

# Document Summary

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The Lord of the Rings is often erroneously called a trilogy, when it is in fact a single novel, consisting of six books plus appendices. The first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was published in Great Britain by George Allen & Unwin on 29 July 1954; an American edition followed on 21 October of the same year, published by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston.

With the appearance of the third volume, *The Lord of the Rings* was published in its entirety. Its first edition text remained virtually unchanged for a decade. Tolkien had made a few small corrections, but further errors entered the book.

Tolkien spent much of the summer of 1966 further revising the text. In June he learned that any more revisions were too late for inclusion in the 1966 Allen & Unwin second edition. This was the last major set of revisions Tolkien himself made to the text during his lifetime.

Unforeseeable glitches arose in other editions when the base computerized text was transferred into page-making or typesetting programs. Such glitches have been very much the exception, not the rule, and the text has otherwise maintained a consistency and integrity throughout its computerized evolution. The textual history of *The Lord of the Rings*, merely in its published form, is a vast and complex web.

Tolkien's hasty comments about where the story might proceed, or why it can or can't go such and such a way – these queries to himself were written out. We are shown innumerable instances in the minutest detail of the thought-process itself at work. We see the author fully absorbed in creation for its own sake.

Tolkien found a few of the unauthorized changes introduced in the second printing when (probably while preparing the second edition in 1965) he read a copy of the twelfth impression (1962). Many more were revealed only recently, when Steven M. Frisby used ingenious optical aids to make a comparison of copies of *The Lord of the Rings*.

The fiftieth anniversary of *The Lord of the Rings* seemed an ideal opportunity to consider the latest (2002) text. Tolkien attempted to correct inconsistency, no less than outright error, whenever it came to his attention. The result, nonetheless, still includes many variations in capitalization, punctuation, and other points of style.

Most of the demonstrable errors noted by Christopher Tolkien in the *History of Middle-earth* also have been corrected. But those inconsistencies of content, such as Gimli's famous (and erroneous) statement in Book III, Chapter 7, 'Till now I have hewn naught but wood since I left Moria', remain unchanged.

There I halted for a long while. It was almost a year later when I went on. In the next year I wrote the first drafts of the matter that now stands as Book Three, and the beginnings of chapters I and III of Book Five. There as the beacons were in Anórien and Theoden came to Harrowdale I stopped. Foresight had failed and there was no time for thought.

Saruman, failing to get possession of the Ring, would in the confusion and treacheries of the time have found in Mordor the missing links. Other arrangements could be devised according to the tastes or views of those who like allegory or topical reference. But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers.

Hobbits are a little people, smaller than Dwarves: less stout and stocky, that is, even when they are not actually much shorter. Their height is variable, ranging between two and four feet of our measure. They seldom now reach three feet; but they have dwindled, they say, and in ancient days they were taller. According to the Red Book, Bândobras Took (Bullroarer) was four foot six and able to ride a horse.

Only the Elves still preserve any records of that vanished time, and their traditions are concerned almost entirely with their own history. Yet it is clear that Hobbits had, in fact, lived quietly in Middle-earth for many long years before other folk became even aware of them. In the days of Bilbo, and of Frodo his heir, they suddenly became, by no wish of their own, both important and renowned.

In the westlands of Eriador, between the Misty Mountains and the Mountains of Lune, the Hobbits found both Men and Elves. A remnant still dwelt there of the kings of Men that came over the Sea out of Westernessee. But they were dwindling fast and the lands of their North Kingdom were falling far and wide into waste.

At no time had Hobbits of any kind been warlike, and they had never fought among themselves. Even the weathers had grown milder, and the wolves that had once come ravening out of the North in bitter white winters were now only a grandfather's tale.

The habit of building farmhouses and barns was said to have begun among the inhabitants of the Marish down by the Brandywine. It is probable that the craft of building, as many other crafts beside, was derived from the Dúnedain. But the Hobbits may have learned it direct from the Elves, the teachers of Men in their youth.

A great deal of mystery surrounds the origin of this peculiar custom, or 'art' as the Hobbits preferred to call it. The Bree-hobbits claim to have been the first actual smokers of the pipe-weed.

Nearly all Tooks still lived in the Tookland, but that was not true of many other families, such as the Bagginses or the Bofuins. Outside the Farthings were the East and West Marches: the Buckland (p.129); and the Westmarch added to the Shire in S.R.1452. Families for the most part managed their own affairs.

Bilbo set out on a quest of great treasure, the dwarf-hoards of the Kings under the Mountain, beneath Erebor in Dale, far off in the East. The quest was successful, and the Dragon that guarded the hoard was destroyed. Yet before all was won the Battle of Five Armies was fought, and Thorin was slain. Bilbo was lost for a while in the black orc-mines deep under the mountains, and there, as he groped in vain in the dark, he put his hand on a ring, lying on the floor of a tunnel.

The Authorities differ whether this last question was a mere 'question' and not a 'riddle' according to the strict rules of the Game. But all agree that, after accepting it and trying to guess the answer, Gollum was bound by his promise.

Bilbo kept the ring from his friends as long as he could. After his return to his home he never spoke of it again to anyone, save Gandalf. 18note on the shire records and Frodo. Only to Frodo did he show the account of his Journey that he was writing.

It was kept at Great Smials, but it was written in Gondor, probably at the request of the great-grandson of Peregrin. It is an exact copy in all details of the Thain's Book in Minas Tirith. The full tale is stated to have been written by Barahir, grandson of the Steward Faramir, some time after the passing of the King.

Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence. The riches he had brought back from his travels had now become a local legend.

Mr. Bilbo was very polite to him, calling him 'Master Hamfast', and consulting him constantly upon the growing of vegetables. 'But what about this Frodo that lives with him?' asked Old Noakes of Bywater, 'Baggins is his name, but he's more than half a Brandybuck, they say. It beats me why any Baggins of Hobbiton should go looking for a wife away there in Buckland, where folks are so queer.'

'There's a tidy bit of money tucked away up there, I hear tell,' said a stranger, a visitor on business from Michel Delving in the Westfarthing. 'All the top of your hill is full of tunnels packed with chests of gold and silver, and jewels, by what I've heard.' 'I know nothing about jewels. Mr. Bilbo is free with his money, and there seems no lack of it; but I know of no tunnel-making,' replied the Gaffer.

An odd-looking waggon laden with odd-looking packages rolled into Hobbiton one evening and toiled up the Hill to Bag End. It was driven by outlandish folk, singing strange songs: dwarves with long beards and deep hoods. Small hobbit-children ran after the cart all through Hobbiton and right up the hill. It had a cargo of reworks, as they rightly guessed.

Bilbo Baggins celebrated his birthday on the 22nd September. The party was open to everyone in Hobbiton and Bywater. There were three of special meals: lunch, tea, and dinner.

There was a splendid supper for everyone; for everyone, that is, except those invited to the special family dinner-party. This was held in the great pavilion with the tree. The invitations were limited to twelve dozen (a number also called by the hobbits one Gross, though the word was not considered proper to use of people)

The purchase of provisions fell almost to nothing throughout the district in the ensuing weeks. As Bilbo's catering had depleted the stocks of most of the stores, cellars and warehouses for miles around, that did not matter much. After the feast (more or less) came the Speech.

Bilbo Baggins was celebrating his birthday and his nephew Frodo's birthday. He then announced that he was leaving the fellowship of the ring.

Bilbo Baggins was never seen by any hobbit in Hobbiton again. Frodo did not want to have any more to do with the party.

I need a change, or something. Gandalf looked curiously and closely at him. 'No, it does not seem right,' he said thoughtfully. 'No, after all I believe your plan is probably the best' 'Well, I've made up my mind, anyway. I want to see moun- tains again, Gandalf –mountains; and then nd somewhere where I canrest. In peace and quiet, without a lot of relatives prying around'

'But there is no need to get angry.' 'If I am it is your fault,' said Bilbo. 'It is mine, I tell you. My own. My Precious. Yes, my Precious'

'You have still got the ring in your pocket,' said the wizard. 'You had better take it and deliver it for me. That will be safest.' 'No, don't give the ring to me. It will be safe enough there, till Frodo comes. I shall wait for him'

Bilbo Baggins has gone away; as far as I know, for good. As master of Bag End Frodo felt it his painful duty to say good-bye to the guests.

Bilbo's residence had got rather cluttered up with things in the course of his long life. Every one of the various parting gifts had labels, written out personally by Bilbo. The poorer hobbits, and especially those of Bagshot Row, did very well.

Otho would have been Bilbo's heir, but for the adoption of Frodo. He read the will carefully and snorted. It was, unfortunately, very clear and correct.

Gandalf tells Frodo to be careful with the ring. He says he will be away for a good while. He will slip into the Shire quietly.

The second disappearance of Mr. Bilbo Baggins was dis- cussed in Hobbiton, and indeed all over the Shire, for a year and a day. It became a reside-story for young hobbits, and eventually Mad Baggins became a favourite character of legend and lived on long after all the true events were forgotten.

Frodo began to feel restless, and the old paths seemed too the shadow of the past. He looked at maps, and wondered what lay beyond their edges. He took to wandering further a eld and more often by himself.

