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the Farbanks Folios

middle earth in the fourth age

red p'occi for p'to for ay'alt'os t'os for c'ip for ay'nod'os for m'ous for p'ap'p'at.



translated by

Liam **T**esshim

**THE
FARBANKS
FOLIOS**

**MIDDLE EARTH
IN THE FOURTH
AGE**

VOLUME ONE

BY

LIAM TESSHIM

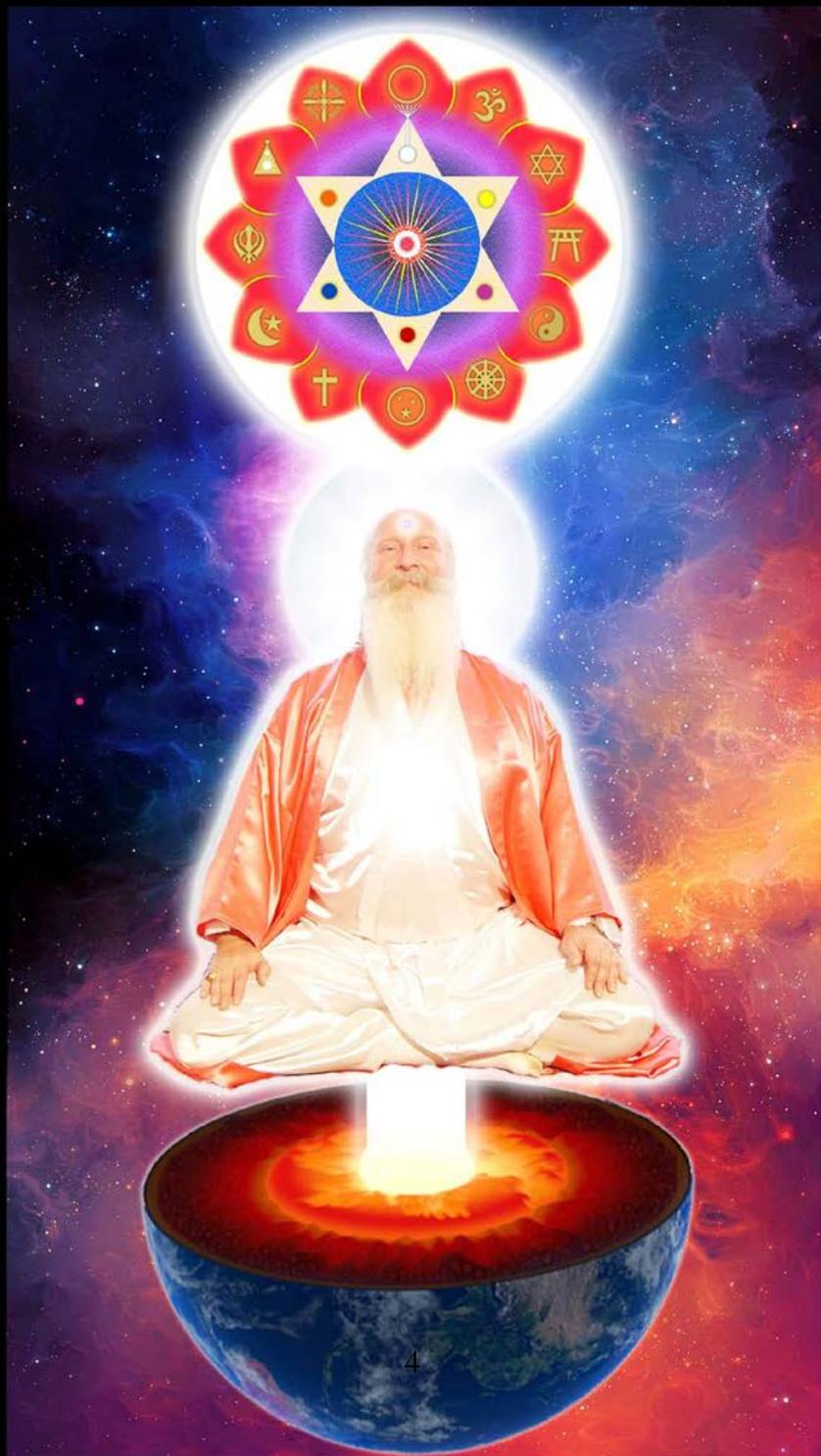
DEDICATION

With all Thanks, Love and Gratitude to Swami Devi Dhyani and all the helpers who make these books and DVDs possible.

With all Thanks, Love and Gratitude to my Mother and Father and to all my other Teachers, Theos Bernard, Sri Yogendra, Eric Berne, Gurdjieff, Father Bede Griffiths, Osho, Zen Master Hogen, Swami Sivananda, Swami Satchitananda, and all the other giants upon whose shoulders I stand - who made me able to be what... I AM - Swami Satchidanand

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DEDICATION

MILES MATHIS THE NEW LEONARDO



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MILES MATHIS

As a young teenager Miles was one of the top junior golfers in the state, winning many regional tournaments. [He shot a 76 at age 12, on a course he had seen only once.] He also won several local tennis tournaments. In this period he became a fledgling wildlife artist, beginning by

copying Clark Bronson drawings when he was 11, moving on to drawing from wildlife photographs in magazines like *National Geographic* and finally working from his own photographs and from nature.

In 2000 Miles moved to Amherst, Massachusetts, where, snuggled in among the five colleges, he began his serious scientific studies. He had majored for a short time in physics and astronomy at UT Austin, where he impressed his professors with a very quick mind. In his first course in physics, one designed to weed out the weak, the class average was 52. Miles ruined the curve with a 100. In astronomy it was the same: Miles had the high average among all the large first-year classes. This was reminiscent of high school, where the calculus teacher had a longstanding trick of asking all his second-year algebra students a pre-calculus question, a leading variant of the problem Newton and Leibniz were working on when they invented the calculus. No one had ever answered it correctly. Miles did.

Also calming is his piano, which he plays almost daily. After a year of lessons when he was 12, Miles waited 20 years to take up the instrument again. At that time he began teaching himself what would be considered an impossible repertoire for someone with one year of childhood training. Remembering only Bach's *Minuet*, he jumped immediately into Debussy's *Claire de Lune*. With that under his belt he added *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair* and *Reverie*, then Ravel's *Pavane for a Dead Princess*, Liszt's *Consolation #3*, Schumann's *Romance #2* and *Of Foreign Lands and People*, Tchaikovsky's *Seasons*, Rachmaninov's *Prelude in G*, Satie's *Gymnopedies*, a couple of Chopin *Etudes*, and many others. Some of these pieces are beastly difficult in timing, but none are especially fast (except perhaps parts of *Claire de Lune*).

He had also kept up his readings in science since college, although this consisted mainly of updates on the latest theories. But, unsatisfied with the direction these theories were taking, Miles finally began studying the history of

theoretical physics in earnest, especially as it related to classical mechanics and basic physics. He bought a small library of old books like Newton's Principia, Euclid's and Archimedes' treatises, Maxwell's papers, and all of Einstein's original writings. He also brushed up on his calculus and began looking into the origins of that math. This ultimately led him to Cauchy and Cantor, set theory, topology, physical chemistry, cosmology, and several other subfields, which he investigated to whatever ends he was following at the time.

His galleries now full of paintings (and selling quite slowly), he was free to write papers of his own. In the ten [now twenty] years since, Miles has written many books worth of papers, all of which investigate mathematical anomalies within broader physical theories or higher maths. These papers are published on a website linked to his art website as well as at a larger online journal devoted to dissenting opinion in physics (Walter Babin's alternative journal, where Miles got ten million hits in the first two years). Since the first of these papers concerned

Relativity, and since Relativity is considered by the status quo to be a closed and finished field, Miles' papers have been censored and slandered by the universities. Some university professors are beginning to take note, however. The current theoretical wall in physics has led even some top names out of standard channels, and a few appear to be trolling the internet for new possibilities. Miles has been contacted by several professors worldwide, [recently added: and in 2010 he was contacted by an astrophysicist at NASA and Johns Hopkins, who recommended he publish in book form ASAP. This NASA scientist even offered to write the introduction, and Miles' first physics book came out in the summer of that year. Another reader offered to bankroll his second book, which came out in late 2011. A third was published in 2013. In 2015 his paper on the Gravity Wave announcement caused a major stir in academia, ultimately killing the story and possibly preventing a Nobel Prize. Other papers have sent similar ripples through mainstream physics, and Miles has now been called by some the most revolutionary voice in science. He lays

claim to the title of being the first professional artist who has had a book on theoretical physics recommended and introduced by an Oxford-graduate and NASA physicist.]

In 2004 Miles moved to Bruges, Belgium, a preferred retreat. In this true artists' town, where stand statues to Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling (and the mathematician Simon Stevin), Miles could retain equilibrium while fighting on a thousand fronts. Solace in the form of silent swans and brooding canal bridges and rooftops glistening from a recent rain were always but a few steps away, out his green door. The finest chocolate and beer in the world could remove him instantly from the messiest squabble, keeping his faced unlined and his eyes bright and his brush hand (the left) steady.

Also calming is his piano, which he plays almost daily. After a year of lessons when he was 12, Miles waited 20 years to take up the instrument again. At that time he began teaching himself what would be considered an impossible repertoire for someone with one year of childhood

training. Remembering only Bach's Minuet, he jumped immediately into Debussy's Claire de Lune. With that under his belt he added The Girl with the Flaxen Hair and Reverie, then Ravel's Pavane for a Dead Princess, Liszt's Consolation #3, Schumann's Romance #2 and Of Foreign Lands and People, Tchaikovsky's Seasons, Rachmaninov's Prelude in G, Satie's Gymnopedies, a couple of Chopin Etudes, and many others. Some of these pieces are beastly difficult in timing, but none are especially fast (except perhaps parts of Claire de Lune).

