

Courage: Use It While You Have It

"What do you fear, lady?" [Aragorn] asked.

"A cage," [Éowyn] said. "To stay behind bars, until use and old age accept them, and all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire."

- The Return of the King, J.R.R. Tolkien

"Gone beyond recall or desire." What Tolkien's female *Lord of the Rings* heroine Eowyn fears most is not death or even the dark lord Sauron – it's the loss of her desire for adventure.

Tolkien gets at a real, healthy fear here: courage does have an expiration date.

Youth gives us some natural boldness and courage. Testosterone helps. Anger or indignation might give us another temporary boost. Desperation drives us to boldness, as does loyalty and protection of those we love. But all of these motivators to courageous action are finite, though. And ignored often enough, they will start to burn less and less brightly.

I think it's safe to bet that we all spend a good deal of my time analyzing and wondering about what will happen if we make bold moves (rather than actually making bold moves). Only a couple of times a year – or a decade – do we have the fire in our bellies to actually make the bold moves and damn the consequences.

This is a new decade, and it's a perfect time to start making the most of the courage we do have, when we have it. Let's not sit on our boldness. And who knows? We might even get some more out of the deal.

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