'But what about these Tree-men, these giants, as you might call them? They do say that one bigger than a tree was seen up away beyond the North Moors not long back.' 'Well, I don't know,' said Sam thoughtfully. He believed he had once seen an Elf in the woods, and still hoped to see more one day.

For three years after the Party he had been away. Then he paid Frodo a brief visit, and after taking a good look at him he went off again. During the next year or two he turned up fairly often, coming unexpectedly after dusk, and going off without warning before sunrise. Then suddenly his visits had ceased.

'How long have you known this?' asked Frodo at length. 'And how much did Bilbo know?' 'Bilbo knew no more than he told you, I am sure,' said Gandalf.

Gandalf: 'Ever since Bilbo left I have been deeply concerned about you, and about all these charming, absurd, helpless hobbits. It would be a grievous blow to the world, if the Dark Power overcame the Shire; if all your kind, jolly, stupid Bolgers, Hornblowers, Bof ns, Bracegirdles, and the rest, not to mention the ridiculous Bagginses, became enslaved'

It is quite plain, and it never shows a scratch or sign of wear. Frodo gave a cry and groped for the tongs; but Gandalf held him back. 'Wait!' he said in a commanding voice, giving Frodo a quick look from under his bristling brows. No apparent change came over the ring.

'The Enemy still lacks one thing to give him strength and knowledge to beat down all resistance, break the last defences, and cover all the lands in a second darkness. He lacks the One Ring. If he recovers it, then he will command them all again, wherever they be, even the Three, and all that has been wrought with them will be laid bare. It is his great hope and our great fear'

'And there in the dark pools amid the Gladden Fields,' he said, 'the Ring passed out of knowledge and legend' 'Even so much of its history is known now only to a few, and the Council of the Wise could discover no more. But at last I can carry on the story, I think.'

'He became very unpopular and was shunned (when visible) by all his relations. They kicked him, and he bit their feet. He took to thieving, and going about muttering to himself, and gurgling in his throat' 'So he journeyed by night up into the highlands and found a little cave out of which the dark stream ran; and he wormed his way like a maggot into the heart of the hills, and vanished out of all knowledge'

'But that, of course, would only make the evil part of him angrier in the end – unless it could be conquered.' Gandalf sighed. 'Alas! there is little hope of that for him. Yet not no hope. No, not though he possessed the Ring so long, almost as far back as he can remember. For it was long since he had worn it much: in the black darkness it was seldom needed'

'But I am not going to give an account of all my doings to you. The history of Elendil and Isildur and the One Ring is known to all the Wise. Your ring is shown to be that One Ring by the re-writing alone, apart from any other evidence.' 'And when did you discover that?' asked Frodo, interrupting. 'Just now in this room, of course,' answered the wizard sharply.

'Light, light of Sun and Moon, he still feared and hated, and he always will, I think; but he was cunning. He found he could hide from daylight and moonshine, and make his way swiftly and softly by dead of night with his pale cold eyes. He grew stronger and bolder with new food and new air.'

Gandalf: 'He had made his slow, sneaking way, step by step, mile by mile, south, down at last to the Land of Mordor' Frodo: 'What am I to do? What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature, when he had a chance!' 'Pity? It was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need'

'I wish he had never found it, and that I had not got it! Why did you let me keep it? Why didn't you make me throw it away, or, or destroy it?' 'Let you? Make you?' said the wizard. 'You are not thinking of what you are saying. These Rings have a way of being found. In evil hands it might have done great evil'

Gandalf told Frodo to cast the Ring in the Cracks of Doom in the depths of Orodruin, the Fire-mountain, to put it beyond the grasp of the Enemy for ever. 'I do really wish to destroy it!' cried Frodo. 'I am not made for perilous quests. I wish I had never seen the Ring! Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?'

'I should like to save the Shire, if I could – though there have been times when I thought the inhabitants too stupid and dull for words, and have felt that an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them. But I don't feel like that now. I feel very small, and very uprooted, and well – desperate. The Enemy is so strong and terrible' He did not tell Gandalf, but as he was speaking a great desire to follow Bilbo came up in his heart.

My old dad would take on so. I meant no harm, on my honour, sir!' 'He won't hurt you,' said Frodo, hardly able to keep from laughing. 'Just you up and answer his questions straight away!'

Mr. Frodo was selling Bag End, indeed he had already sold it – to the Sackville-Bagginses!

Gandalf stayed in the Shire for over two months. Then one evening, at the end of June, he suddenly announced that he was going off again next morning. 'Only for a short while, I hope,' he said, 'But I am going down beyond the southern borders to get some news, if I can'

The Sackville-Bagginses, Lobelia and her sandy-haired son, Lotho, turned up, much to Frodo's annoyance. Lobelia had been obliged to wait about seventy-seven years longer for Bag End than she once hoped, and she was now a hundred years old. She had come to see that nothing she had paid for had been carried off; and she wanted the keys.

Bag End seemed sad and gloomy and dishevelled. Frodo wandered round the familiar rooms, and saw the light of the sunset fade on the walls, and shadows creep out of the corners. He went out and walked down to the

gate at the bottom of the path, and then on a short way down the Hill Road.

In the gloom he looked very much like a dwarf. 'I pity snails, and all that carry their homes on their backs'

Merry expects us some time the day after tomorrow; but that leaves us nearly two days more. We'll halt at the first likely spot. There is a dry r-wood just ahead, if I remember rightly.

They went down the slope, and across the stream where it dived under the road, and up and down another shoulder of the hills; and by that time their cloaks, blankets, water, food, and other gear already seemed a heavy burden. The day's march promised to be warm and tiring work. After some miles, however, the road ceased to roll up and down: it climbed to the top of a steep bank in a weary 96th the fellowship of the ring zig-zagging sort of way, and then prepared to go down for the last time.

'I wonder if that is Gandalf coming after us,' said Frodo; but even as he said it, he had a feeling that it was not so. A sudden desire to hide from the view of the rider came over him. The other two ran quickly to the left and down into a little 98th the fellowship of the ring hollow not far from the road.

'Why didn't you speak up before?' 'I have only just remembered, sir. It was like this: when I got back to our hole yesterday evening with the key, my dad, he says to me: Hallo, Sam! he says. I thought you were away with Mr. Frodo this morning. There's been a strange customer asking for Mr. Baggins of Bag End. I've sent him on to Bucklebury. Not that I liked the sound of him. Hissed at me, he did. It gave me quite a shudder.'

Frodo, Sam and Pippin were walking in the lanes of the Water-valley. They stopped suddenly and stood as silent as tree-shadows, listening. There was a sound of hoofs in the lane, some way behind. Quickly and quietly they slipped off the path, and ran into the deeper shade under the oak-trees.

The black shadow stood close to the point where they had left the path, and it swayed from side to side. Frodo thought he heard the sound of snuffing. The shadow bent to the ground, and then began to crawl towards him. Once more the desire to slip on the Ring came over Frodo; but this time it was stronger than before.

'We have seen you often before with Bilbo, though you may not have seen us,' they said. 'But we have no need of other company, and hobbits are so dull,' they laughed. 'For tonight we go to the woods on the hills above Woodhall. It is some miles, but you shall have rest at the end of it, and it will shorten your journey tomorrow'

Frodo, Sam and Pippin were staying in a wood near the village of Woodhall. The Elves invited them to a rest, where they were treated to food and drink. Frodo recalls little of the food or drink, for his mind was filled with the light upon the elf-faces.

Frodo remained long awake, talking with Gildor. The tidings were mostly sad and ominous: of gathering darkness, the wars of Men, and the light of the Elves.

Gildor Inglorion gave Frodo advice on how to avoid the Black Riders. He advised Frodo to go at once, without delay, and not to go alone. The Wandering Companies shall know of your journey, and those that have power for good shall be on the watch. May Elbereth protect you!

'What is the plan for today?' asked Pippin. 'To walk to Bucklebury as quickly as possible,' answered Frodo, and gave his attention to the food. Under the morning sun the prospect of seeing a whole troop of them did not seem very alarming to him.

'I seem to see ahead, in a kind of way. I know we are going to take a very long road, into darkness; but I know I can't turn back' 'I have something to do before the end, and it lies ahead, not in the Shire. I must see it through, sir, if you understand me'

The hobbits scrambled down a steep green bank and plunged into the thick trees below. Their course had been chosen to leave Woodhall to their left, and to cut slanting through the woods that clustered along the eastern side of the hills.

Frodo, Sam and Pippin set off across the open as quickly as they could. At first they felt afraid, away from the shelter of the wood. But the land became steadily more tame and well-ordered. Soon they came into well-tended elds and meadows.

The line of the River grew nearer; and the Black Riders began to seem like phantoms of the woods now left far behind. They passed along the edge of a huge turnip-eld, and came to a stout gate. Beyond it a rutted lane ran between low well-laid hedges towards a distant clump of trees.

Farmer Maggot took Frodo Baggins by the arm and said: 'Mr. Baggins is it? Come inside! We must have a talk' They went into the farmer's kitchen, and sat by the wide re-place. Mrs. Maggot brought out beer in a huge jug, and lled four large mugs.