In the winter of 2007, while on vacation in Spain, Miles solved what has been billed as the oldest surviving math problem in the world. Travelling like an Amishman, with no phone, no laptop, no reservations, and one pair of pants and shoes, he was in a position to let his mind wander, which was the whole point. Not seeing Mardi Gras coming, he arrived in Cordoba with no booking and spent the night in a carpark. But this also only encouraged fresher thoughts. By the time he made it to the naturist beach in Vera Playa, his brain had been well-primed for real work.

Bored with the blowing sand and the fat naked Germans denting the dunes, he dove into the internet cafes to take solace with his papers. He took up an old paper on Goldbach's Conjecture he had worked on for a few weeks several years earlier and attacked it furiously, refusing to let several bouts of bad math deter him. After a few days he had discovered the secret, and re-surfaced with a simple proof that can be understood by any good reader. Somewhere, distant towers were swaying once again.

Also in 2007, Miles finally got around to working with a gallery in Bruges. There you can find several oils and pastels.

Miles also works in clay and bronze sculpture, and occasionally develops his own photography prints. These are normally hand-toned 11x14 inch prints of pictures he takes of his painting models, in the same sessions in which he paints. Many but not all of these are nudes. He has offered a whole book of his photographs of the young model Tess to various publishers such as Aperture, with no success. These will have to wait for a

future release, like the photos of Reverend Dodgson or Julia Margaret Cameron.

Added later: Since 2013 Miles has also become known as the foremost fake-events researcher on the internet, blowing the cover of literally hundreds of major stories throughout history, all the way back to the Crusades. In 2013, his art counter-criticism morphed and expanded into a more general historical criticism, taking him into areas never before tread by an honest researcher. Discovering at that time an admission by the CIA that they had been in control of Modern Art all along, Miles finally put 2 and 2 together, seeing that most of accepted history had been managed in a similar way. This led to a linking of his art criticism and his science criticism, since he proved that both art and science—and everything else—were being managed by the same people for the same reasons.

By 2017 his two websites had gone viral, creating a worldwide stir in several fields.

Many of the papers on the science site rank on the first page on a Google search on their general subjects, and several

outrank Wikipedia and Dictionary.com. In 2018, the London Daily Mail published his research on Stephen Hawking, showing Miles was correct, Hawking was fake!

In 2018 and 2019, the mainstream has admitted he is correct on several other major subjects, which has turned out to be very embarrassing for mainstream physics. The entire field is now in disarray.

<http://milesmathis.com/>
<http://www.milesmathis.com/>
<http://milesmathis.com/updates.html>
<http://milesmathis.com/farbindex.html>

**THE
FARBANKS
FOLIOS
MIDDLE EARTH
IN THE FOURTH
AGE
VOLUME ONE**

**BY
LIAM TESSHIM**

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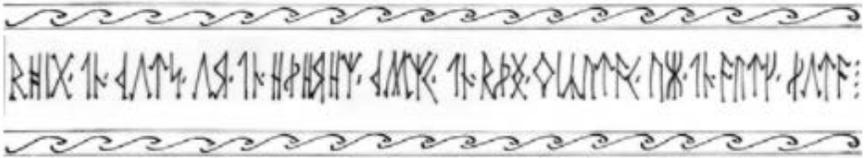
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**One Ring to rule them all, One
Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in
the darkness bind them**

**THOSE WHO HAVE
BECOME CORRUPTED
HAVE,
"TAKEN THE RING"**

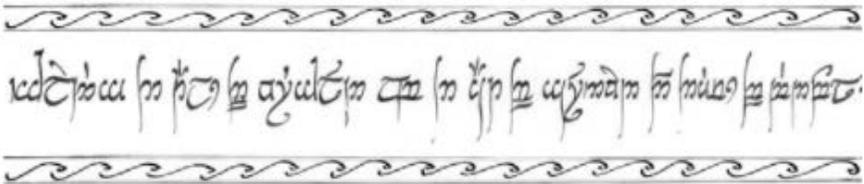


**THE ONE RING ENERGY
BLOCKAGE OF SAURON**



the Farbanks Folios

middle earth in the fourth age



translated by

Liam **T**esshim


**P**reface

Disclaimer: this work is offered to the world as a temporary gift, and it may be downloaded and printed for entertainment only. Any sale or resale, or any use for profit, is prohibited by international laws. It is automatically copyright of me and the Tolkien family. I may not have the werewithal to pursue anyone for infringement, but be assured the Tolkiens do.

It has been the assumption by many of those in the world of letters that Professor Tolkien's discovery of *The Red Book of Westmarch* (and other writings) in the early 20th century was not so much an exhumation as a fabrication. That is, like James Macpherson and the famous controversy of Ossian two hundred years earlier, Mr. Tolkien was considered not an historian but a fiction writer. But unlike Ossian, the existence of Mr. Tolkien's sources was never even questioned: they were dismissed by all but the most credulous (or faithful) readers out of hand. The documents were believed to be a literary device; almost no one took them seriously. This saved Professor Tolkien the trouble of proving his assertions, but it has led to serious misunderstanding.

It is surprising that no one found it at all strange that a professor of philology with no previous fiction writing credentials, at a premier university, should be the one to 'imagine' an entire history, complete with vast chronologies and languages and pre-languages and etymologies and full-blown mythologies. No one thought to ask the question that was begged by all this: if a previously unknown cache of historical documents of a literary nature *were* to surface anywhere on earth, where would that be? At the top of the list would certainly be the archaeology departments of Oxford or Cambridge. Who else is still digging in the British Isles? Who else cares about such arcane (and provincial, not to say insular) matters? And who would these archaeologists consult when faced with unknown languages in unknown characters in untranslatable books? They would go first to their own philologists in their own universities, to experts on old northern languages. This is exactly what Mr. Tolkien was. Coincidence? I think not. And when those discoveries were found to be of the nature they were—positing the existence of hobbits and elves and dwarves and dragons—is it any wonder the archaeologists washed their hands of the whole mess, never wishing to jeopardize their careers by making any statement about the authenticity, or even the existence, of their great find? One would *expect* them to make a gift of it all to the eccentric philologist who believed in it, though it was not in the least believable. To let him hang

himself out to dry in any way he saw fit. Who could have foreseen, after all, that he would publish it to ever greater wealth and fame, and never have to explain a thing? The strange turns that history takes, not even the historians can predict.

The truth is that *The Red Book* (or a copy of it) did, and probably still does, exist. Nor is it the only surviving document, or trove of documents, from that part of our history. Other sources have recently been unearthed, in related but separate locations, that confirm this. It is true that the ruins of Westmarch were long thought to be the only existing repository of hobbitlore and the history of the elves. And it is also true that the present-day location of what was then Westmarch is still under a cloud. Only Professor Tolkien, and perhaps one or two from the archaeology department at Oxford, ever knew its exact locus. But, as I said, other fortuitous digs have yielded new evidence that Westmarch was a real place, and that *The Red Book* was an historical fact.

It is known to all of the wise (in hobbitlore) that Westmarch was only one of many population centers in the Northwest of Middle Earth. Bree, Buckland, Hobbiton/Bywater, Tuckborough, and several others in fact predated the settlement at Westmarch, and were not eclipsed by it until later in the Fourth Age. What is not as well known, because it was not included in *The Red Book* or accompanying artifacts, is that other settlements to the north and south of the Shire also gained pre-eminence later, and were

therefore the natural repositories for important documentation. The wealth of material since discovered in these other sites not only rounds out our understanding of the Third Age, it often fills in gaps in the first two ages. And, most importantly, it supplies us with completely new information about the Fourth Age. The present volume is proof of that.

The tale told here is taken from *The Farbank's Folios*, an anonymous compilation of oral histories and Elvish lays probably composed sometime in the Fifth Age. None of the tales in these folios has been given a title in Westron (such as "There and Back Again"), since none of the tales herein appear to have been written by any of their protagonists. There is no first person narrative, and much of the detail can only have been supplied by an 'omniscient' third-person writer living at a great distance in time from the action of the story. In that sense these are secondary sources, just as the all the information about the Elder days in *The Red Book*—that is, "Translations from the Elvish"—is also (but as "There and Back Again" is not—if it was in fact written by Bilbo.)

The Farbank's Folios as a whole deal with any number of events and narratives, as well as poems and songs. The present selection from them concerns only one major event, told in a single narrative. Although the author is unknown, he (or she) is assumed to be a hobbit. The other contents of the folios, and their similarities and linguistic

connections to the Westmarch documents, makes this supposition unavoidable. The author has incorporated bits and pieces from other sources, such as from the elvish and dwarvish oral and written histories of the day. These external sources are occasionally the subject of other narratives among *The Farbanks Folios*, and in these cases I have taken the liberty of including pertinent information in the present tale, either by simply putting it in the tale itself (with a footnote), or adding it as a footnote. I have done this only when I considered it of utmost importance. Publication of overlapping tales, many of them incomplete, presents difficulties which perhaps cannot be solved to the satisfaction of everyone. All I can do is indicate my actions, and the reasons for them. It is hoped that the audience may remain indulgent, as long as their patience may be ultimately rewarded.

Liam Tesshim

Swansea, Wales



Book 1

*News
from the West*


 **C**  **hapter 1***A Visitor in Brown*

Primrose Burdoc adjusted the skirts of her pale-blue dirndl and patted her curly hair back into place as she approached the bridge. Over the water she could see the round doors and windows of Farbanks and the row of tidy gardens along Willow Way. But mostly she could see—because she was looking that way all along—a hobbit in a dirty yellow overall and an old straw hat kneeling amongst his potatoes, up to his knees and elbows in mud. If she hadn't known him immediately, he certainly wouldn't have been of any interest to *her*—a hobbit lass of 24 summers and as picky as any. In his present position, he was not likely to impress any passing female, not if she were 8 or 80. But Primrose, or Prim as she was called, knew the hole and the garden—yea, she knew the very straw hat on his head and loved it, though it was ever so unlovely.

