

Dearest Éowyn,

again I must apologise for not sending word sooner. Again 'tis almost a week since my last message, as I noticed with a slight shock. I am a bit worried about your silence. Please tell me you are well and have recovered from your illness. How are the boys? I hope they are not bothered by their colds any longer, or, in Peregrin's case, have not contracted one. I miss you all. 'Tis so quiet around here, and it feels strange to enter a room without stumbling over some toy lying on the floor.

I should like to tell you I am well, but alas, the nasty illness that seems to be roaming the City has struck me down as well. The past three days I have done little but sleep, but still I feel somewhat weak and shaky. Also, the fever has not quite abated yet. The strange thing is I do not know whence I got this cold – if cold it is. I have not been sneezing like most people around here, nor coughing, although the past week or so ere Elessar finally banished me from council and confined me to bed I had been feeling very tired and often cold, or dizzy when rising quickly from a seat. I put it down to the long hours in council and the general stress I had been under. Three days ago, however, I very uncharacteristically overslept, and arrived in council shortly ere noon, to few nasty comments, surprisingly.

Here I should add that things have calmed down a little, thankfully, with the Tolfalas-issue more or less settled. I cannot commend Elessar enough for his seemingly unending patience – recalling how short-tempered Denethor used to be in comparable situations –, but it showed that there are limits to it as well. The day after I sent the last letter, he openly rebuked some of the most forward gentlemen, and moreover sanctioned them somewhat strictly. None of them has dared speak up and complain, not even Ondoher. Most likely because they are aware of the justice of what they received for their “destructive behaviour”, as the King called it. To my utter surprise, some had even become really cooperative. And no mention anymore of me being in league with Al-Jahmir.

But back to that day. I felt like I had had no rest at all, had no appetite, and even though the chamber was sufficiently heated by the large fireplace and I was dressed warmly, I was cold. The longer the meeting lasted, the more difficult I found it to follow what was being said, and when during a break I tried to rise from my chair, I must have swayed so much that Amrothos leaped to my side to steady me. I learned that he and Imrahil who had been sitting next to me had been watching me with increasing concern. I had not noticed it, although obviously a number of people had. Elessar took me aside and strongly advised me to return home, despite my vote being needed afterwards.

I did not feel that bad, honestly, just cold and tired, with a slight headache, but he was adamant. There was true concern in his eyes. So I had little choice except obeying. Amrothos escorted me home. I went to bed straight away, and when I woke very early the next morning I found Aragorn and Imrahil at my bedside. It looked like they had been there for quite a while, perhaps the entire night. Now I grew concerned as well as I had not felt that ill the day before, but when I asked them they assured me my condition had a no point been critical. They just wanted to account for all eventualities. Thus I knew they had feared that my strange symptoms were rather due to what the poison has done to my body than the cold or whatever I caught.

I must admit this realisation unsettled me somewhat. As the summer has shown, my constitution has indeed suffered from the poison, but so far I have not seen this as a reason to worry, as long as I look after myself. It could be that the past days have only been a combination of unlucky coincidences, yet there is also a possibility that I cannot cope with stress and work like I used to. I recall Teherin and others warn that this could be the case, but so far I think I have tried to ignore their predictions. All my life I was seldom troubled by illness. 'Tis difficult to accept that things might have changed. I sometimes feel like I cannot trust my own body anymore, which is highly frustrating. But what can I do? Elessar encouraged me by pointing out that whatever I con-

tracted is likely to have affected others even worse. Usually he is very frank in his dealings with me, knowing I would perceive if he was not, so I believe he did not simply tell me this to cheer me up.

I am ranting, am I not? And surely I worry you with my talk. Forgive me. Even though I have regular visitors, I cannot help feeling lonely without you and the little ones; especially now – which is not meant to encourage you to take risks in journeying over. The roads are still evil, I have heard the errand-riders complain. There is no need to worry about me. I am on the mend. Not confined to the bed anymore, and although I am still feverish, I can walk about without fear of fainting any moment. My appetite has returned as well, as I am sure you will be glad to hear. Also I am increasingly restless, which usually is a good sign.

There is one advantage of my state: I do not have to attend council at the moment, although Elessar and especially Imrahil who is due to arrive any moment have kept me updated of the events. It appears I have not missed much. What else passed over here? I have not see Túrin recently. I know he wanted to visit, but was discouraged by the King who feared he might catch the illness and pass it on to Vorondil and his father. It seems Húrin and his son have had a conversation on the eve of the day I had to leave council. Elessar said as much, although he was not able to tell me more. You inquired about Húrin's illness. I asked the King about it, but he said he was not sure yet what exactly was causing the symptoms. It might be some kind of cancer, or else a disease he has not encountered before.

Ah, here comes Imrahil, with the errand-rider trailing after him. Which means I must close now, in order to send the message on its way. Fare you well, you and the boys. I fervently hope we shall not be parted much longer.

*Love always,
Faramir*