Frodo met a black man riding on a big black horse in the Shire. He asked Frodo if he had seen Baggins. When Frodo said no, the man said: 'He is coming. He is not far away. If he passes will you tell me? I will come back with gold'

'Well, Mr. Frodo,' Maggot went on, 'I'm glad that you've had the sense to come back to Buckland. My advice is: stay there! And don't get mixed up with these outlandish folk. You'll have friends in these parts. If any of these black fellows come after you again, I'll deal with them'

Frodo, Sam and Pippin were on their way to the Ferry when they heard hoofs on the road ahead. They thought they could dimly guess a dark cloaked shape in the mist, a yard or two ahead. Black Riders would have to ride over him to get near the wagon.

In your duck-pond?' 'No, I caught ■'em trespassing,' said the farmer, 'and nearly set my dogs on 'em; but they'll tell you all the story, I've no doubt.'

Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin rode over the Brandywine to Crickhollow. It was some distance from the river to Frodo's new house. They passed Buck Hill and Brandy Hall on their left, and on the outskirts of Bucklebury struck the main road of Buckland.

The hobbit-hole was built by the Brandybucks, for the use of guests, or members of the family that wished to escape from the crowded life of Brandy Hall for a time. The travellers hung up their cloaks, and piled their packs on the oor.

Merry went to the door: 'What about supper and beer in the throat?' he called. Frodo came out drying his hair. 'There's so much water in the air that I'm coming into the kitchen to nish' 'Lawks!' said Merry, looking in. The stone oor was swim- ming.

'I can't keep it dark any longer. I have got something to tell you all. But I don't know quite how to begin' a conspiracy unmasked<sup>135</sup> 'I think I could help you,' said Merry quietly, 'by telling you some of it myself'

Merry said he had known about the existence of the Ring for years. He kept the knowledge in his head, until we formed our conspiracy. 'Step forward, Sam!' said Merry; and Sam stood up with a face scarlet up to the ears.

take someone as you can trust. 'But it does not seem that I can trust anyone,' said Frodo. Sam looked at him unhappily. Merry and Pippin began a song, which they had apparently got ready for the occasion.

Merry and Frodo discuss the best way of getting out of Buckland. Frodo decides to go to the Old Forest, but Fredegar warns him against it.

I don't know whether these Riders can read or not, of course, but I should not have dared to risk a written message, in case they got in and searched the house. But if Fatty is willing to hold the fort, and I can be sure of Gandalf knowing the way we have gone, that decides me. I am going into the Old Forest rst thing tomorrow.

'Follow me!' said Merry, 'and you will see' He turned to the left along the Hedge, and soon they came to a point where it bent inwards, running along the lip of a hollow. A cutting <sup>144</sup>the fellowship of the ring had been made, at some distance from the Hedge. It had walls of brick at the sides, which rose steadily, until they arched over and formed a tunnel that dived deep under the Hedge and came out in the hollow on the other side.

On the far side was a faint path leading up on to the oor of the Forest, a hundred yards and more beyond the Hedge. But it vanished as soon as it brought them under the trees. Looking back they could see the dark line of the Hedge through the stems of trees that were already thick about them.

They were still climbing gently, but they now went much quicker, and with better heart. It seemed to them that the Forest had relented, and was going to let them pass unhindered. But after a while the air began to get hot

and stuffy. The trees drew close again on either side, and they could no longer see far ahead.

Northward, where they looked most hopefully, they could see nothing that might be the line of the great East Road. They were on an island in a sea of trees, and the horizon was veiled. On the south-eastern side the ground fell very steeply, as if the slopes of the hill were continued far down under the trees.

Merry led them to a path that he had discovered. Everywhere the reeds and grasses were lush and tall, in places far above their heads. The path was easy to follow, as it turned and twisted, picking out the sounder ground among the bogs.

Merry and Pippin dragged themselves forward and lay down with their backs to the willow-trunk. Behind them the great cracks gaped wide to receive them as the tree swayed and creaked. They shut their eyes, and then it seemed that they could almost hear words, cool words, saying something about water and sleep.

'What a foul thing to happen!' cried Frodo wildly. 'Why did we ever come into this dreadful Forest? I wish we were all back at Crickhollow!' He kicked the tree with all his strength, heedless of his own feet. A hardly perceptible shiver ran through the stem and up into the branches. The leaves rustled and whispered, but with a sound now of faint and far-off laughter.

Frodo, Sam and Merry were stuck in a crack in a willow tree. A man appeared and began singing into the crack. Frodo and Sam could not catch the words, but evidently Merry was aroused.

Tom Bombadil burst out laughing. 'You shall come home with me! The table is all laden with yellow cream, honeycomb, and white bread and butter. Goldberry is waiting. Time enough for questions around the supper table. You follow after me as quick as you are able!'

Come merry dolly! rolled out the song to greet them. Then another clear voice, as young and as ancient as Spring, came falling like silver to meet them.

Frodo and the hobbits went to the house of Tom Bombadil. Goldberry told them that he was the Master of wood, water, and hill.

At last Tom and Goldberry rose and cleared the table swiftly. The guests were commanded to sit quiet, and were set in chairs. There was a fire in the wide hearth before them, and it was burning with a sweet smell.

In the dead night, Frodo lay in a dream without light. Under its thin light there loomed before him a black wall of rock, pierced by a dark arch like a great gate. Up from the dark plain below came the crying of fell voices, and the howling of many wolves.

Frodo and Pippin looked out of the western window, down into a pool of mist. The Forest was hidden under a fog. There was a fold or channel where the mist was broken into many plumes and billows.

Tom Bombadil took off his clothes and put them in the chimney-corner. He then told them many remarkable stories, sometimes half as if speaking to himself. As they listened, they began to understand the lives of the Forest, apart from themselves.

The hobbits sat still before him, enchanted; and it seemed as if, under the spell of his words, the wind had gone, and the clouds had dried up. 'Long tales are thirsty. And long listening's hungry work, morning, noon, and evening!' cried Tom.

After they had eaten, Goldberry sang many songs for them, songs that began merrily in the hills and fell softly down into silence. Then once more she wished them each good night and left them by the bedside. But Tom now seemed wide awake and plied them with questions. He appeared already to know much about them and all their families.

Tom now told them that he reckoned the Sun would shine tomorrow, and it would be a glad morning, and setting out would be hopeful. By his advice they decided to make nearly due North from his house, over the western and lower slopes of the Downs. They might hope in that way to strike the East Road in a day's journey, and avoid the Barrows.

In that direction the land rose in wooded ridges, green, yellow, russet under the sun. To the South, over the line of the Withywindle, there was a distant glint like pale glass where the Brandywine River made a great loop in

the lowlands.

Frodo, Sam, and Gandalf set off on a day-trip through the Downs. They came to a hollow in the ground where a standing stone stood. They ate and drank there under the open sky. But they woke suddenly from a sleep they had never meant to take.

Frodo, Sam, Pippin, and Merry went in le, fog on the barrow-downs<sup>181</sup> with Frodo leading. Suddenly Frodo saw a hopeful sign. On either side ahead a darkness began to loom through the mist. If they could pass that, they would be free. But his hope soon changed to bewil- derment and alarm.

His knees gave, and he fell on the ground. Nothing happened, and there was no sound. Trembling he looked up, in time to see a tall dark gure like a shadow against the stars. It leaned over him. He thought there were two eyes, very cold though lit with a pale light that seemed to come from some remote distance. Then a grip stronger and colder than iron seized him. The icy touch froze his bones and he remembered no more.

At rst Frodo felt as if he had indeed been turned into stone by the incantation. Then a wild thought of escape came to him. He wondered if he put on the Ring, whether the Barrow-wight would miss him, and he might nd some way out. But the courage that had been awakened in him was now too strong: he could not leave his friends so easily.

When he came out he was bearing in his arms a great load of treasure: things of gold, silver, copper, and bronze. He climbed the green barrow and laid them all on top in the sunshine. Raising his right hand he said in a clear and commanding voice: fog on the barrow-downs<sup>187</sup> Wake now my merry lads! Wake and hear me calling! Warm now be heart and limb! The cold stone is fallen; Dark door is standing wide; dead hand is broken. Night under Night is own, and the Gate is open!

Merry, Sam, and Pippin now clothed themselves in spare garments from their packs. They soon felt too hot, for they were obliged to put on some of the thicker and warmer things that they had brought against the oncoming of winter. It was still fairly early by the sun, something between nine and ten, and the hobbits turned their minds to food. Their last meal had been lunch beside the standing stone the day before.

Frodo and the other hobbits set off on a journey back to the Shire. Tom Bombadil gave each of them a dagger of marvellous workmanship. He told them that these blades were forged many long years ago by Men of Westernessee.

The hobbits were on the top of a sloping bank, and the Road, now dim as evening drew on, wound away below them. At this point it ran nearly from South-west to North-east, and on their right it fell quickly down into a wide hollow. They rode down the bank and looked up and down. There was nothing to be seen.

Please remember – all of you – that the name of Baggins mustnotbe mentioned. I am Mr. Underhill, if any name must be given.