The time of the year was mid-autumn and though the season had so far been mild, the nights were chilly. As the sun began to set Prim increased her step and pulled her shawl about her shoulders. But at

number 8 Marly Row she stopped and put her basket of berries on the ground. Then she crossed her arms.

'Mister Fairbairn!' she said to the muddy posterior and undersoles of the grubbing hobbit. 'If you haven't noticed, it's almost dark.'

The hobbit turned round and squinted at her from under the crackled brim of the hat. 'Oh, yes— Prim, is it? Thank you, yes, it is late. Thank you.' And he turned back around and continued to muck.

'Tomilo* Fairbairn!' she continued to his backside, as if she were used to addressing that position. 'Do you propose to go on lying in that cold mud until your hands freeze up and the frost sets on your toes? I should just like to know, so that I can tell the mourners when they ask.'

Tomilo turned and squinted at her again, with perhaps a slight twinkle in his eye. Perhaps not. It was hard to tell in that light. 'Hm, yes, the mud is a bit cold. Thank you. I'm almost finished. I hope your mother is well?' And he returned to the mud.

*His name was Tomillimir, but everyone in Farbanks shortened it to Tomilo. The Fairbairns were descendants of Samwise the Great, through his daughter Elanor Goldenhair. Moving to the Westmarch in 1455 (Shire Reckoning), the Fairbairns naturally became interested in Elvenlore and language. Tomillimir is a name of Sindarin origin, meaning 'jewel of the sands'. The elves had intended 'tomillos' to mean the sands of the seashore, but the

hobbits took it to mean sand more generally, including the sand removed from a burrow.

With a slight humpfh Prim adjusted her shawl, picked up her basket and returned to the lane. She looked back once, but as Tomilo was not watching her, she humpfhed lightly again and walked on.

About a quarter of an hour later, as the sun finally dipped all the way behind the hill and it was just beginning to get really dark, Tomilo looked up again. He looked first at the road. Then he looked at his hobbit hole and the dark round windows, shuttered with green half moons on wooden hinges. The white curtains, looking blue in the moony light, shivered in the evening breeze. Suddenly Tomilo felt cold and he got up and washed his hands and feet in a pail of rainwater under the eaves. Then he went inside and lit the candles and the fire. In the kitchen he lit another fire and started his toast and tea. As he put on his housecoat the kettle began to sing. In a moment he was at the fireside, his feet roasting on the fender, and his plate high with toast and honey and butter.

After supper he took down the candle and began to search for his pipe. Now, it should be in his morning housecoat pocket. Barring that, it must be at the bedside table. No, of course, he had left it on the lawn chair. But as he rummaged in the dark, even feeling about in the grass in case it had fallen, he

thought he remembered putting the pipe in the right-hand pocket of his green breeches. Before he could run into the hole to test this latest theory, though, a *thing* happened. Not a great thing, mind you. But maybe one of those things that somehow leads to a great thing. That is how he thought of it later, anyway.

For he heard the clop of a horse's hoof, and the next thing he knew a black figure emerged out of the lane and came toward him. Suddenly a lantern was uncovered and the figure said, 'Tomilo, is that you?'

'Of course it is me; this is my hole isn't it? Who else would be standing outside my hole searching for my pipe? Is that you, Bob Blackfoot?'

'Of course it is. Who else would be wandering about Farbanks after sundown with a wizard on his heels.'

'Beg pardon?'

'I mean who else but the acting mayor is qualified to make these decisions?'

'Beg pardon? Bob, have you got someone there with you?'

'Yes, Tomilo, that is the long and short of it. Invite us in and I will introduce you.'

Tomilo did invite them in, and when he had re-entered the parlour and lit another candle, he turned round to see who his other guest was. What he saw surprised him, even though he had had some warning. Bob had indeed mentioned a wizard, but Tomilo had assumed it was all part of some jest.

Standing there in the middle of the room, bowing his head to keep his tall hat from crushing its point on the low ceiling, was an old man with a white beard and a staff. His black kneeboots were heavily weathered and caked with grey dirt. His cloak was a rich brown, with a fur collar. On his forearm he wore a strange leathern device that Tomilo did not recognize. About his neck hung a heavy gold chain bearing a single precious stone with a warm brown glint. It flashed now in the candlelight and then went dark.

'Tomillimir Fairbairn, at your service,' said the hobbit finally, with a bow.

'Radagast the Brown at yours,' returned the wizard. 'Perhaps you have heard of me?'

'Sorry, no,' answered Tomilo.

'Hm. I should have guessed as much. But you *are* a hobbit, so perhaps you have heard of Gandalf. Had some connections to Hobbiton, almost two, no, what is it, three hundred years ago now?'

'Yes, I have heard of him. I read about him in *The Red Book* once.'

'Yes, that's right. Now wait a minute,' said Radagast suddenly. 'Fairbairn. You aren't one of the Tower Fairbairns are you, the Wardens of the Westmarch?'

'My family comes from there, yes. I am not one of *the* Fairbairns. But I am *a* Fairbairn. One of my cousins is a warden. I have never met him.'

'There are a lot of Fairbairns now, I suppose. Just

like Took or Brandybuck or Gardner. They're all over. Not room in the Shire for all of them, I guess. I suppose that's why you're here?'

'In a word, yes. There are other reasons, but that will do for now. But what about Gandalf?'

'Oh, Gandalf. Gandalf was a wizard, you know. One of five. I am one of the other four, you see. He was Gandalf the Grey. Or Gandalf the White, I should say. At the end. Or after Saruman the White was removed from the order. I am Radagast the *Brown*. That is my colour. There are other wizards, other colours. But that is neither here nor there. It may soon *be*, actually, but it isn't now.'

'Yes,' offered Tomilo expectantly, waiting for Radagast to state his purpose.

'I am a wizard,' repeated Radagast.

'Yes,' repeated Tomilo, looking to Bob for help.

Bob jumped to Radagast's side. 'Mr. Radagast here needs a message took to the Moria. None of us could do it; we're all that busy, you know. Besides, our families wouldn't allow it. The wives and all. So Mr. Radagast here suggested a bachel-dore. Someone who could go to the Moria with a message and not be missed. I mean not be missed overmuch by his family, if you see what I mean, Tomilo.'

'Yes, Bob, not to worry, no offense taken, none meant neither I guess. But to Moria, you say? Dwarvish message, is it? They should run their own errands, the dwarves; then a hobbit, or even a wizard, Mr. Radagast is it?, could be left to his own taters.'

'It's not a dwarvish message,' answered the wizard. 'It's a message *to* the dwarves. And to others. I have many such messages to be taken all over: north, south, east and west. More than that I cannot tell you. Except that the message is *very* important. If someone from this village does not deliver it, I shall have to go myself. But I am expected in Gondor, to take the same message to the King; and also to Edoras. If you could see to leaving your garden for a fortnight, Mr. Fairbairn, I am sure Bob here could have someone keep an eye on it. And I can supply you with a pony. Working with beasts is a specialty of mine, you might say.'

'Well, I suppose I could get away for a week or two, if you can scare up a pony from somewheres. I'd rather not walk all the way there, it getting along in the year as it is—and I do have work to do, family or no.'

'Good, then it's settled,' said Radagast, ignoring this last part. 'We'll leave first thing in the morning. I can ride with you as far as the Greenway—I mean the New South Road, of course. After that you will be on your own. Now I must go out and see to getting the pony here in time.'

'Tomorrow morning! Sakes! Good gracious me! If we're going to rush off, why not go now? I can leave without any pocket handkerchiefs or warm clothes and be miserable the whole way. And get chased by dragons and swallowed by trolls and who knows what else. I've barely finished my supper and

now I'm expected to pack. Why, I don't even know where my pipe is. Who can be expected to ride to Moria without a pipe?'

'Be calm, my good hobbit,' said Radagast, smiling to himself. He understood Tomilo's meaning well enough: *The Red Book* was well-known not only among hobbits, but now among the wider world as well. 'Nothing to get *bebothered* about,' he continued. 'We'll leave in the morning when you are ready. Take your time, but don't pack too much. The pony is long-legged and spry, but he won't like a heavy load, even with half of it a halfling! Do try to get up early, though. Be prepared, but don't dawdle. Oh, and your pipe—it's on the mantel behind you.' And with that he swept from the room and leapt on his horse, clapping away into the darkness.

'Well, he's a caution and no mistake,' said Bob, as the sound of hooves died in the distance. 'He came riding in about an hour ago from the west, as if all the sons of Smaug was on his tail. Strolled right into meeting and asked for the mayor. Never even took off his hat. Mayor Roundhead is in Sandy Hall, of course, for the Quarters, so I had to do the honours. You know the rest.'

'What's this message? Does it sound important?'

'Don't know. It's writ down and sealed, he says. You're not so much delivering a message as carrying a letter—that's what I would say, Tomilo. I wonder if it's that he don't trust hobbits? Just to remember it, I mean. And not to tell no one else.'

'Unlikely. Probably just a letter that don't concern us. Although if it's the same as one going to Gondor—and everywhere else, as he says—it should concern us, too. We've probably just been left out of reckoning again.'

'I don't know. If it means we'll be left alone, I say all to the good. I'd just as soon be forgot and stay forgot, as far as news goes anyway. Anything that concerns hobbits, we'll hear about it from the Shire. You take care, now. We'd appreciate a report when you return, if you think about it. Oh, and don't dawdle,' he added with a chuckle and a handshake.

