A Day at the Houses

by lindahoyland

Notes

A Day at the Houses

The physician must not only be the healer, but often the consoler - Harriot K. Hunt

These characters all belong to the estate of J.R.R. Tolkien. This story was written for pleasure and not for financial gain.

With thanks to Virtuella and Raksha

Humming softly to himself, Aragorn, flanked by two guards, made his way to the Houses of Healing for his weekly visit. Out of all his duties, healing gave him the greatest satisfaction. Not only was it an opportunity to help his subjects, but also to meet them and learn about their joys and sorrows.

Dame Idril, a plump and pleasant faced woman in her middle years, who cared for many of the women and children, met him at the door, a troubled expression on her face. "I am glad you are here, my lord," she said. "A woman was brought in with a high fever yesterday. She is very agitated and in great distress."

"Athelas should help her," said Aragorn and followed the woman in what had become a familiar routine as she ordered a servant to bring some hot water.
Within the hour, the sick woman was sleeping peacefully, her mind calmed and the fever abated by the athelas and Aragorn's healing touch.

"Who else requires my help today?" Aragorn asked.

"Old Finnwyn is much troubled by painful ulcers on her legs, but I have no idea if she will see you or not," said Idril. "She is quite a character!"

"Why not ask her?" Aragorn suggested.

He followed Idril to Finnwyn's room and waited outside the door.

"No, it isn't proper, having a man in my room, it isn't!" shouted an old woman's voice from within.

"He is the King and a great healer too," Idril reasoned.

"Well, he's still a man, and I am not having a man in my bedroom," Finnwyn said firmly. "I'll box his ears if dares come near my bed, king or not!"

Idril emerged from the room and closed the door behind her. "I fear the lady says no," she replied.

Aragorn smiled wryly. "She is not the first patient to refuse my help, and it is her right. I will send you some Elven salves which should aid her."

Just then, Aragorn's friend and fellow healer, Aedred, appeared. "Pardon me, Mistress Idril," he said, "but the Warden would welcome the King's help in treating a man with a badly fractured leg. Poppy juice is not easing his pain."

Aragorn followed the Rohirric healer to a room where the Warden, Tarostar, was trying to set a broken limb. Two assistants held down the writhing and screaming patient. Aragorn hastened to the bedside and gripped the man's hand, laying his other hand on the sweat soaked brow. "Easy, now, easy!" he said in a compelling yet soothing tone. He then closed his eyes and held his hands a few inches about the injured leg.

The patient's breathing eased as the pain lessened. "Thank you," he whispered. He managed a faint smile. Aragorn then sent him into a healing slumber while his injury was treated.

"Thank you, my lord," said Tarostar. "It should be a simple matter to set the broken bone now."

"There is another patient I will take you to see," said Aedred. "One Amras, who was until recently apprenticed to a carpenter until he was dismissed for idleness. He is troubled by pains in his limbs, which render him unable to walk, and none here can find the cause. Master Tarostar has examined him, as have I. You are our last hope of determining his malady!"

"I am certain if anything serious ailed him, you would have found it," said Aragorn. "Nevertheless, I will see what I can do."

Amras started to moan quietly as Aragorn and Aedred entered the room, and when Aragorn examined him, he screamed louder than the patient with the broken leg. Aragorn held his hands a few inches above the man's limbs and frowned at his findings. "This is a strange malady indeed, Master Aedred," he said, winking at the Rohirric healer. "The only way we can help this poor fellow is to amputate all his limbs, which I suggest we do immediately!"

With a loud cry of alarm, Amras leapt from the bed and grabbed his clothes. Still wearing his nightshirt, he fled from the room.
Aedred burst out laughing. "One of your most miraculous cures yet, my lord!" he chuckled. "We suspected he was in search of free bed and board, but had no way of proving it!"

"I could sense his limbs were sound" said Aragorn and grinned. "Of course he had no way of knowing that. I doubt he will trouble you again unless a genuine malady afflicts him! Now who else do you want me to see?"

"I think that is all for today as -" Aedred was unable to finish the sentence because he was interrupted by a servant telling him that a youth had been admitted.

"You are welcome to come with me if you have the time, my lord," said the healer as he bustled off to see his next patient.

"I am always happy to assist you," said Aragorn, easily outpacing his companion.

They found the boy, who appeared to be about seventeen years of age, lying on a bed looking rather pale and clutching his chest.

"What happened, lad?" Aragorn asked kindly.

"I went to visit my sweetheart and we were just exchanging a kiss." The boy flashed scarlet.

"Only a kiss?" Aedred asked sternly.

"I swear it was, master," said the boy. "Her brother objected, though, as he came back from market at just the wrong moment. He punched me and I fell against a table."

"Let me have a look and see what the damage is," said Aragorn, while Aedred helped the unhappy boy to remove his tunic and shirt and covered him with a blanket. "Now where does it hurt?"

"Here," said the boy, gesturing to the ribs on his left side.

"I fear you have two cracked ribs, lad," said Aragorn as he skilfully examined the youth. "I will ease your pain as best I can, but you will have to rest while they heal. And resting includes not visiting young ladies with protective brothers!"

"Yes, Master Healer," said the boy who obviously did not recognise the King, though he looked puzzled when Aragorn eased his pain by holding his hands a few inches above the injury before applying a salve made from comfrey leaves.

"You can stay here overnight," said Aedred. "You ought to be able to go home tomorrow. I will fetch you a nightshirt to wear."

He left the room, accompanied by Aragorn.

"I think he will be well, but send for me if he has any difficulty breathing during the night," said Aragorn.

"Injuries like this must seem very mundane for a healer who has healed the Black Breath and terrible battle wounds," Aedred remarked.

"How much better things are, though," said the King. "A few years ago, a boy of this age would be fighting orcs. I have seen far younger ones die among the Northern Dúnedain fighting for their lives and everything they hold dear. I would prefer by far to be tending the victims of love rather than war."
A/N. This is an extended version of a ficlet written for the prompt "Bed" in the AA Group. A Tale of Telcontar.

I have not forgotten "Coastal Tales" and hope to resume them soon.

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