Frodo and his companions came at last to the Greenway-crossing and drew near the village. They came to the West-gate and found it shut; but at the door of the lodge beyond it, there was a man sitting. He jumped up and fetched a lantern and looked over the gate at them in surprise. 'What do you want, and where do you come from?' he asked gruf y.

The hobbits rode on up a gentle slope, passing a few detached houses, and drew up outside the inn. Sam stared up at the inn with its three storeys and many windows, and felt his heart sink. He pictured black horses standing all saddled in the shadows of the inn-yard, and Black Riders peering out of dark upper windows.

Frodo, Sam Gamgee and Barliman Butterbur arrived at the house of Mr. Butterbur. The landlord looked at them with great interest. He said they were from the Shire, and then suddenly clapped his hand to his forehead, as if trying to remember something. 'Hobbits!' he cried. 'Now what does that remind me of? Might I ask your names, sirs?'

Frodo, Pippin, and Sam decided to join the company. The company was in the big common-room of the inn. The gathering was large and mixed, as Frodo discovered, when his eyes got used to the light.

He said he was thinking of writing a book (at which there was silent astonishment), and that he and his friends wanted to collect information about hobbits living outside the Shire. At this a chorus of voices broke out. If Frodo



had really wanted to write a book, and had had many ears, he would have learned enough for several chapters in a few minutes.

Frodo and Pippin were at a party in Bree when Strider appeared. Strider was a tall man with a shaggy head of dark hair icked with grey. He invited Frodo to come over and sit by him. 'I am called Strider,' he said in a low voice. 'I am very pleased to meet you, Master – Underhill'

Frodo had a good voice, and the song tickled their fancy. They called for more ale, and began to shout: 'Let's have it again, master! Come on now! Once more!'

Frodo was playing with the Ring when it suddenly vanished into thin air. He was left alone in a corner, and eyed darkly and doubtfully from a distance. Strider, who sat unmoved, gave no sign of his thoughts.

'Of course there's a mistake!' said Frodo. 'I haven't vanished. Here I am! I've just been having a few words with Strider in the corner.' Most of the Hobbits and the Men of Bree went off then and there in a huff.

'I will tell you what I know, and give you some good advice – but I shall want a reward.' 'And what will that be, pray?' said Frodo. 'Just this: you must take me along with you, until I wish to leave you'

Strider asked Frodo: 'Why did he press us to join the company? And why on earth did we behave so foolishly: we ought to have stayed quiet in here?' 'It would have been better,' said Strider. 'I would have stopped your going into the common-room, if I could; but the innkeeper would not let me in to see you, or take a message.' 'Do you think he does not altogether like mysterious vagabonds of my sort?'

Frodo made no answer; his mind was confused with doubt and fear. Sam frowned, and looked at his master; and at last he broke out: 'With your leave, Mr. Frodo, I'd sayno! This Strider here, strider217 he warns and he says take care; and I sayyesto that, and let's begin with him. He comes out of the Wild, and I never heard no good of such folk'

Frodo received a letter from Gandalf asking him to send a message to the Shire. The letter was addressed to Mr. FRODO BAGGINS, BAG END, HOBBITON in the SHIRE.

Tried to get in here to see you, before you'd had bite or sup, he did. 'He came to offer me his help.' 'Well, you know your own business, maybe,' said Mr. Butterbur, looking suspiciously at Strider.

'We must get off as early as possible. Breakfast at six-thirty, please' 'Right! I'll see to the orders,' said the landlord. 'Good night, Mr. Baggins – Underhill, I should say! Good night – now, bless me! Where's your Mr. Brandybuck?'

I had to studyyou rst, and make sure of you. The Enemy has set traps for me before now. As soon as I had made up my mind, I was ready to tell you whatever you asked. A hunted man sometimes wearies of distrust and longs for friendship. But there, I believe my looks are against me.

Strider says he has not seen Gandalf since May. Frodo asks: 'Do you know where he is, or what he is doing?' 'I do not know,' he says. 'I have often kept watch on the borders of the Shire in the last few years, when he was busy elsewhere. He seldom left it unguarded'

'I found him, sir,' put in Nob. 'Mr. Butterbur sent me out with a lantern. I went down to West-gate, and then back up towards South-gate. Just nigh Bill Ferny's house I thought I could see something in the Road. I couldn't swear to it, but it looked to me as if two men was stooping over something, lifting it'

'Well Masters,' said Nob, 'I've ruf ed up the clothes and put in a bolster down the middle of each bed. And I made a nice imitation of your head with a brown woollen mat, Mr. Bag – Underhill, sir' 'Very life-like!' he said. 'But what will happen when they have penetrated the disguise?'

'No, not me! I haven't got it!' It was some time before anyone could make out what he was babbling about. At last they got the idea that enemies were in Buckland, some strange invasion from the Old Forest. And then they lost no more time.

It is the food and stores that trouble me. We cannot count on getting anything to eat between here and Rivendell, except what we take with us. How much are you prepared to carry on your backs?' 'As much as we must,' said Pippin with a sinking heart, but trying to show that he was tougher than he looked (or felt)

Merry's ponies had escaped altogether, and eventually (having a good deal of sense) they made their way to the Downs in search of Fatty Lumpkin. So they came under the care of Tom Bombadil for a while, and were well-off. But when news of the events at Bree came to Tom's ears, he sent them to Mr. Butterbur, who thus got very good beasts at a very fair price. They had to work harder in Bree, but Bob treated them well; so on the whole they were lucky: they a knife in the dark missed a dark and dangerous journey.

Strider guided them confidently among the many crossing paths, although left to themselves they would soon have been at a loss. He was a wandering course, to put off any pursuit. After the Road had run down some way, and had left Bree-hill standing tall and brown behind, they came on a narrow track that led off towards the North.

The hobbits spent a miserable day in this lonely and unpleasant country. Though the Neekerbreakers (as Sam called them) had been left behind, the midges still pursued them. As Frodo lay, tired but unable to close his eyes, it seemed to him that far away there came a light in the eastern sky.

Frodo, Sam and Pippin set out on the road to Weathertop. Strider advised them to go as straight eastward from here as they can. They made an undulating ridge, often rising almost to a thousand feet, and here falling again.

The hobbits were six days out from Bree when they found a track plain to see. They turned right and followed it southwards. It ran cunningly, taking a line that seemed chosen so as to keep as much hidden as possible.

'I hope it won't come to that!' said Strider. 'Do not speak that name so loudly!'

Frodo, Merry, Sam and Peregrin had explored the small dell and the surrounding slopes. They found footprints not more than a day or two old. In the dell itself they found recent traces of a re, and other signs of a hasty camp.

Sam and Pippin have trampled the soft ground, and the marks are spoilt or confused. Rangers have been here lately. But there are also several newer tracks that were not made by Rangers. At least one set was made, only a day or two ago, by heavy boots. I cannot now be certain, but I think there were many booted feet.

There is little shelter or defence here, but re shall serve for both. Sauron can put re to his evil uses, as he can all things, but these Riders do not love it, and fear those who wield it. Fire is our friend in the wilderness.

I would dearly like to hear more about Elves; the dark seems to press round so close. 'I will tell you the tale of Tinu 'viel,' said Strider, 'in brief – for it is a long tale of which the end is not known'

As the stars above the mists of the Northern lands was her loveliness, and in her a knife in the dark face was a shining light. In those days the Great Enemy, of whom Sauron of Mordor was but a servant, dwelt in Angband in the North. The Elves of the West coming back to Middle-earth made war upon him to regain the Silmarils which he had stolen.

I saw nothing, but I didn't stop to look,' said Merry. 'I saw something,' said Merry; 'or I thought I did – away westwards where the moonlight was falling on the ats beyond the shadow of the hill-tops, I thought there were two or three black shapes. They seemed to be moving this way.' 'Keep close to the re, with your faces outward!' cried Strider.

With a last effort Frodo, dropping his sword, slipped the Ring from his nger and closed his right hand tight upon it. When Frodo came to himself he was still clutching the Ring desperately. He was lying by the re, which was now piled high and burning brightly.

Strider took a knife from his belt and sang over it in a strange tongue. He then gave Frodo the leaves of a healing plant. Frodo felt the pain and also the sense of frozen cold lessen in his side. But the life did not return to his arm, and he could not raise or use his hand.

Sam and Strider made their way slowly and cautiously round the south-western slopes of the hill, and came in a little while to the edge of the Road. There was no sign of the Riders. The land before them sloped away southwards, but it was wild and pathless; bushes and stunted trees grew in dense patches with wide barren spaces in between.

They dreaded to see black gures waiting there, but they saw none. Strider made them take cover in a thicket at the side of the Road, while he went forward to explore. Before long he came hurrying back. 'I can see no sign of the enemy,' he said, 'and I wonder very much what that means. But I have found something very strange.'

They were nearly ten days out from Weathertop, and their stock of provisions was beginning to run low. That night they camped on a stony shelf with a rock-wall behind them, in which there was a shallow cave, a mere scoop in the cliff. The next day the hills rose still higher and steeper before them, and they were forced to turn away north-wards out of their course.

