have finally made peace with the method of your rescue?" Gwendafyn raised her eyebrows at him as they turned around to observe the last remnants of the battle.

Wilford and his men swept the area, but in truth most of the bandits had been put down. There were only a few resistors, and as they watched they were quickly felled.

“To a certain extent,” Benjimir said wryly. “I am thankful you came for me. You were the only one with the ability to do so.”

“And yet you still object to it?”

“Not really. You have the power. It is more that I do not like you running around by yourself.” Benjimir thoughtfully watched Arion smash two bandits’ heads together.

Arion has a troublemaker for a wife, and he’s managed to find a way to protect her secretly... Should I do something similar? Aloud, he mused, “Perhaps I shall follow Arion’s example and invest in a Snow Cat, though maybe a wolf would better suit you? I imagine it would be easier to train to come find me if you were in trouble...”

Gwendafyn glanced up at him, her eyes bright with curiosity. “Wasn’t Sius meant to be just a pet—albeit an exotic one?”

Benjimir snorted. “Are you jesting? No, not ever. Arion knows his wife well enough to realize she was likely to continue to mix herself in all sorts of trouble in the future, and unlike you, her ability to fight back is limited. No, Arion got Sius because he was the best disguised bodyguard he could find.”

Gwendafyn laughed, but the beautiful sound faded quickly. “But you truly are not angry I fought—or...*bothered* by my magic?”

This is important. I have to make it clear I don’t mind, or she’s going to remember this moment forever. So Benjimir took great pains to watch the battlefield as if he didn’t have a care in the world. “Why would such a thing bother me?”

Gwendafyn blinked, shocked by his answer. “...because?”

Benjimir snorted. “I’m not your mincing family, Fyn. You have magic—good for you. Now as how to use it, *that* I have several ideas we should discuss at a more appropriate time.” He smiled wickedly and hoped he had said the right thing.

Gwendafyn stared at him.

I think that did it. “But I do have a question for you,” Benjimir continued. He finally shifted his gaze to her so he could watch and carefully judge her reaction. “How are you?”

“What do you mean?”

“You haven’t ever shed blood before,” Benjimir said.

Gwendafyn paused and started to look down, but when her gaze settled on her blood smeared sword she abruptly raised her eyes to the sky. “I’m fine right now, but I don’t think it has set in yet.” She paused, then added in a small voice, “But later tonight...”

I will have to do something tonight. No matter how strong and courageous she is, she shouldn’t be alone after her first fight. Benjimir curled an arm around her shoulders. “To be one who fights is a burden. You shed blood to protect others and are responsible for multitudes of lives. Regret, sadness—those mean you are a *good* warrior, Gwendafyn. For if such things do not affect a person, then their soul is shattered beyond repair.”

Gwendafyn stared out at the battlefield where Petyrr stomped around and shouted orders to guards. “I hope you are right.”

Benjimir blinked and forced himself to stand tall, even though all he wanted to do was scoop Gwendafyn up and drag her from the bloody field. *That wouldn’t accomplish anything, except annoy her. The only thing I can give her now is my presence, and my love—even if she isn’t aware of it.*

The End