Tomilo sat by the fire, thinking about tomorrow. And yesterday. First of all, he decided not to bother with packing until the morning. It was too dark to go looking for everything with just a candle. And he would take his time in the morning, too. If Radagast left without him, he left without him. As long as the pony was good, he could make it to Moria on his own. He knew where Moria was. Due east. He'd never been there, but he knew well enough.

Since the fall of Sauron and the end of the Third Age, times had been peaceful and easy. No one thought of goblins or wolves, much less dragons or black riders. Tomilo knew of them, it is true. He had read about them in the books in the museums—in Undertowers or Great Smials. But they were all creatures of the past, the last ones killed by his father's fathers' fathers, he thought. A trip to Moria

was simply a good excuse to get out of Farbanks for a spell; to be on the road again, out under the stars. Farbanks was becoming just like the Shire. He had felt like the last bachelor in the Shire, and now he was the last bachelor in Farbanks. Or the last bachelor over thirty-five. It was rare now for a hobbit male to get out of his tweens untaken. Families were large, and the sooner they started, the larger they could get. This was fine with Tomilo. He came from a large family, of course, and he liked company. But he had never been one to rush into things. At thirty-six, there seemed more reasons for not marrying (yet) than for marrying. That was all. There were things to do first. *What* things, he was less and less sure. Still, something told him to wait.

So here he was in Farbanks, almost a hundred miles south of the Three Farthing Stone and more than fifty miles from the Old Forest. The last hobbit settlement in Eriador. The Town Hall itself, the only building in the village, only went up forty years ago. But it was needed, all said. Farbanks was needed for overflow, if nothing else. And then there was the trade with Minhiriath; and of course the leaf grew so well down here.

There were already bustling communities in the Tower Hills (where he had come from), the South Downs, even Fornost. Arthedain, that the hobbits called the North Farthing, was the most populous place west of Bree. Oatbarton alone was now bigger than Hobbiton and Bywater put together!

When Tomilo had moved from the Tower (as it was called), he had hoped to find things different on the frontier. He had envisioned a bit of excitement. New faces, new folks. Work to be done. But hobbits are a proficient race, and most do not hearken to excitement. Within the first few years Farbanks became as domesticated as Took Hall, everything running in its groove, well oiled and pleasant. In fact it was better, from the hobbit point of view, than Took Hall; for Took Hall had its eccentricities still, and its strong characters. Farbanks had no use for such things. There were no weeds in the gardens, no dead leaves on the thatch, no stones in the road. The mill ground its grist and the maidens sang and the children played under the Great Mallorn.

Tomilo fell asleep with the front door and all the windows open, satisfied with this bliss and yet somehow uneasy. He had no fear of burglars, but his dreams were fitful nonetheless.

The morning dawned clear and chill. As soon as the first ray stole through the front window and creapt across Tomilo's bed, he was out of the covers and collecting his gear. His packs were on the lawn, checked and re-checked many times before Radagast appeared. The sun had just begun to warm the dew when that wizard rode up on a well-formed bay with untrimmed mane and tail. Behind him trotted a slender mottled-grey pony—quite tall for a pony and a bit intimidating to Tomilo.

'Sorry I'm late,' announced Radagast, with no other greeting. 'I sent word to Bombadil last night, but the birds took their time. Drabdrab just arrived, and he's already tired and sleepy. We'll go slow and make it a short day. Still, we should get to Sarn Ford before we rest.'

Drabdrab was equipped with a saddle of superior workmanship, long worn but finely tooled. It had strange shapes cut into its flaps and intricate patterns even on the girth and stirrup leathers. It was also equipped with breastplate and breeching, but these were thin and mostly ornamental—for the hanging of bells or other decoration. Tomilo knew somewhat of working leather, and he asked Radagast about the figures and the tracery.

'That saddle was made for an elf child, I believe. Where or by whom I don't know. Imladris or the Havens, I would guess. Or Iarwain—that is, Bombadil, I should say—may have kept a much older saddle, from Eregion I suppose. Leather generally wouldn't last that long, but Bombadil has his ways. Those are *tengwar*, or elf letters, as you would call them, those lines running along the edge. *Certar*, or elf runes, are usually used for incising, but leather allows for the curving lines, so that the craftsman has preferred them here. I would read them for you, but they are too small for me to see without dismounting, and we are already late as it is. Remind me and I will translate them later. The larger lines are probably just decoration. Hop up and I'll tell

you more on the road.'

Tomilo slung his packs behind the saddle and cinched them on. Then he scrambled uneasily up behind Drabdrab's neck. His legs were too short, and he had to climb back down and adjust the stirrups. Even at their shortest they still hung below his feet. Once in the saddle, his balance was good, so he just had to let his feet hang, unshod and unstirruped. 'Hobbitback', he thought.

Radagast headed down the Farbanks' road, southeast, and Tomilo followed. He gave Drabdrab no signals with the reins: it was unnecessary. The road was straight, Radagast was ahead on Pelling (the big bay horse) and what else was there to do but follow. As they got to the edge of town, though, Tomilo heard someone calling to him and he pulled Drabdrab up. Radagast stopped also. The Burdoc hole was the last in the bank to the north of the road, and Primrose was at the gate looking toward Tomilo. Suddenly she ran up to Drabdrab and patted his nose.

'Where are you going, Mr. Fairbairn? You look packed for a while.'

'I'm just delivering a letter to Moria, Prim. I'll be back soon.'

'Are you working for the post now?' she asked with a smile.

'No. Bob asked me to do this special. It's important or I wouldn't. I'll be back.'

'All right. Don't burgle any dragonhoards. And if you do, bring me back something pretty. You take care of him Radagast!' The wizard tipped his hat to her, and they trotted the horses back into the lane.

'Who was that?' said Radagast. 'Fiancee?'

'What do mean "Who was that?" She knew *you*. How did she know your name?'

'Oh, I've seen the lass a time or two, gathering berries. I ride in this area occasionally, looking for lost things, finding found things. She has a bright eye, doesn't she?'

'I suppose,' answered Tomilo, grumbling.

After a couple of hours the two riders came to the main road from the Shire to Sarn Ford. A turn to the northwest would have taken them to Waymoot, and beyond to Little Delving. But their way was south and then east. Not a soul was to be seen for miles in either direction. The traffic of Eriador stopped for the most part at Farbanks. Men did not use this road, and the occasional elf or dwarf who did were rarely to be caught doing it.

All that day Tomilo followed Radagast, speaking little. For a hobbit Tomilo was rather taciturn, having lived by himself for many years, and so having lost the habit of easy speech. As for Radagast, he was the least social of all the wizards, and wizards are a rather solitary lot to begin with. Whilst Gandalf had wandered about all the Western World, having his hand in the affairs of almost every region, and most

households; and whereas Saruman had at first attempted to befriend the elves—especially the Lady Galadriel and Lord Celeborn of Lothlorien—but had in the end to make due with the company of orcs; at the same time Radagast had always lived alone, either at Rhosgobel or in his solitary rides through Mirkwood and Wilderland. Radagast's only friends had been the beasts and birds, with whom speech was partly or wholly unnecessary. So it was drawing on toward evening before Tomilo finally thought to ask a question.

'Mr. Radagast, Sir, I were wondering if we might stop for a bit? I do believe Drabdrab is almost done up. What with not sleeping at all last night, as you said.'

'So he is, my boy. I almost forgot, with all this on my mind about Moria and Gondor and everything else. I'm usually quite aware of the beasts and their needs—I suppose I'm not really myself these days. We'll stop just before we reach Sarn Ford—over the next rise and down the slope. Of course, it's not a ford anymore, not since the King built the bridge, but that's what they still call it.

Radagast and Tomilo had so far travelled quickly. The wizard had not wanted to press Drabdrab, but the horses had been trotting or galloping much of the way. Only on uphill stretches, or when the road turned bad, did Radagast allow the beasts to walk. So they had made it to the vicinity of the bridge by nightfall.

Tomilo had been over the Baranduin only a single time—on a daytrip to Bree long ago. But the great river was much larger here, only some 50 leagues south of the Brandywine Bridge, having gained the flow of the Withywindle as well as several other smaller rivers. It was still muddy and red, and Tomilo thought to himself that he would not want to fall into it. The water looked very cold. He and Radagast did not cross yet, but made camp to the right of the road, under a small copse of trees, in clear view. They were not hiding from anyone, nor did they fear to meet travellers. In fact, Radagast quite hoped to meet travellers, especially dwarves. He could not pass on important messages to those met on the road, but he could learn somewhat from them about the news on ahead, on the road or off it. And the affairs of the various peoples had suddenly taken on a new urgency for him. To do what was necessary over the next several months, Radagast must learn everything possible about all those around him—their trusts and mistrusts, new alliances and long-standing grudges.

It was in the recent memory of Radagast that none would think of stopping near a crossroads or a ford such as this great bridge. In these newly prosperous times, however, such spots were the best place for travellers to congregate, to camp after nightfall, and to expect visitors with tales of new wealth, new discovery, and larger families and towns. If this is what Radagast desired, he was not

disappointed. He and Tomilo had arrived early, but soon after dark a travelling band of dwarves came over the bridge and made directly for Radagast and Tomilo's blazing fire. The hobbit could hear them singing as they tramped along: a proper dwarf song of gold and silver and hidden hoards of wealth.

*In a deep dark cave in the mountain's lap
We delve straight down with a mighty rap
of our pick, ho!
Then we take what we finds
from the glittering mines
as long as it shines
out bright, ho!
And none can blast the great black stone
or chip and crack the earth's backbone
like Durin's kin!
Not elves or men!
Not by the beard on Durin's chin!
Be it silver or gleaming gold
or clear-white jewel or metal cold
we will find it
earth can't bind it
from the tools of dwarves, ho!*

The song ended as they came into the firelight—clumping loudly in the dark as only dwarves can—and bowed low, introducing themselves in turn.

'Frain, at your service.'