'Frodo has been touched by the weapons of the Enemy,' said Strider, 'and there is some poison or evil at work that is beyond my skill to drive out. But do not give up hope, Sam!'

Pippin, Sam and Strider went on ahead with Frodo's pony. The path went on again from the door, and turning to the right again plunged down a thick wooded slope. They halted suddenly on the edge, and peered through the tree-trunks. There stood the trolls: three large trolls. One was stooping, and the other two stood staring at him.

'Won't somebody give us a bit of a song, while the sun is high?' said Merry, when they had nished. 'Not since Weathertop,' replied Frodo.

Frodo, Pippin and Merry were walking along the Road when they heard the sound of hoofs behind them. They had been in fear of pursuit for so long that any sound from behind seemed ominous and unfriendly. As there was now no other possible course for them to take, they climbed down the bank, and turning left went off as fast as they could.

The rider's cloak streamed behind him, and his hood was thrown back; his golden hair owed shimmering in the wind of his speed. When he saw Strider, he dismounted and ran to meet him calling out: Ai na vedui Du 'nadan! Mae govannen!

Glor ndel shuddered as he took it, but he looked intently at it. 'There are evil things written on this hilt,' he said; 'though maybe your eyes cannot see them. Keep it, Aragorn, till we reach the house of Elrond! But be wary, and handle it as little as you may!'

So far there had been no sign or sound of pursuit that the hobbits could see or hear. They were stumbling along dizzy with weariness, and unable to think of anything but their feet and legs. Glor ndel would halt and listen for a moment, if they lagged behind, and a look of anxiety clouded his face.

Two rode towards Frodo; two galloped madly towards the Ford to cut off his escape. The Riders behind were falling back: even their great steeds were no match in speed for the white elf-horse of Glor ndel.

Frodo woke and found himself lying in bed. The ceiling looked strange; it was at, and it had dark beams richly carved. He lay a little while longer looking at patches of sunlight on the wall, and listening to the sound of a waterfall. He was fully awake now, and the memory of his journey was returning.

'I was delayed,' said Gandalf, 'and that nearly proved our ruin. And yet I am not sure: it may have been better so' 'I wish you would tell me what happened!'

Frodo is recovering well in Rivendell. Gandalf says he will need their help in the days to come. The Ring is not yet at rest.

But why could we all see their horses?' 'Because they are real horses; just as the black robes are real robes that they wear to give shape to their nothingness when they have dealings with the living' 'Then why do these black horses endure such riders? All other animals are terri ed when they draw near, even the elf-horse of Glor ndel. The dogs howl and the geese scream at them'

Gandalf said that Frodo was safe in the Last Homely House of the Sea.

Frodo woke up again, and found that he no longer felt in need of rest or sleep, but had a mind for food and drink. He got out of bed and discovered that his arm was already nearly as useful again as it ever had been. He found his friends sitting in a porch on the side of the house looking east.

'He thinks I need keeping in order. But it seems impossible, somehow, to feel gloomy or depressed in this place. I feel I could sing, if I knew the right song for the occasion'

Frodo sat at Elrond's table among all these folk so high and fair. The feast was merry and the food all that his hunger could desire. Next to Frodo on his right sat a dwarf of important appearance, richly dressed.

Gloin was delighted to have found so polite a listener. Of the ten companions who had survived the Battle of Five Armies seven were still with him. Bombur was now so fat that he could not move himself from his couch to his chair at table.

Elrond entered the Hall of Fire and was greeted by Elvish minstrels. Frodo noticed a small dark gure seated on a stool with his back propped against a pillar. The gure raised its head and uncovered its face. 'Bilbo!' cried Frodo with sudden recognition, and he sprang forward.

'I got here without much adventure,' he said, 'and after a rest I went on with the dwarves to Dale: my last journey. I shan't travel again. Old Balin had gone away. Then I came back here, and here I have been. I have written some more of my book. And, of course, I make up a few songs. They sing them occasionally: just to please me, I think. And I listen and I think: it just is. A remarkable place altogether.'

Frodo was left to himself for a while, for Sam had fallen asleep. He was alone and felt rather forlorn, although all about him the folk of Rivendell were gathered. But those near him were silent, intent upon the music of the voices and the fellowship of the ring instruments, and they gave no heed to anything else. There he wandered long in a dream of music that turned into running water, and then suddenly into a voice. It seemed to be the voice of Bilbo chanting verses.

In panoply of ancient kings, in chainèd rings he armoured him; his shining shield was scored with runes to ward all wounds and harm from him. His bow was made of dragon-horn, his arrows shorn of ebony, of silver was his habergeon, many meetings were held. His sword of steel was valiant, of adamant his helmet tall, an eagle-plume upon his crest, upon his breast an emerald. Beneath the Moon and under star he wandered far from northern strands, bewildered on enchanted ways beyond the days of mortal lands.

Frodo opened his eyes and saw that Bilbo was seated on his stool in a circle of listeners, who were smiling and applauding. 'I am atterred, Lindir,' he said, 'But it would be too tiring to repeat it all.' 'Not too tired for you,' the Elves answered laughing. 'You know you are never tired of reciting your own verses. But really we cannot answer your question at one hearing!'

Frodo awoke early the next day, feeling refreshed and well. He walked along the terraces above the loud-owing Bruinen and watched the pale, cool sun rise above the far mountains. The dew upon the yellow leaves was glimmering, and the woven nets of gossamer twinkled on every bush. On a seat cut in the stone beside a turn in the path they came upon Gandalf and Bilbo.

'That is the warning bell for the Council of Elrond,' cried Gandalf. 'Come along now! Both you and Bilbo are wanted'

Long have its vast mansions lain empty since the children of Durin died. But now we spoke of it again with longing, and yet with dread. No dwarf has dared to pass the doors of Khazad-dûm for many lives of kings.

Elrond spoke of Sauron and the Rings of Power, and their forging in the Second Age of the world long ago. A part of his tale was known to some there, but the full tale to none.

Eärendil was my sire, who was born in Gondolin before its fall; and my mother was Elwing, daughter of Dior, son of Eäthien of Doriath. 'I was the herald of Gil-galad and marched with his host. I was at the Battle of Dagorlad before the Black Gate of Mordor. I beheld the last combat on the slopes of Orodruin, where Gil-Galad died, and Eärendil fell. But Sauron himself was overthrown, and Isildur the council of elrond cut the Ring from his hand with the hilt-shard of his father's sword, and took it for his own.'

'In the North after the war and the slaughter of the Gladden Fields the Men of Westemnet were diminished, and their city of Annúminas beside Lake Evendim fell into ruin. The heirs of Valandil removed and dwelt at Fornost on the high North Downs, and that now too is desolate. Men call it Deadmen's Dike, and they fear to tread there. 'So it has been for many lives of men. But the Lords of Minas Tirith still ght on, defying our enemies, keeping the passage of the River from Argonath to the Sea'

Aragorn is the son of Arathorn, and the Chief of the Dúnedain in the North. 'In this evil hour I have come on an errand over many dangerous leagues to Elrond: a hundred and ten days I have journeyed all alone. But I do

not seek allies in war. The might of Elronda is in wisdom not in weapons, it is said. I come to ask for counsel and the unravelling of hard words'

'Bring out the Ring, Frodo!' said Gandalf solemnly. 'The time has come. Hold it up, and then Boromir will understand the remainder of his riddle.' 'Is then the doom of Minas Tirith come at last? But why then should we seek a broken sword?'

Bilbo's tale was wholly new, and they listened with amazement while the old hobbit recounted his adventure with Gollum, at full length. 'I have seen a bright ring in the Hal ing's hand; but Isildur perished ere this age of the world began, they say. How do the Wise know that this ring is his? And how has it passed down the years, until it is brought hither by so strange a messenger?'

Every step of his journey from Hobbiton to the Ford of Bruinen was questioned and considered, and everything that he could recall concerning the Black Riders was examined. At last he sat down again. 'Not bad,' Bilbo said to him, 'You would have made a good story of it, if they hadn't kept on interrupting. I tried to make a few notes, but we shall have to go over it all again together some time, if I am to write it up. There are whole chapters of stuff before you ever got here!'

'From the rst my heart misgave me, against all reason that I knew,' said Gandalf. 'I desired to know how this thing came to Gollum, and how long he had possessed it. So I set a watch for him, guessing that he would ere long come forth from his darkness to seek for his treasure. He came, but he escaped and was not found. And then alas! I let the matter rest, watching and waiting only, as we have too often done'

'When I read these words, my quest was ended. For the traced writing was indeed as Isildur guessed, in the tongue of Mordor and the servants of the Tower. But for my part I will risk no hurt to this thing: of all the works of Sauron the only fair. It is precious to me, though I buy it with great pain'

Aragorn found Gollum in the Dead Marshes, covered with green slime. He will never love me, I fear; for he bit me, and I was not gentle. Nothing more did I ever get from his mouth than the marks of his teeth. The power of the ring had lengthened his years far beyond their span.

Gollum is in prison, but no worse,' said Aragorn. 'There is no doubt that he was tormented, and the fear of Sauron lies black on his heart. Still I for one am glad that he is safely kept by the watchful Elves of Mirkwood'

Gandalf met Radagast the Brown near the borders of Mirkwood. He told him of the defeat of Gondor and the return of Saruman. He also told him that the Nine were abroad again.

