

Good morning, Suramar.

I find myself waking up at a sensible time more and more nowadays, even though work has been put on hold for... obvious reasons.

That doesn't mean that I don't still wake up groggy, with crusty eyes and a ringing in my ears and hair that would make even a Highmountain native look well groomed. I still force myself up and spend far too long in a blisteringly hot shower, and maybe finding something to wear is far harder than it needs to be. For what it's worth, I ended up going for a light hoodie. Even with all of that, I was out and there by eight, and I sat down on a stool next to the countertop of a petite café that runs alongside the canal.

I always liked it here. While I know any self respecting, *real* Shal'dorei would consider it possibly their most hated place ever on account of it being somewhere they were stuck in for the majority of their existence (something I can't quite blame them for, knowing my own disdain for the towers I was locked in) I still can't help myself feel safe on these streets. And again, I know for people who actually live here it was barely a blink ago that they had observers and felguards and felhounds and fel-everythings in every corner. But unlike somewhere else, I don't think Suramar hides the troubles that it had, nor do I think it tries to pretend itself as anything other than what it is.

I used to be stunned by arcane beauty, runes of ancient magic woven into every stone, a society perhaps older than my entire people, with power and incandescence expressed through marble and white.

But that's a bit kiddy, isn't it?

I like Suramar for different reasons now. It's comfortable, familiar. And even though I don't really belong, it never feels like there's someone breathing down my neck, reminding me that maybe the world is going to get worse again.

A yellow leaf falls down onto my head from the tree above, and I realised I took too long staring at where *it* used to be in the sky.

"Strange, isn't it?" The barista asks me.

"It not being there?" I reply.

"Maybe, but more the fact that I've stared at this sky far longer without it than with it and somehow I still miss it."

"I think I'll miss it too." I muse. "One way or another."

We were the only two there this morning, and he seemed to have things together.

For him, the changing seasons were just another part of life.

Maybe he didn't realise that the summer was over, and things could only get worse from here.

He finished off my iced coffee, the last one I'd have this year, and he hands it to me.

I can see the cracks and bends in this wooden table, carved by hand from a tree chopped with an axe, wrought and rough brown oak in a city where everything else shined.

“Are you okay?” He asked a kind question I’ve had a few times now, but honestly don’t really deserve. I take a sip and shrug, then pull my hair out from my hood.
“Honestly, I can’t complain. At least I’m okay.”

A part of me worried for how long I could say that.