'Bral, at your service.'

'Kral, at your service.'

'Min, at your service.'

'Radagast the Brown, at yours and your entire family's, I'm sure,' replied the wizard, not bowing, but only touching his brown stone with his right hand and peering again into the fire. 'Oh, and this is my travelling companion, the estimable hobbit, Tomillimir Fairbairn, of Farbanks.'

Tomilo bowed low, but looked at the dwarves uneasily. Although a wide traveller among hobbits, Tomilo had not met any of the Naugrim before, and he found their hard-edged visages and abrupt manner disconcerting. Their clothes, too, were exceeding strange: dark and loose-fitting kirtles, heavier surely than the weather called for. And with boots large and wide enough for a very large man. Even Radagast's boots were not so large. He might have worn Frain's boots as overshoes, with his own boots inside.

'Do you come from Khazad-dum, as I suppose?' asked Radagast. 'And is all the news still good from there, I hope?'

'The answer to both your questions is yes and yes,' replied Frain. 'The news is good. So good, in fact, that we would have little reason to return to our mines in the Blue Mountains but for family that has remained there. My brother, Kim, prefers our place there. Less competition for space, and for reknown.'

It is still true as it always was that for mithril, there is no place to compare to the mines of Khazad-dum. But for jewels, the Ered Luin still yields great wealth.'

'That is true,' added Kral. 'In fact, with new tools made of mithril, we are delving deeper and discovering more than ever before. All our mines all over Middle Earth are yielding more, due to the use of mithril tools, as well as the abundance of dwarves to wield them. Now that we are not constantly at war, we may work doing what dwarves were made to do.'

'Mr. Fairbairn is travelling to Moria,' interrupted Radagast. 'I hope the roads remain in good repair.'

'They do. But I wonder why a hobbit is going to Moria?' answered Frain. 'We have had no trade with the Shire, save for pipeweed, in many years. Might I ask if you are a trader in leaf, Mr. Fairbairn?'

'No. I have a message from Cirdan for King Mithi.'

'From Cirdan of the Havens? Is it important?'

'I do not know. I am only the messenger.' Tomilo left it to Radagast to explain, if he would. But Radagast changed the subject. It was clear he felt the message to be appropriate for King Mithi, but perhaps not for idle conversation with every passing dwarf, no matter how trusty they might at first appear.

'Do you know anything of the Great South Road?' asked Radagast. 'I myself am travelling that way and wonder if there is any news from Rohan or

the Gap. Is Orthanc still deserted?'

'For all we know Orthanc is as it was five years ago and fifty years ago—naught but a haunted tower,' said Bral. 'It is rumoured that the treemen kill any who come near. Dwarves have never had any love for forests, or for the creatures in them, so we do not go that way or speak of it. When we travel to the Glittering Caves we cross far down the Isen and come in from the west, hugging the foothills of the Ered Nimrais. As for the South Road, there is no news. But the folk of Dunland are not ones to make news or pass it on, and we ask no more. I think you will find everything remains quiet. But if you are Radagast the wandering wizard, as I think, you will know as much as we do about the ways over and around the Misty Mountains.'

'I *am* that Radagast, as there is no other, but I have been in Eriador on one errand and another since the first of the year. The eagles and lesser birds of Rhovanion do not often travel west of the mountains, and I have been left without my usual sources of information. I must arrive in Minas Tirith—I mean Minas Mallor*—before the end of the month, so I must gather news on the hoof, as it were. There is really no time to lose.'

'Sarn Ford to Minas Mallor in a fortnight? You will have need of your friends the eagles if you desire such speed. Your mount will be halt before you reach Edoras, though I would not let such a beast carry me even across the river. Your feet will carry

you there more surely, though perhaps with less haste.'

'I plan to change horses in Rohan. Good Pelling here is from the West Emnet in the fields of the Rohirrim, and he will carry me there as surely as any, and need no prodding as we get closer to the grasses of his home. But perhaps you can at least tell me of the Dwarvish settlements in the Green Mountains.* Does trade remain good between Minas Mallor and Krath-zabar?'

'It is good. We still do not mine north of Nurn. And we have yet to explore the Ash Mountains. The fear of Barad-dur and Minas Morgul remains strong and overcomes even our love of delving and our need for untapped veins of ore. It is said that Sauron sapped all the strength from the mountains about Mordor long ago, to feed his fires and his armies, and so we have an excuse for staying away. But in the Green Mountains, that once were the Mountains of Shadow, we have not found this to be so, at least south of Osgiliath where we have dared to go. The range there is mostly untouched, since Sauron oversaw almost no work—he only stole from the hoards of others. It is said that the dwarves of Khand supplied him with iron for his armouries; but where it was mined, we know not.

*The name of Minas Tirith had been changed by King Eldarion to Minas Mallor: 'tower of the rising sun.' And upon the rebuilding of Minas Ithil, it was

also renamed: Minas Annithel, 'tower of the setting moon.' Two reasons were given for switching the nomenclature (remember that it had been 'tower of the *setting* sun' and 'tower of the *rising* moon'). The first reason given by Eldarion was that the sun could be seen to rise in the east. Minas Mallor faced east, hence the logic of the name. His Steward complained that the Ephel Duath blocked any view of the rising sun. But the King replied that, by that way of thinking, the name Minas Anor had been just as senseless, since Mt. Mindolluin blocked the sunset. The second reason given by the King was that the moon had always been a metaphor for the elves. The age of the elves was waning, the age of men was waxing. Therefore, after the fall of Sauron, the name Annithel was more descriptive. The Steward agreed on this point. And at his urging, the Ephel Duath was also renamed: Ered Galen, the Green Mountains.

We still do not communicate with the dwarves of the east, who fought for Sauron, or at least were under his dominion. Most have fled into the far reaches of Rhun and beyond, where our knowledge ceases.'

'You have a king now at Krath-zabar?'

'Yes. King Rath. The High King remains at Erebor. But we also have kings at Moria and the Glittering Caves. They are independent but remain under oath. Little allegiance is required in times of peace, but we retain our all our traditions. Our

kingdoms are very strong.'

'Good,' said Radagast. 'That is as it should be, my good Krain. The dwarves are a wise people in their way, and we need your strength. I am glad that you prosper. Now, I was wondering, can you be so good as to tell Mr. Fairbairn here the proper ways to approach your gates at Moria? I have not knocked on your door, so to speak, from the west—I always pay my visits, rare though they are, from the east, arriving from the Dimrill Dale. Is there anything a hobbit should know about arriving at the shining portals of the Dwerrowdelf?'

'Nothing. The way is wide and well-marked and we have no gates. We do not fear attack, being all but impregnable anyway. And a single hobbit on horseback is not likely to cause much alarm. Even the great western gates of stone that have been rehung and given new passwords are rarely closed, save at night. Mr. Fairbairn only need state his errand to the gatekeeper and he will be led along the proper passages and taken good care of. Such a visitor usually would find an audience with the King extremely difficult, if not impossible. But the names of Radagast and Cirdan should gain you a few moments, if I am not mistaken. Messengers are treated with due respect, and the dwarves have not forgotten the proper forms. You should address King Mithi as "Lord," Mr. Fairbairn. Other than that, if you are polite you can do little, being a stranger, that would give insult.'

Radagast and Tomilo took their leave of the dwarves early the next morning. A heavy fog had settled in the river valley overnight and Drabdrab was dripping with dew as Tomilo slipped up into his saddle. Pelling snorted and blew great draughts of smoke into the heavy air, trying to warm his nostrils for the long day ahead. Radagast checked the horse's hooves carefully and rubbed his ears, speaking softly to him. Then he wiped the mist from his own saddle with his brown cloak before mounting. The dwarves were pulling on their great packs as Radagast and Tomilo rode past.

'My good dwarves, you said you were travelling to the Blue Mountains? Are you crossing the Lhun?'

'Indeed,' answered Frain. 'The old mines are all in the southern range, of course. But our new mines in the northern range of the Ered Luin have become most profitable. The caves we seek, and the home of Kim, are some two days journey past the river Lhun, high in the eastern slopes.'

'I wonder if you would be so good as to give a message to the elves as you pass the Havens, if it is not too much out of your way. I know you have little love for the elves (except at times some of the Noldor—since Aule rules the hearts of all of you), but if you could let Cirdan know that I found someone to go to Moria, and that I myself am gone to Gondor, it would be a great help to me. It is a simple message and may be passed on by mouth to

any elf you meet.'

'We will if we can. But won't you tell us what message goes to Moria and Gondor? If it concerns the dwarves of Moria, it will concern us. And we had rather not wait for the message to travel on the road we have just covered and back.'

'I'm afraid that is impossible, unfortunately. It is a message from Cirdan to Lord Mithi himself. What he may choose to do with that information, I know not. He may proclaim it as news of general interest. He may not. But I suspect you will hear of it soon enough, one way or another. I fear I have been imprudent in handling the whole affair, and I apologize. I have grown accustomed to talking freely in these untroubled times, and I am afraid I have said too much. I should have said nothing at all, and saved you from needless concern. But again, thank you for your news of the east, and give my message if you can. If you cannot it is of little importance.'

Radagast and Tomilo left the dwarves and rode over the bridge, passing into the open lands beyond. The day was warming quickly, and the two riders hoped to leave many leagues behind them by the end of it.



