“I have called you all together for a Purpose.” Something in the way that he said this made an impression. There was almost silence, and one or two of the Tooks pricked up their ears.

“Indeed, for Three Purposes! First of all, to tell you that I am immensely fond of you all, and that eleventy-one years is too short a time to live among such excellent and admirable hobbits.” Tremendous outburst of approval.

“I don 't know half of you half as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve.” This was unexpected and rather difficult. There was some scattered clapping, but most of them were trying to work it out and see if it came to a compliment.

“Secondly, to celebrate my birthday. Cheers again. I should say: OUR birthday. For it is, of course, also the birthday of my heir and nephew, Frodo. He comes of age and into his inheritance today.” Some perfunctory clapping by the elders; and some loud shouts of ‘Frodo! Frodo! Jolly old Frodo,' from the juniors. The Sackville-Bagginses scowled, and wondered what was meant by 'coming into his inheritance'. “Together we score one hundred and forty-four. Your numbers were chosen to fit this remarkable total: One Gross, if I may use the expression.” No cheers. This was ridiculous. Many of his guests, and especially the Sackville-Bagginses, were insulted, feeling sure they had only been asked to fill up the required number, like goods in a package. 'One Gross, indeed! Vulgar expression.'

“It is also, if I may be allowed to refer to ancient history, the anniversary of my arrival by barrel at Esgaroth on the Long Lake; though the fact that it was my birthday slipped my memory on that occasion. I was only fifty-one then, and birthdays did not seem so important. The banquet was very splendid, however, though I had a bad cold at the time, I remember, and could only say 'thagyou very buch'. I now repeat it more correctly: Thank you very much for coming to my little party.” Obstinate silence. They all feared that a song or some poetry was now imminent; and they were getting bored. Why couldn't he stop talking and let them drink his health? But Bilbo did not sing or recite. He paused for a moment.

“Thirdly and finally, he said, I wish to make an ANNOUNCEMENT.” He spoke this last word so loudly and suddenly that everyone sat up who still could.

“I regret to announce that - though, as I said, eleventy-one years is far too short a time to spend among you - this is the END. I am going. I am leaving NOW. GOOD-BYE.”

He stepped down and vanished. There was a blinding flash of light, and the guests all blinked. When they opened their eyes Bilbo was nowhere to be seen. One hundred and forty-four flabbergasted hobbits sat back speechless.

There was a dead silence, until suddenly, after several deep breaths, every Baggins, Boffin, Took, Brandybuck, Grubb, Chubb, Burrows, Bolger, Bracegirdle, Brockhouse, Goodbody, Hornblower, and Proudfoot began to talk at once.

Frodo was waiting on the step, smiling, but looking rather tired and worried. Some of the visitors he invited to come inside, as Bilbo had left 'messages' for them.

Inside in the hall there was piled a large assortment of packages and parcels and small articles of furniture. On every item there was a label tied. There were several labels of this sort:

For ADELARD TOOK, for his VERY OWN, from Bilbo, on an umbrella. Adelard had carried off many unlabelled ones.

For DORA BAGGINS in memory of a LONG correspondence, with love from Bilbo, on a large waste-paper basket. Dora was Drogo's sister and the eldest surviving female relative of Bilbo and Frodo; she was ninety-nine, and had written reams of good advice for more than half a century.

For MILO BURROWS, hoping it will be useful, from B.B., on a gold pen and ink-bottle. Milo never answered letters.

For the collection of HUGO BRACEGIRDLE, from a contributor, on an (empty) book-case. Hugo was a great borrower of books, and worse than usual at returning them.

<https://forms.gle/Ybqsm2BwuxJmucB98>

answers on spreadsheet