"I have been told that wherever they go the Riders ask for news of a land called Shire," said Radagast. 'And he told me to say that if you feel the need, he will help; but you must seek his aid at once, or it will be too late.'

I rode under the arch, and the gate closed silently behind me, and suddenly I was afraid, though I knew no reason for it. 'But I rode to the foot of Orthanc, and came to the stair of Saruman; and there he met me and led me up to his high chamber.'

"I said we, for we it may be, if you will join with me. A new Power is rising. Against it the old allies and policies will not avail us at all. There is no hope left in Elves or dying Númenor. This then is one choice before you, before us. We may join with the fellowship of the ring that Power. It would be wise, Gandalf.

'I stood alone on an island in the clouds; and I had no chance of escape, and my days were bitter,' said Gandalf. 'I looked on it and saw that, whereas it had once been green and fair, it was now filled with pits and forges. Wolves and orcs were housed in Isengard, for Saruman was mustering a great force on his own account, in rivalry of Sauron and not in his service, yet.'

'I was sent to bear tidings not burdens,' said Gandalf. 'But fear grew in me as I rode. Ever as I came north I heard tidings of the Riders, and though I gained on them by day, they were ever before me. They had divided their forces, I learned: some remained far from the Greenway, and some invaded the Shire from the south.'

I came to Hobbiton and Frodo had gone; but I had words with old Gamgee. He had much to say about the shortcomings of the new owners of Bag End. 'I can't abide changes,' said he, 'not at my time of life, and least of all changes for the worst.' ' "Worst is a bad word,"' I said to him, 'and I hope you do not live to see it'

Their Captain remained in secret away south of Bree, while two rode ahead through the village, and four more invaded the Shire. But when these were foiled in Bree and at Crickhollow, they returned to their Captain with tidings. The Captain then sent some eastward straight across country, and he himself with the rest rode along the Road in great wrath. 'I galloped to Weathertop like a gale, and I reached it before sundown on my second day from Bree – and they were there before me. They drew away from me, for they felt the coming of my anger and they dared not face it while the Sun was in the sky'

But many another name he has since been given by other folk: Forn by the Dwarves, Orald by Northern Men, and other names beside. He is a strange creature, but maybe I should have summoned him to our Council. 'He would not have come,' said Gandalf.

Galdor: 'If the return to Iarwain be thought too dangerous, then ight to the Sea is now fraught with gravest peril. My heart tells me that Sauron will expect us to take the western way, when he learns what has befallen. He soon will. The Nine have been unhorsed indeed, but that is but a respite, ere they nd new steeds and swifter. Only the waning might of Gondor stands now between him and a march in power along the coasts into the North'

'As long as it is in the world it will be a danger even to the Wise. I fear to take the Ring to hide it.' 'Balin will nd no ring in Moria,' said Gandalf. 'But we will put it to the test one day'

Bilbo laughed. 'I have never known you give me pleasant advice before,' he said. 'If you had really started this affair, you might be expected to nish it. But you know well enough now thatstartingis too great a claim for any, and that only a small part is played in great deeds by any hero'

Frodo looked at all the faces, but they were not turned to him. A great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken. 'I will take the Ring,' he said, 'though I do not know the way.'

Pippin: 'We hobbits ought to stick together, and we will. I shall go, unless they chain me up. There must be someone with intelligence in the party.' 'Then you certainly will not be chosen, Peregrin Took!' said Gandalf, looking in through the window, which was near the ground.

The hobbits had been nearly two months in the house of Elrond. Some had gone north beyond the springs of the Hoarwell into the Ettenmoors. Others had gone west, and with the help of Aragorn and the Rangers had searched the lands far down the Grey ood. Nothing had been seen or heard of Gollum; but the wild wolves were still gathering, and were hunting again far up the Great River.

Elrond summoned the hobbits to him. 'If the Ring is to set out, it must go soon. But those who go with it must not count on their errand being aided by war or force. They must pass into the domain of the Enemy far from aid. Do you still hold to your word, Frodo, that you will be the Ring-bearer?'

We want to go with Frodo. 'That is because you do not understand and cannot imagine what lies ahead,' said Elrond, unexpectedly support- ing Pippin. In any case, I judge that the younger of these two, Peregrin Took, should remain. My heart is against his going.'

I shan't want it again, I expect. Frodo accepted it gratefully. 'Also there is this!' said Bilbo, bringing out a parcel which seemed to be rather heavy for its size. He unwound several folds of old cloth and held up a small shirt of mail. It was close-woven of many rings, as supple almost as linen, cold as ice, and harder than steel.

They were to start at dusk, for Elrond counselled them to journey under cover of night as often as they could, until they were far from Rivendell. The Company took little gear of war, for their hope was in secrecy not in battle. Aragorn had Andu ´ril but no other weapon, and he went forth clad only in rusty green and brown, as a Ranger of the wilderness.

Elrond called the Company to him. 'The Ring-bearer is setting out on the Quest of Mount Doom. On him alone is any charge laid: neither to cast away the Ring, nor to deliver it to any servant of the Enemy'

The others were in le behind, and Legolas whose eyes were keen was the rearguard. the ring goes south367 The rst part of their journey was hard and dreary, and Frodo remembered little of it, save the wind. For many sunless days an icy blast came from the Mountains in the east.

Gandalf: 'We cannot look too far ahead. Let us be glad that the first stage is safely over. I think we will rest here, not only today but tonight as well'

A dark patch appeared, and grew, and drove north like ying smoke in the wind. Flocks of birds, ying at great speed, were wheeling and circling, and traversing all the land as if they were searching for something.

All that day the Company remained in hiding. The dark birds passed over now and again; but as the westering Sun grew red they disappeared southwards. At dusk the Company set out, and turning now half east they steered their course towards Caradhras.

'But there is another way, and not by the pass of Caradhras: the dark and secret way that we have spoken of' 'But let us not speak of it again! Not yet. Say nothing to the others, I beg, not until it is plain that there is no other way'

Snow was thick on his hood and shoulders; it was already ankle-deep about his boots. 'His arm has grown long indeed,' said Gimli, 'if he can draw snow down from the North to trouble us here three hundred leagues away'

Hobbits huddled together with their backs to the wall. Bill the pony stood patiently but dejectedly in front of the hobbits. The Company cared no longer for watchers or unfriendly eyes.

'The dawn is not far off.' 'If any dawn can pierce these clouds,' said Gimli. Boromir stepped out of the circle and stared up into the blackness. 'He has more snow yet to bring us, if we go on. The sooner we go back and down the better'

The clouds lowered, and now a few flakes of snow came curling down again. An hour, maybe, went by, though it seemed far longer, the ring goes south and then at last they saw Legolas coming back. 'Well,' cried Legolas as he ran up, 'I have not brought the Sun. She is walking in the blue elds of the South, and a little wreath of snow on this Redhorn hillock troubles her not at all. But I have brought back a gleam of good hope for those who are doomed to go on feet.'

Gandalf told the hobbits that Caradhras had defeated them. They had no choice but to go on, or to return to Rivendell. Pippin's face brightened visibly at the mere mention of return.

'The road may lead to Moria, but how can we hope that it will lead through Moria?' said Aragorn darkly. 'Things have changed since you came north, Boromir,' answered Gandalf, 'Did you not hear what I told you of Saruman? With him I may have business of my own ere all is over. But the Ring must not come near Isengard, if that can by any means be prevented.'

I passed through, and I came out again alive!' 'I too once passed the Dimrill Gate,' said Aragorn quietly; 'but though I also came out. again, the memory is very evil. I do not wish to enter Moria a second time' 'How far is Moria?' asked Boromir. 'There was a door south-west of Caradhras, some fifteen miles as the crow flies, and maybe twenty as the wolf runs'

In the midst of this they lit a fire, for there was no hope that darkness and silence would keep their trail from discovery by the hunting packs. Round the fire they sat, and those that were not on guard dozed uneasily. The howling of the wolves was now all round them, sometimes nearer and sometimes further off.

No trace of the light remained but the charred trees and the arrows of Legolas lying on the hill-top. All were undamaged save one of which only the point was left. In the distance could be dimly seen a line of bare cliffs, and in their midst, taller than the rest, one great grey wall.

After a brief halt and a hasty meal they went on again. Before them the mountains frowned, but their path lay in a deep trough of land. At length they came to a sharp bend. There the road had been veering southwards between the brink of the channel and a steep fall of the land to the left. Rounding the corner they saw before them a low cliff, some five fathoms high, with a broken and jagged top. Over it a trickling water dripped, through a wide cleft that seemed to have been carved out by a fall that had once been strong and full.

Gandalf led the Company along the shore of the lake. They came to a narrow creek that barred their way to the far shore. A mile southwards they came upon holly trees.