Chapter 2

An Accumulation of Mysteries

Despite the prosperity of the Fourth Age, the wide lands between the Baranduin and the Greyflood remained mostly unpopulated. It was almost fifty leagues to Tharbad, and from the bridge at Sarn Ford to the new bridge at Tharbad there was little to see. The ground was rocky and flat, with few trees and little vegetation of any kind. At one time, the Old Forest had covered much of Cardolan, reaching even to the northern parts of Enedwaith. But the cataclysms at the end of the First Age had temporarily inundated a large part of Middle Earth, from Beleriand all the way to the Hithaegdir. Beleriand remained drowned to this day, and

Ossiriand as well—save the small regions of Forlindon and Harlindon. The Gulf of Lhun had taken Mount Dolmed and the cities of Belegost and Nogrod, and many other fair things had passed away forever. The receding waters left Eriador changed but intact. Most of the Old Forest had been swept away, never to return. Cardolan arose from the waters a desolate place, and it had remained desolate in many regions to the present age. As Tomilo looked north toward the South Downs and the Barrow-downs, he saw nothing but low bushes and dry grass as far as the eye could see. Brakes of hazel and clumps of thorn there were, and dry rivulets meandering through the rough country like a weird sunk-fence dug by a madman. To the south it was much the same—a few stands of trees here and there in the distance, and some old willows and oaks along the line of the Brandywine as it snaked its way to the sea.

The two travellers had been riding all day through this empty heath, stopping only to eat and to water the horses. Radagast had been grumbling to himself since the bridge at Sarn Ford; and suddenly, in the late afternoon, he spoke up, startling the hobbit out of his musings on the landscape.

'I have made a terrible mess of the whole affair already,' he began, almost to himself, or to Pelling. He stroked his beard and fumbled with the brown stone about his neck. 'I either say too much or too little. For ages I have spoken to almost no one but

the birds and beasts, and now I am expected to converse with dwarves and hobbits and who knows what else. I am not fit for it. I am the wrong one to trust with such things. That meeting with the dwarves was a complete disaster. Imagine, sending dwarves with messages to elves, and hobbits with messages to dwarves! I don't know what I am thinking. But I can't do it all myself. It is too big for me, I tell you.'

'What is too big?' asked Tomilo, somewhat surprised to see a wizard out of sorts.

'This. . . this whole. . . Oh, I can't say. That's the problem. I wish Gandalf hadn't gone back, sailing away just when things look really bad. Bother, I shouldn't have said that either. See, I can't be discreet, as wisdom demands. I was always the least of the wizards, and now I'm made to feel it. I'm surprised Cirdan even trusted me as the messenger. Gandalf would never have told a band of travelling dwarves of the existence of a message to their king. It is absurd. I am a counsellor, sent here to gather information, not pass it on like a fool at any chance meeting.'

'I don't think you did any harm. If we have all become too trusting, it is only to be expected. Times are good.'

'For the present. Good times cannot last, my dear Mr. Fairbairn, and being overtrusty is not a custom that ever lasts, for it undermines itself. I must not let my tongue wag, and I must think out my policy

beforehand.'

'Well, your hints are as disquieting as any news could well be. I won't ask you about the message, since I can see you feel you have said too much already, and since I will likely find out soon enough, when I am in Moria. But I wonder if you, or Cirdan, have had the foresight to send messages to the Shire? I am sure the Thain would be interested to hear of any news that concerns the rest of the world. And he might take it ill hearing the news secondhand, from the king's messengers, or from my report to Farbanks.'

'Don't worry about that, my friend. The Thain has likely already been told, since your lands border on the Western Sea. The Tower Hills are only a short ride from the Havens. On this, the hobbits will be the first to know rather than the last. Cirdan remembers Frodo Baggins and his companions, and the Shire will never be left out of the reckoning of the wise again.'

'That is well, at least. Still, whatever concerns you had about our talk with the dwarves cannot come to anything, surely. The dwarves of Moria mean no one any harm, do they? I don't see how what they know could be of use to anyone, even the enemy. And there is no enemy.'

'Doubtless you are right. There is no enemy, for the present. Besides, it is not that I am worried about leaking any information. I only told them of a message they will hear of later, in the proper way.'

But that is what I mean. It was not proper. They should have been told or not told. I must relearn the proper forms. I must become more wary. I must learn to speak to strangers as one of the wise would. I must not say more than is necessary, or show weakness. There may come a time when such traits might be fatal.'

'Oh my! I hope not, or we shall all be dead, and me first of all. Surely it is not as bad as all that!'

'I have already said too much.'

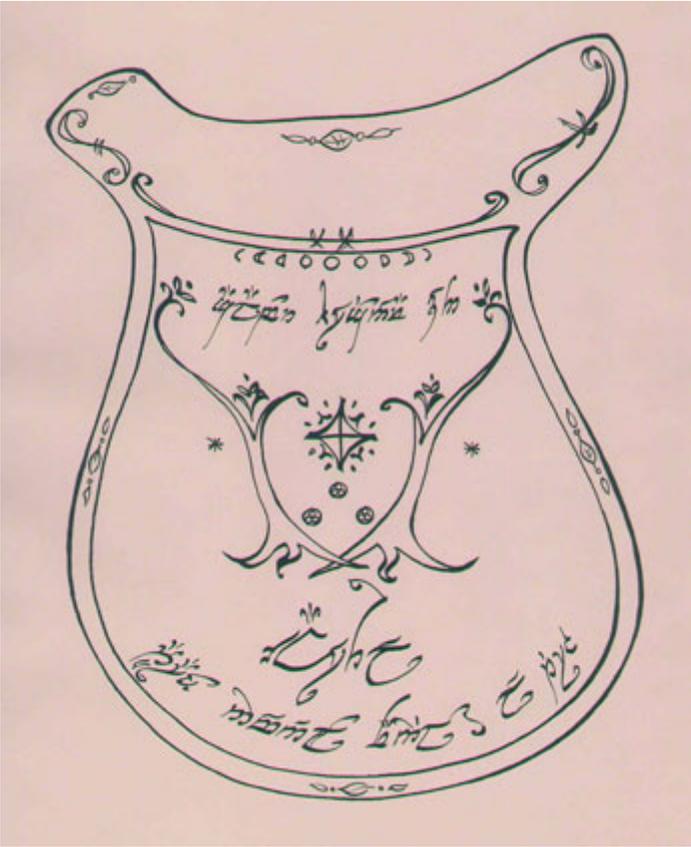
'Well, then, let's change the subject, by all means. Evening is coming on, and I can't be imagining such things. Let's see, why don't you tell me what these letters on my saddle mean? It will be dark soon and you won't be able to see them at all.'

'Yes, you are right. I think we have had enough riding for today. I am in a great hurry, but I think there is no need for us to travel after dark. When I leave you at Tharbad, I can make whatever speed I want. For now, let us be easy with poor Drabdrab. He is not used to these distances like Pelling.'

Soon they dismounted and unpacked the horses. Once camp had been made and a small fire was going in preparation for the night, Radagast approached Drabdrab and studied the saddle closely for many minutes.

'Well, Bombadil must have had this saddle a very long time, though how he kept it in this condition it is beyond my skill to tell. I know something of the tanning of hides and of the preservation of things,

but I myself could not conjure a spell to make leather last this long. This saddle comes from Hollin, the very place you are now headed. It was made sometime in the Second Age, before its destruction, and long before the destruction of Numenor. It bears the inscription of its maker here, you see?—it says in Quenya, the language of the Noldor, *Galabor of Hollin made this*. Written quite prominently. And here below, writ even larger, running in this great arc, the letters say, *Arethule, child of the West, Varda protect thee*.* And see all the fine tracery. These are symbols of the Noldor. The two trees and the stars. Above Galabor's name are the phases of the moon, punched into the leather. And these are the Silmarils—see, below the central star—that the First House of the Noldor still used as signs even after the defeat of Morgoth and the final loss of those gems.



"This saddle was made for a child—a very special child, I should say—for most leatherwork at that time would have been inscribed in Sindarin rather than in Quenya. Saddlework was mostly a thing considered too vulgar for such high speech. This elfchild, Arethule (which means "sun spirit"), was no doubt one of the children of the contingent of High Elves living in Hollin at that time. Celebrimbor, grandson of Feanor (who invented this writing), was

one such. His inscription was on the west doors of Moria before they were broken. I think the dwarves keep the fragments of that door as heirlooms in the vaults of Khazad-dum. The parents of this child may have been of the same family as Celebrimbor. If Galadriel were still in Middle Earth, she might be able to tell us somewhat of this Arethule. She was of the Third House of Finwe and Celebrimbor was of the First, but she and Celeborn spent many years in Hollin in the Second Age, I believe, before going on to Lothlorien. No one else but Bombadil could say aught of such a thing as this saddle, I think. Keep it well, Tomilo, while it is in your care! It is a thing of great worth, and would be greatly treasured by some in Imladris or Lorien, were it known to exist. I wonder how it came into the hands of Bombadil in the Old Forest? It is a question for our next meeting. Come, let us tend the fire and prepare our dinner. The light is now gone.'

*Here is a letter-for-letter translation: *galabor eregioneva essent/ arethule/ tartanno numenello fanuilos le tirai*. You will notice that two different *r*'s are used. The *r* in Galabor is a final *r*, and so is the only one that is not long. The *e* in *essent* is not written, since it would be understood that no word begins with *ss*. Also, 'to make' is a very common verb: it had become unnecessary to differentiate it from words beginning *iss-* or *oss-*, &c. Proper names beginning with a vowel still required an initial character, however. That is

why Arethule does not begin with the Quenya character for *r*. Since the *tehtar* (the super-character devices) indicated a following vowel in Quenya, but never a preceding one, the initial *A* must be indicated with the character used. The 'a' *tehtar* was often also used, especially as a decorative flourish in formal writing. This was not read *Aa*. In this mode used by Galabor the Quenya *y* character is a long *r*, the *y* with a doubled tail is *rd*, and a tripled tail is *rt*. The Quenya character *u* translates *nn*. *Tirai* is subjunctive.

