

Dearest Éowyn,

our company has just arrived in the city, and while Elessar proceeded to calling on Falastur, to find more about his strange invitation, thankfully I was allowed to remain behind. The journey was far swifter (and thus more exhausting) than everybody expected, but we rode speedily and without many breaks except those at night.

Apart from some trouble on the ferry across Anduin which Narák did not like at all, nothing untoward befell on the way south. As for the crossing, I still believe it was a good decision to take the boat to Harlond instead of riding all the way up to Osgiliath. It saved a lot of time, although certainly my horse does not share my opinion. He was so frightened of the wooden planks and indeed the swaying ground underneath his hooves that it proved impossible to keep him calm. Halfway across the river he managed to tear himself free, and he sent one of the poor ferrymen diving (virtually) for cover from his flailing hooves. The man went over the railing, but fortunately his comrades reacted in time and threw him a rope so that he could pull himself out again and was not carried off by the strong current.

This accident left all of us somewhat shaken, and I was glad for the fact I had to wait for Elessar at the South-gate of the Pelennor for a few hours, which gave us some time to collect ourselves and rest after the excitement on the boat. When the King arrived finally, to my surprise I spotted Túrin in his retinue. Later I learned that Aragorn had persuaded him to accompany him. Apparently this had taken him quite some time and skill, because at first Túrin had outrightly refused to leave his family in these troubled times. But Elessar can be very persistent as well I know, and in the end Túrin yielded. I am glad he did so. I daresay the journey has done him good. He really needed a change of air and scenery.

Already on the second day of our journey I thought I recognised more of his old cheerful self in him. He smiled more often, and at one point actually suggested that since he had not managed to celebrate his birthday properly a month ago, he would like to hold a feast in summer or early autumn, and to invite faraway friends like Maradir and Khorazir. It was really good to hear him talk like this again. Of course the fact that lately his father has been quite well, and actually has begun to resume some of his former duties is helping to cheer him up. There is still the matter with Visilya, however. Perhaps you know more about what is going on between her and her husband. I carefully broached the subject, but I have not found out much, only that there appears to be some problem or other. I am not sure if it is still the second-child-issue or something different. Túrin himself appears unable to define what it is exactly. Perhaps Visilya has a clearer notion of it, and has conversed with you about it.

Did anything befall at home I should know of? Peregrin has not tried to stuff another pea into his nose, has he? I still wonder how he managed to get it in so deep. And has Meriadoc behaved himself and not tried to eat any more grass? I hope so. I still do not entirely believe Elboron's claim that he did not tell him to. I am sure he meant no harm, but he does know his brother is not a pony. But at the moment our eldest is full of mischief, I have come to realise, and is definitely testing how far he can go. I hope he is not giving you too much trouble. I shall look for a miniature boat with sails he can let swim on the ponds and in the bath-tub for his birthday-present, if that is alright with you. I will be back in time. One missed birthday is enough. If Falastur has other plans for the duration of this meeting, he will have to pursue them without me present.

Any tidings from the South? 'Tis strange – nay, by now 'tis worrying – that we have heard naught from Azrahil or Khorazir for so long. I keep wondering if our last letters reached them at all, and indeed what happened to the young man. I mentioned my concerns to Elessar, and instead of soothing me, he informed me that he has encountered a disruption of correspondance, too, by the looks of it. The regular accounts of some of his informants in the South have not come in for some time, or only sporadically. On one the seals were broken, and a sheet appeared to be missing, and one errand-rider actually described how he had only narrowly escaped an

ambush. He was unable to tell who had set it. I have already sent word to Mablung to increase our patrols around Poros, and moreover to send men foraging into Harondor to watch the roads. We depend on the safe and speedy delivery of messages. Whoever tries to disrupt this must be stopped.

Not to mention that some of the messages might be dangerous in the wrong hands, and you know what hands I mean. Perhaps we should reconsider our plans for journeying down south to Khorazir's wedding, as much as I should like to attend. But something is brewing in the South, and ere we know more about it, we should tread with care down south, or rather not tread at all. Aragorn said so as well when I mentioned Khorazir's invitation. He understands that we would like to be present at the feast, but he also warned me of the dangers. I could tell that partly he still blames himself for the fact he did not manage to catch Al-Jahmir a year ago. Of course we cannot be certain – doubtless Marek is not the only one who enjoys troubling Gondor's errand-riders – but somehow all signs appear to be pointing in the direction of the cursed Umbarian. And if there is indeed Al-Jahmir waiting for us down there ... I am torn between the wish to try and catch him, to finally punish him for what he has done to us, and between my fear for your (and my) safety. Even if the children remain at home, I should not like to endanger you, but ensure that both their parents return to them unscathed. And with him out there ... I do not know if I can give that guarantee. Do I sound like I fear this man? In fact, Elessar asked me if I do, and I admitted to it. 'Tis no secret that the memories of my imprisonment at Tolfalas still haunt me. They have not faded as much as I expected them to. And I would not like to have them refreshed.

Túrin was silent throughout our talk about possible journeys to the South, watching the southern horizon with a dreamy expression. I know he would like to come as well, and actually I believe Khorazir would be pleased if he joined us. But 'tis doubtful Visilya would let him go. Perhaps she fears he would not return for some time.

Ah, it looks like I will not spend the evening in my quarters after all. A servant has just delivered a message from Imrahil who invites Túrin and myself to dine with him tonight. Apparently he has been in Pelargir for some days already, and is eager for tidings about you and the children. And I for my part am curious as to what he has to tell. Thus I shall close now, send the errand-rider on his way so that he can catch the last ship set to journey up Anduin today, and then go down to meet him.

Please tell the boys I miss them (even their pranks) and shall return to them soon. No need to mention, you I miss as well. As well as your pranks.

*Love,
Faramir*