Gandalf told Sam he would have to choose between his pony and Frodo. 'He'd follow Mr. Frodo into a dragon's den, if I led him,' protested Sam. 'I am sorry, Sam,' said the wizard. 'But when the Door opens I do not think you will be able to drag your Bill inside'

'They are wrought of mithril that mirrors only starlight and moon- light, and sleeps until it is touched by one who speaks words now long forgotten in Middle-earth. It is long since I heard them, and I thought deeply before I could recall them to my mind' 'What does the writing say?' asked Frodo, who was trying to decipher the inscription on the arch. 'The words are in the elven-tongue of the West of Middle- earth in the Elder Days,' answered Gandalf.

The opening words were Elvish, like the writing on the arch: that seems certain. He stepped up to the rock again, and lightly touched with his staff the silver star in the middle beneath the sign of the anvil. Annon edhellen, edro hi ammen! Fennas nogothrim, lasto beth lammen! he said in a commanding voice. The silver lines faded, but the blank grey stone did not stir.

Bill the pony gave a wild neigh of fear, and turned tail and dashed away along the lakeside into the darkness. Sam leaped after him, and then hearing Frodo's cry he ran back again, weeping and cursing. The others swung round and saw the waters of the lake seething, as if a host of snakes were swimming up from the southern end. 'Into the gateway! Up the stairs! Quick!' shouted Gandalf leaping back.

Gandalf gave them each a third sip of the miruvor of Rivendell. 'It will not last much longer, I am afraid,' he said; 'but I think we need it after that horror at the gate.' After only a brief rest they started on their way again.

Frodo's spirits had risen for a while after his escape, and after food and a draught of the cordial; but now a deep uneasiness, growing to dread, crept over him again. They had no fuel nor any means of making torches; in the desperate scramble at the doors many things had been left behind.

Pippin felt curiously attracted by the well. While the others were unrolling blankets and making beds against the walls of the chamber, as far as possible from the hole in the door, he crept to the edge and peered over. He felt his heart beat many times before there was any sound. Far below, as if the stone had fallen into deep water in some cavernous place, there came a plunk, very distant, but magnified and repeated in the hollow shaft.

Gandalf roused them all from sleep. He had sat and watched all alone for about six hours, and had let the others rest. 'I do not like the feel of the middle way,' he said. 'There is foul air down there, or I am no guide'

I think we have reached them now, but it is night outside again, and we cannot tell until morning. If I am right, tomorrow we may actually see the morning peeping in. But in the meanwhile we had better go no further. Let a journey in the dark let us rest, if we can.

The Orcs have often plundered Moria; there is nothing left in the upper halls. And since the dwarves died, no one dares to seek the shafts and treasures down in the deep places: they are drowned in water – or in a shadow of fear.

a journey in the dark<sup>415</sup> When he lay down he quickly went to sleep, but it seemed to him that the dream went on. He heard whispers, and saw the two pale points of light approaching, slowly. He woke and found that the others were speaking softly near him.

Gandalf opened a door to a chamber where bones and broken swords were lying. There were many recesses cut in the rock of the walls, and in them were large iron-bound chests of wood. All had been broken and plundered; but beside the shattered lid of one there lay the remains of a book. It had been slashed and stabbed and partly burned, and was so stained with black and other dark marks like old blood that little of it could be read.

Gandalf looked over the last page of the Book of Mazarbul. The last thing written is in a trailing scrawl of elf-letters: they are coming.

'Slam the doors and wedge them!' shouted Aragorn. 'We must not get shut in. Keep the east door ajar! We will go that way, if we get a chance.' 'There are Orcs, very many of them,' said Boromir, 'and some are large and evil: black Uruks of Mordor. For the moment they are hanging back, but there is something else there. A great cave-troll, I think, or more than one'



Rams and hammers were beating against it. It cracked and staggered back, and the opening grew suddenly wide. Arrows came whistling in, but struck the northern wall. There was a horn-blast and a rush of feet, and orcs one after another leaped into the chamber.

Frodo thought he could hear the voice of Gandalf above, muttering words that ran down the sloping roof with a sighing echo. The walls seemed to be trembling. Every now and again the drum-beats throbbed and rolled: doom,doom. Suddenly at the top of the stair there was a stab of white light. There was no other sound of pursuit, neither tramp of feet, nor any voice.

All the wall gave way, and the roof of the chamber as well, I think. 'I am afraid Balin is buried deep, and maybe something else is buried there too. But at least the passage behind us was completely blocked. Ah! I have never felt so spent, but it is passing'

Doom, doom: the pillars seemed to tremble and the ames to quiver. Away beyond the shadows at the western end of the hall there came cries and horn-calls.

Gandalf stood in the middle of the span, leaning on the staff in his left hand, but in his other hand Glamdring gleamed, cold and white. 'You cannot pass!' he said. The Balrog made no answer. The re in it seemed to die, but the darkness grew. It stepped forward slowly on the bridge, and suddenly it drew itself up to a great height.

Frodo heard Sam at his side weeping, and then he found that he himself was weeping as he ran. They passed into a hall, bright with daylight from its high windows in the east. Through its huge broken doors they passed, 432the fellowship of the ring and suddenly before them the Great Gates opened.

Gimli said: 'There lies the Mirrormere, deep Kheled-za ram!' The Company now went down the road from the Gates. It was rough and broken, fading to a winding track between heather and whin.

The hobbits had eaten nothing since the early morning. Sam's cut was burning like re, and his head felt light. In spite of the shining sun the wind seemed chill.

I still marvel that you are alive at all. Gently he stripped off Frodo's old jacket and worn tunic, and gave a gasp of wonder. The silver corslet shimmered before his eyes like the light upon a rippling sea.

Frodo heard the quick patter of feet and saw two tiny gleams of light behind. They had come to the eaves of the Golden Wood. The night-wind blew chill up the valley to meet them.

Frodo and Legolas came upon another stream as they walked through the forest. They heard it splashing over a fall away among the shadows on their right. 'Here is Nimrodel!' said Legolas, 'Of this stream the Silvan Elves made many songs long ago, and still we sing them in the North'

Legolas sang a song about Lothlórien, Lo ■rien of the Blossom. It tells how sorrow came upon her when the Dwarves awakened evil in the mountains. The voice of Legolas faltered, and the song ceased. 'I can- not sing any more,' he said.

'Darol!' it said in commanding tone, and Legolas dropped back to earth in surprise and fear. There was a sound of soft laughter over their heads, and then another clear voice spoke in an elven-tongue.

'Myself, four hobbits; and two men, one of whom, Aragorn, is an Elf-friend of the folk of Westerlande' 'The name of Aragorn son of Arathorn is known in Lothlórien,' said Haldir, 'and he has the favour of the Lady. All then is well. But you have yet spoken only of seven.' 'The eighth is a dwarf,' said Legolas. 'That is not well. We have not had dealings with the Dwarves since the Dark Days. They are not permitted in our land'

He could dimly see the grey forms of two elves sitting motionless with their arms about their knees, speaking in whispers. At last lulled by the wind in the boughs above, Frodo fell asleep with the song of Legolas running in his mind. Late in the night he woke. The Elves were gone. The sickle Moon was gleaming dimly among the leaves. The wind was still. A little way off he heard a harsh laugh and the tread of many feet on the ground below. There was a ring of metal.

The Company set out again, guided now by Haldir and his brother Rúmil. 'Farewell, sweet Nimrodel!' cried Legolas. Frodo looked back and caught a gleam of white foam among the grey tree-stems.

The others may walk free for a while, until we come nearer to our dwellings, down in Egladil, in the Angle between the waters. This was not at all to the liking of Gimli. 'I will not walk blindfold, like a beggar or a prisoner. And I am no spy. My folk have never had dealings with any of the servants of the Enemy'

Haldir said there are Elf-havens west of my land, the Shire, where Hobbits live. 'Happy folk are Hobbits to dwell near the shores of the 454th the fellowship of the ring sea!' said Haldir.

A marching host of Elves had come up silently: they were hastening towards the northern borders to guard against any attack from Moria. The marauding orcs had been waylaid and almost all destroyed; the remnant had ed westward towards the mountains, and were being pursued. A strange creature also had been seen, running with bent back and with hands near the ground, like a beast and yet not of beast-shape.

I feel as if I was inside a song, if you take my meaning. Haldir looked at them, and he seemed indeed to take the meaning of both thought and word. 'You feel the power of the Lady of the Galadhrim,' he said, 'Would it please you to climb with me up Cerin Amroth?'

'Here is the heart of Elvendom on earth,' he said, 'and here my heart dwells ever, unless there be a light beyond the dark roads that we still must tread, you and I. Come with me!' And taking Frodo's hand in his, he left the hill of Cerin Amroth and came there never again as living man.

The others may follow as they wish. It is a long climb for those that are not accustomed to such stairs, but you may rest upon the way. As he climbed slowly up Frodo passed many sets: some on one side, some on another, and some set about the bole the mirror of galadriel of the tree, so that the ladder passed through them. At a great height above the ground he came to a wide talan, like the deck of a great ship. On it was built a house, so large that almost it would have served for a hall of Men upon the earth.

'These are evil tidings,' said Celeborn, 'the most evil that have been spoken here in long years full of grievous deeds' He turned to Haldir. 'Why has nothing of this been told to me before?' he asked in the elven-tongue.