The next morning Tomilo and Radagast set out once more. Tomilo was amazed to think that he was sitting on an heirloom of the High Elves, made in Hollin in the Second Age. As they galloped through the empty lands, he became lost in his own imaginings, taking him back in time—a time when wondrous creatures still walked in Middle Earth, passing with grandeur and terror. Elves with glittering swords and rings of fell power, tall men with high helmets and burnished shields, great worms and foul goblins and Witchkings in black robes.

It was true, the King in Gondor was yet a person of great majesty and lineage—or so Tomilo had been told, for he had never seen him. And elves still lived in faraway places, in towers by the sea or in great caves in the forest or in tall trees on the other side of the mountains. But he had never seen them either.

Even when he had lived in Westmarch, only a few leagues from the Havens, he had not encountered a single elf. There were tales of them, to be sure, and reported sightings. A messenger even rode through occasionally on the main road for all to see, or so it was said. All the same, Tomilo had not seen one. He had never even seen a dwarf until two days ago. All borders were supposed to be open, after the fall of Mordor and the rebuilding of Arnor. And yet little had changed. In good times, folks kept to themselves. They kept their thoughts to themselves, and took care of their own.

Men had passed through the Northfarthing quite often, soldiers of Arnor and the builders and settlers of Fornost, reclaiming all the fertile valley between the Hills of Evendim and the North Downs. But even these, after a quick look at the settlements of the hobbits, and maybe a stop in the taverns for a taste of 'halfling beer', had returned to their own towns and farms, and were mostly never heard from again. Except for pipeweed, and the occasional trade of a pony, the products of the Shire did not interest the men of Fornost. They already had their own markets in the south. And the tastes of men and hobbits, whether in food or clothing or housing, had little overlap. Each community was content to keep to itself. No mixed town, of the Bree sort, had formed during the expansion of the Shire and the emigration of men from Gondor to the north countries. It was once thought that there might be,

and King Eldarion, son of King Elessar, had promoted the mingling of man and hobbit, or at least the sharing of economies. He had reversed the decree of his father that had forbidden men to enter the Shire, and had encouraged friendly relations between the two peoples. Men were still forbidden to settle in the Shire, but they were not forbidden peaceful excursions, or the building of relationships, business or otherwise. And hobbits were encouraged to settle in Arnor in any way they liked—in the towns or out of them. But it had never come to pass. There was simply too much resistance from within. The hobbits of the Shire were proud of their independence and the men from Gondor were also content with their own society.

Two more uneventful days passed on the road. The riders met no one and saw no other beast larger than a squirrel. Radagast searched the skies for birds of good omen or ill, but found neither. Near the end of the third day from the ford, he and Tomilo weathered a short storm that blew in violently from the southwest. They could see it coming for hours and took shelter at last under a lonely tree; but though it poured hard enough to sting any exposed skin (and threatened to spook the ponies with the loud thunder—only the soft words of Radagast kept them from rearing), it did not last. They returned to the muddy shining road and continued their progress under the still growling sky.

The next day was dry. The storms had gone on over the Misty Mountains to soak the uplands of Lorien and the Dimrill Dale. Tomilo and the Wizard had fallen into their accustomed silence after breakfast, and the hobbit had been daydreaming again—thinking of the times when adventures actually *happened*. In the books he had read of the old times, a hobbit couldn't so much as leave his hole without terrible, dangerous, *interesting* things happening. Tomilo didn't really want anything too interesting to happen, but a little minor adventure might be welcome. Meeting someone that Radagast could zap with his staff, for instance. But Radagast wasn't a wizard like Gandalf, thought Tomilo. Radagast didn't even carry his staff. There it was, just tied to his saddle, sticking up in the air, useless.

Tomilo's thoughts were suddenly interrupted by Radagast himself. They had been riding all day, with only short pauses to rest the horses. Radagast had not spoken since midday.

'We are about five leagues from Tharbad. We will camp here and make the crossing tomorrow. There are marshes we will have to cross before we get there, and they will be better managed during the day, when we can ride through them quickly. During the night they would give the horses (and us) little rest, even this late in the year. It is still many weeks until the first frost, except in the mountains, and the flies in the marshes are yet a nuisance to travellers on the road. Here the ground is firm, and there is even a

bit of dry wood for the fire. Come, let me tell you what to expect tomorrow.'

Tomilo followed Radagast off the road and into a loose thicket of brambles and scrubby trees, gnarled and blasted as if by passing flames. A white fungus covered the ground here and there, and the roots of the little trees rippled the ground like waves, threatening to make sleep very difficult. The earth appeared to offer no flat spot large enough even for a hobbit to lie down upon in comfort. Pelling and Drabdrab, meanwhile, entertained no such fears. They would sleep standing. For now they rustled through the undergrowth, searching for late shoots or the scent of anything soft and green. Radagast wandered off in search of water. Tomilo made the fire.

Over a frugal meal of bread and sharp cheese and apple cider warmed over the flames, Radagast gave Tomilo the directions for tomorrow. After the bridge at Tharbad, Tomilo would be on his own. Radagast must go south with all speed, and Tomilo must turn toward the mountains. There was a road that followed the Glanduin for almost forty leagues* before crossing it and turning north.

'You must take this road with good speed,' Radagast told the hobbit. 'Drabdrab should make the journey to Moria in four days. Five at the most. The crossing of the Glanduin is a ford, not a bridge; but it is shallow and slow, save in the spring when the snows melt. You should have no trouble with it now.'

For a few weeks in May it is swift and treacherous, and for this reason it is also called the Swanfleet. Swans do not frequent the upper reaches of the Glanduin, near the mountains. But further down, in the marshes at the confluence of Glanduin and Gwathlo, there are great flocks of swans and geese and ducks unnumbered, especially at this time of year. They stop over on their long flights from the Bays of Forochel to their wintering homes in Umbar and Harad. In a few weeks the waters of the Nin-in-Eilph, the Waterlands of the Swans, will be white with the pausing flocks. You may also see some from the northern vales of the Anduin, who fly over the Misty Mountains to join their western cousins in the long flight south over the White Mountains. These birds from the east pass over the Misty Mountains just as we do—through the Redhorn Pass.

'Once you have crossed the Glanduin, simply follow the dwarf road north and east some ten or twelve leagues until you reach the Sirannon, the Gate Stream. This you follow to the gate, of course. There were once some stairs and some falls as you made the final approach to the Western Wall, but I don't know if they have survived the rebuilding of the West Gates. But I expect you will have been spotted by dwarves by this time, and will have an escort the rest of the way.

'An escort?' interrupted the hobbit. 'I'll be a prisoner, you mean.'

'No, no. Don't be absurd, Mr. Fairbairn. None of

that. No one keeps prisoners in the Fourth Age. But don't be suprised that the dwarves should want to keep an eye on you. It is *their* kingdom, after all. They can't be expected to allow strangers to wander about willy-nilly.'

'I suppose not.'

'After you have delivered the letter to King Mithi, and taken some refreshment and rest, you will no doubt wish to return as quickly as possible to your garden and your work. Stay as long as you like in Moria. I don't mean to rush you. Mayhaps the great caves of the dwarves will be of more interest to a hobbit than to a wizard—what with your instinct for burrowing, I mean. At any rate, ride back the way we came. There is no other way, unless you want to return through Rivendell and take a month in the journey. When you arrive in Farbanks, simply release Drabdrab at the north end of town, and be sure he is well watered. He will make his way back to Bombadil.'

The next morning they rode on. The flies of the marshes were still torpid from the cool night air, and bothered them little. Before long they came to a grey bridge, some nineteen ells across, made of stone and marly earth. There were carven figures at each entrance, smaller versions of the great pillars of the Argonath, but much less foreboding. Rather than the helm and crown of the ancient kings, these stone heads bore only the single star of the House of

Elendil. They were carven in the likeness of Elessar, who had refortified Arnor and rebuilt much of the road to Arthedain and Fornost. In the right hand of each figure was a marble bough—an image of a shoot from the White Tree of Gondor, scion of Nimloth. And the left hand was raised, not in warning, but in greeting.

As Tomilo rode between the figures and over the waters of Gwathlo he thought of the King now in Gondor, great grandson of Elessar, the fourth of his line. Tomilo had never considered that he was part of a larger realm, that the Shire was only a kingdom within a kingdom, suffered to exist only by the goodwill of a great man in a faraway city of towers and flying banners and white trees. A great man Tomilo would probably never meet. Tomilo paused at the middle of the span, and Radagast turned also to peer at the slow-moving waters.

'What is his name? I mean, what is he called, the King in Gondor?' asked Tomilo.

'He is Telemorn, son of Celemorn, son of Baragorn, son of Aragorn. But he is called King Elemmir, after the star Elemmire, one of the first stars in the heavens wrought by Elbereth before the first days. See, there it shines even now, the star-jewel, blazing high on the breast of Menelmacar.'

Tomilo looked up, but he could see nothing in the bright sky but blue beyond blue.

*The Numenorean measure of distance was the 'lar,'

equal to about three English miles. I have followed Professor Tolkien's usage of the 'league' to translate 'lar,' making the forty leagues in question approximately 120 miles.

'Yes, the stars are there, even during the day, my good Mr. Fairbairn,' laughed Radagast. 'They do not run away and then scamper back, just for your delight. But the sun drowns out their dim glow from the eyes of most.' The wizard stared at the sky intently and seemed to lose himself for a moment. 'Hmm, where was I? Oh, yes. King Elemmir has ruled only a score of years, following his father King Eldamir who ruled almost a hundred. The new king is a young man, by the measure of the Numenoreans, being not yet seventy, I believe. I have seen him only once, when he was a boy, in the Druadan Forest. He was beating a small drum, trying to call out the Druedain, the Woses. But the little men would not show themselves, not even to a future king of Gondor. I remember Telemorn complained, and said, "They might at least beat their drums in answer." But it was to no avail. He and his escort had to return to Minas Mallor with no new stories of the Pukel-men.'