I will do what I can to aid you, each according to his wish and need, but especially that one of the little folk who bears the burden.

All of them, it seemed, had fared alike: each had felt that he was offered a choice between a shadow full of fear that lay ahead, and something that he greatly desired. They remained some days in Lothlórien, so far as they could tell or remember. Haldir had bidden them fare- well and gone back again to the fences of the North.

Frodo and Sam were walking together in the cool twilight. Both of them felt restless again. Frodo suddenly the shadow of parting had fallen. He knew somehow that the time was very near when he must leave Lothlórien.

I'd dearly love to see some Elf-magic, Mr. Frodo!' 'I wouldn't,' said Frodo. 'It's like being at home and on a holiday at the same time, if you understand me.'

'And I'd not mind a glimpse of what's going on at home,' he said in an aside to Frodo. 'But there, like as not I'll only see the stars, or something that I won't understand.' 'Do you now wish to look, Frodo?' said the Lady Galad.

'I do not counsel you one way or the other, the mirror of galadriel<sup>473</sup> I am not a counsellor. You may learn something, and whether what you see be fair or evil, that may be profitable, and yet it may not. Yet I think, Frodo, that you have courage and wisdom enough for the venture, or I would not have brought you here. Do as you will!'

Galadriel said: 'I perceive the Dark Lord and know his mind, or all of his mind that concerns the Elves. And he gropes ever to see me and my thought. But still the door is closed!' She lifted up her white arms, and spread out her hands towards the East in a gesture of rejection and denial. Eärendil, the Evening Star, most beloved of the Elves, shone clear above. Its rays glanced upon a ring about her nether; it glittered like polished gold overlaid with silver light.

Galadriel said: 'I pass the test. All shall love me and despair!' She lifted up her hand and from the ring that she wore there issued a great light that illumined her alone and left all else dark. Then she let her hand fall, and the light faded, and suddenly she laughed again, and lo! she was shrunken: a slender elf-woman, clad in simple white, whose gentle voice was soft and sad.

Celeborn gave Aragorn a gift of boats. The Company debated what they should do, and how it would be best to attempt the fulfilling of their purpose with the Ring.

His own plan, while Gandalf remained with them, had been to go with Boromir, and with his sword help to deliver Gondor. But in Moria the burden of Gandalf had been laid on him; and he knew that he could not now forsake the Ring. And yet what help could he or any of the Company give to Frodo, save to walk blindly with him into the darkness?

The cakes will keep sweet for many many days, if they are unbroken and left in their leaf-wrappings, as we have brought them. The Elves next unwrapped and gave to each of the Company the clothes they had brought. For each they had provided a hood and cloak, made according to his size, of the light but warm silken stuff that the Galadhrim wove.

On the bank of the Silverlode, at some distance up from the meeting of the streams, there was a hythe of white stones and white wood. By it were moored many boats and barges. Some were brightly painted, and shone with silver and gold and green, but most were either white or grey. Three small grey boats had been made ready for the travellers, and in these the Elves added also coils of rope, three to each boat.

Galadriel, tall and white, stood with a circlet of golden flowers in her hair, and in her hand she held a harp, and she sang. 'We have come to bid our last farewell,' she said, 'and to speed you with blessings from our land' 'Though you have not yet eaten with us, and we bid you, therefore, to a parting feast, here between the flowing waters that will bear you far from Lo 'rien'

'But what I have heard seems to me for the most part old wives' tales, such as we tell to our children. All that lies north of Rohan is now to us so far away that fancy can wander freely there' 'Here is the gift of Celeborn and Galadriel to the leader of your Company,' she said to Aragorn, and she gave him a sheath that had been made to fit his sword.

In this hour take the name that was foretold for you, Elessar, the Elfstone of the House of Elendil!' Then Aragorn took the stone and pinned the brooch upon his breast.

The Lady Galadriel gave Frodo a small crystal phial. She said: 'In this phial is caught the light of Earendil's star, set amid the waters of my fountain'

And she 'Tintalle 'Varda Oiolosse 'o ve fanyar ma 'ryat Elenta 'ri ortane ', ar ilye 'tier undula 've'lumbule '; ar sindano ■riello caita mornie ' i falmalinnar imbe 'met. S 'vanwa na ', Ro'mello vanwa, Valimar! Nama 'rie"! Nai hiruvalye 'Valimar.

Frodo awoke to find himself on the west bank of the Great River, Anduin. The Company had come to the Brown Lands that lay, vast and desolate, between Southern Mirkwood and the hills of the Eryn Muir.

'How wide and empty and mournful all this country looks!' said Frodo. 'But we have not journeyed far south yet,' answered Aragorn. Soon the River broadened and grew more shallow. The Brown Lands rose into bleak wolds, over which flowed a chill air from the East.

Sam had a funny dream an hour or two before we stopped, Mr. Frodo,' he said. 'Or maybe it wasn't a dream. Funny it was anyway. It was like this: I saw a dog with eyes!'

'Ever since the night on the boat. I suppose he was lurking in Moria, and picked up our trail. But I hoped that our stay in Lo 'rien would throw him off the scent again. The miserable creature must have been hiding in the woods by the Silverlode, watching us start off!'

Aragorn, Legolas and the Company set out on the journey to Eryn Muir, the southern march of Wilderland. They saw little of the country, for they journeyed mostly by night and twilight.

Sarn Gebir loomed up in the night, dark and ominous. 'All together, paddle!' shouted Boromir, 'Paddle! Or we shall be driven on the shoals' Frodo felt the keel beneath him grate upon stone.

Frodo felt a sudden chill running through him and clutching at his heart. Suddenly the great bow of Lo 'rien sang. Shrieked the arrow from the elven-string. Almost above him the winged shape swerved. There was a harsh croaking scream, as it fell out of the air.

The travellers huddled in their boats felt the changing of the weather. The air grew warm and very still under the great moist clouds. The rushing of the River over the rocks of the rapids seemed to grow louder and closer. The twigs of the trees above them began to drip. When the day came the mood of the world about them had become soft and sad.

Aragorn hoped to find some way by which they could carry both their boats and their baggage to the smoother water beyond the Rapids. Boromir held out long against this choice; but when it became plain that Frodo would follow Aragorn, wherever he went, he gave in.

Boromir and Aragorn carried the boats, while the others toiled and scrambled after them with the baggage. At last all was removed and laid on the portage-way. Then with little further hindrance, save from sprawling briars and many fallen stones, they moved forward all together.

Frodo peering forward saw in the distance two great rocks approaching. Tall and sheer and ominous they stood upon either side of the stream. 'Behold the Argonath, the Pillars of the Kings!' cried Aragorn.

The Company rested for a while, drifting south on the current that owed through the middle of the lake. They set a watch, but had no sight nor sound of their enemies. If Gollum had contrived to follow them, he remained unseen and unheard.

High up above the tall cliffs were steep slopes upon which trees climbed, mounting one head above another. Above them again were grey faces of inaccessible rock, crowned by a great spire of stone. Many birds were circling about it, but no sign of other living things could be seen.

'I was afraid for you, Frodo,' he said. 'If Aragorn is right and Orcs are near, then none of us should wander alone, and you least of all: so much depends on you. And my heart too is heavy. May I stay now and talk for a while, since I have found you? It would comfort me. Where there are so many, all speech becomes a debate without end. But two together may perhaps find wisdom.'

Boromir said: 'The Ring would give me power of Command. How I would drive the hosts of Mordor, and all men would flock to my banner!' 'You misunderstand me,' said Frodo. 'My city is not far now; and it is little further from there to Mordor than from here'

Frodo dodged aside and again put the stone between them. There was only one thing he could do: trembling he pulled out the Ring upon its chain and quickly slipped it on his finger. The Man gasped, stared for a moment amazed, and then ran wildly about, seeking here and there among the rocks and trees.

Far away it seemed, and beautiful: white-walled, many-towered, proud and fair upon its mountain-seat; its the breaking of the fellowship of the ring. But against Minas Tirith was set another fortress, greater and more strong. Thither, eastward, unwilling his eye was drawn.

Aragorn: 'It is now more hopeless than ever for the Company to go east' 'I would choose Minas Tirith, but if he does not, then I follow him' 'And I too will go with him,' said Legolas. 'It would be faithless now to say farewell'

Boromir, who at first had been sitting silent on the outside of the circle, was no longer there. 'Now where's he got to?' cried Sam, looking worried. Boromir reappeared from the trees and walked towards them without speaking. He paused as if counting those that were present, and then sat down aloof, with his eyes on the ground.

'I will say no more yet.' 'This is bad!' cried Sam, jumping up. 'I don't know what this Man has been up to. Why should Mr. Frodo put the thing on? He didn't ought to have; and if he has, goodness knows what may have happened!'

Frodo and Sam were on their way to Mordor. Frodo was going alone, but Sam wanted to go with him. Sam fell into the River and Frodo had to rescue him.

'It is no good trying to escape you. But I'm glad, Sam. Come along! It is plain that we were meant to go together. We will go, and may the others find a safe road! Strider will look after them. I don't suppose we shall see them again' 'Yet we may, Mr. Frodo. We may,' said Sam.