'Pukel-men? Woses? Who are they? Are they dwarves?'

'No, no. They were not fashioned by Aule. They are one of the strange creations of Iluvatar. Although of much the same stature as dwarves, they are far

more nimble. Also, they love to laugh, when they are with others of their own kind. They do not delve and have no love for wealth or hoards. Dwarves do not like woods, but the Druedain will live nowhere else. There are few left in Middle Earth, and it may be that the loss of woods and the loss of the Druedain are not unrelated.'

'Do you think there are Woses in the Old Forest?'

'Not now, at any rate. Before the flood, when the Old Forest spanned much of Eriador, I should think that the Druedain flourished there. But now, none are left. The only two-legged creatures in the Old Forest are Bombadil and Goldberry. And perhaps one other.'

'One other?'

'There I go, getting ahead of myself again. There may be one other that you might include. But he is not a man or elf or halfling or dwarf or wizard or sprite. And he prefers to keep his existence to himself—much like Bombadil and Goldberry. *The Red Book* has been a source of some frustration for them, if you must know, for they do not want visitors. The scouring of the barrows has left them open to nosy neighbours from the east, and they have been forced to live further down the Withywindle. This. . . this two-legged creature also wants to be left alone, so please forget I said anything. Besides, he is no one to go visiting. His welcome is unlikely to be warm.'

'Well, the mysteries of the world *do* accumulate, travelling with a wizard. Especially one with a loose tongue. But back to the King. Is this King Elemmir the one you must deliver the message to now?'

'Yes. Precisely. And if I don't train my tongue in the next fortnight, it could be very unpleasant for me. Telemorn is said to have a reputation for irascibility. And he is not likely to be impressed by a wizard, a brown one least of all. A messenger with bad news is never wanted. An unexpected one, even less. An unexpected one with a stained cloak and overworn boots—well, he is in some danger of being thrown into the Anduin.'

'Surely you exaggerate! Are you suggesting that I may be in some danger in Moria? Are the dwarves likely to be inhospitable, on account of this message?'

'No, you are right. I am getting overexcited about this whole business. You have nothing to fear, my dear hobbit. But do be prepared for a few awkward moments. Especially on the day after you first meet with King Mithi. Once he reads the message, the air in the caves may be a bit thick for a while. I can tell you this much: there is nothing urgent about the message—there will be no muster, no general upheaval. You will not be caught in any call to arms or flight to the strongholds or any such thing. But the King and his counsellors are likely to be a bit tense. They may question you. They may be angry that you can tell them nothing more. Or that you are a hobbit. But I do not think it will go much beyond

that. Remind them that you are under the protection of Cirdan, the elves of the Havens, and myself, as well as the Thain. Offer to return with messages, if you can think of nothing else. You need not return past Farbanks: I will have riders going west before winter, and I will instruct them to ask in Farbanks for any letters to be sent on to Cirdan.'

'If I can think of nothing else? You make it sound like I will be lucky to get out at all! I have more than half a mind to turn around and ride back now. You never told me there was any danger!'

'Not danger, Mr. Fairbanks. Never that. Let us say, unpleasantness. Some small unpleasantness. You know how dwarves can be. Testy. No more than that. Now please don't get in a huff. They will have no reason to keep you there, no matter how they feel about the news. They really have no use for hobbits, and dwarves don't keep slaves. No matter what else may be said about them, they are not that.'

'All right, enough. Please don't say another word about slaves. Everytime you try to relieve my fears, you end up adding to them. I will go, Mr. Radagast. But I consider you deeply in my debt. And I don't believe I will know how deeply until this is all over with.'

Radagast and Tomilo passed the bridge and rode down to the crossings beyond. About a league from the river the road diverged. To the left it ran directly toward the Misty Mountains hanging ominously in

the distance. To the right it curved in a long arc, disappearing amongst the trees and boulders. Somewhere beyond it straightened out and ran almost due south into Dunland. This was the New South Road, identical to the Old South Road but for its improved crossings and general upkeep. Bridges had replaced fords, and here and there a small village had taken root where the road crossed water or skirted a wood. There was even an inn in one of these villages, near the halfway point from Tharbad to the Gap. The inn was run by men of Gondor, not by the Dunlendings: indeed the entire village consisted of settlers from Gondor. The only exceptions were the groomsmen who worked in the stables. They, of course, were of the Rohirrim. The villages of the native Dunlendings were mainly off the road, and these villages contained no inns or taverns. Even after three centuries, they neither travelled nor wanted guests or other company. Much like the Woses, they only wanted to be left alone.

Tomilo looked at the mountains in the distance. They were still small and indeed misty. They looked much like a line of low clouds, and one had to squint to make out where the clouds of mist stopped and the mountains of mist began. Suddenly Tomilo heard a distant honking, high above and to the left. He looked up and watched as a great vee of white birds wheeled over and turned to the south. He listened to the fading honks until they were out of sight.

He turned to Radagast. 'It makes me want to go now and see the swans where they gather—what did you call it?'

'The Nin-in-Eilph?'

'Yes. Just that. I should think they would be easier to meet than the dwarves.'

'Now, now. Don't get yourself all in a pother. I tell you the dwarves are more bark than bite. And, as beautiful as the swans are in the marshes, I must tell you that Khazad-dum is also something to see. You should be pulling at your toes in anticipation, not grinding your hobbit teeth. Even an avoider of palaces, as I am, would make a week's journey to see the Dwerrowdelf for the first time, and count it time well spent, even with no other business to be done. See, look at Drabdrab. He knows where he is going. Hollin never forgets the elves, and never loses its mystery, no matter how many ages come and go.'

Tomilo felt the pony quivering under him, and fancied that the beast did indeed seem to want to gallop off down the road. This put him somewhat at ease. Also, he thought how he was on a saddle that might be quivering in anticipation as well. This seemed somehow absurd, but also somehow fitting, and the hobbit smiled to think he had thought it.

'I hope everything goes well in Gondor, with the King and all. I guess maybe I won't see you again. In a while, I mean,' stammered Tomilo.

'Yes, this is good-bye for now. I am sure I will

find something to say when I get there. Let us hope it is not too awkward. Well, I must learn to speak sometime. And this is the time, by all appearances. Be that as it may, we may meet again, my dear hobbit. I must say that Gandalf was right about the halflings, as he was about everything else: your reticence and honesty both play well, even in the ears of the "wise"; and, for myself, I have no fears about your ability to deliver the message to the dwarves. And I shouldn't be surprised to see you again. Eriador is not so far out of my reckoning as it once was. Stay on the road, and don't stay too long in Moria. Winter is not far away, remember! Farewell!' With that he turned Pelling and galloped down the right hand way, his brown cloak flying out behind him and waving above the dust.



Chapter 3

An Unexpected Welcome

Despite Radagast's final words of encouragement and Drabdrab's apparent excitement, Tomilo still felt a bit glum as he made his way along the Glanduin road. The unknown contents of the message weighed on his mind, as did all the veiled forebodings of Radagast. The letter itself was in his pack, safe and sound. He reached back to be sure the pack had not come loose, or fallen off. It was still there, all right, but touching the leather only made him think of the letter all the more. When Radagast had given it to him as they parted, Tomilo had only glanced at it for a moment (he did not want to seem too curious). But he did see that it was sealed with wax that bore the impression of the brown stone that hung about Radagast's neck. Tomilo assumed Cirdan's seal was

inside.

Tomilo wondered what a letter could say that would make even a wizard turn into a fool, second-guessing himself and forgetting simple things like watering the pony. The hobbit was clever with his fingers and he thought he could probably get the letter open without damaging the wax. No, that would be absurd. Preposterous. It was even more repugnant to the hobbit than the idea of living in ignorance. Normally he would never even consider opening a letter not addressed to him, but this situation had put him out of sorts. This surprised him almost as much as anything: that he would even think such a thing.

But try as he might to think of something else, his mind kept returning to the letter. He tried to think of the swans again. He listened to the sky for a while, hoping to hear another honk. Anything to break his train of thought. But he had come too far east for the swans. They were already behind him. Finally he reached into his pack and pulled out the letter. He looked at it closely. There was no writing on the outside save two words only: *Moria*, in Cirdan's flowing script; and underneath, in Radagast's tall letters, *Khazad-dum*. Both were written directly upon the leathern wrapping. The only other thing was the thick wax seal. This was no letter for the post. It was a message from a wizard to a king. A message from an elf prince to a wizard to a king! Tomilo's hand trembled as he held it up to the sun.

There were no holes in the leather, no chinks, not even a dot of paper visible.

What if he lost it? What if he were attacked by orcs or dragons? What if someone else found the letter after he was killed? How would they know who it was for? Tomilo assumed that anyone important would know Radagast's seal. In such a case it would be returned to Radagast, supposed the hobbit. But what if the terrible thing that the letter was warning of happened before Tomilo could get to Moria? Or what if the letter got eaten or destroyed by fire, and Tomilo escaped? And what if Radagast died in the terrible event, the cataclysm? Shouldn't Tomilo know what to tell the survivors?

Tomilo shook his head and pinched himself. His mind was playing him tricks. He was not making any sense. Suddenly he laughed. If a cataclysm befell or Radagast were eaten by dragons, neither King Mithi nor anyone else would need to be warned of it. In that case it would have already happened. Still, he would like to get a glimpse of the letter.

He now had the letter right up to his face, examining the wax in close detail. At that very moment Drabdrab suddenly snorted and stamped. Tomilo looked up. A crane was dancing in the grass a few yards away from the road. It was trying to pick something up, but the thing was moving too, and at first Tomilo could not see what it was. Then the crane stabbed it with its beak and Tomilo saw that it was a large trout, still alive. The crane had been flying

over, had dropped the fish, and had come down to retrieve it. At last the bird made firm its hold on the fish and it leapt again into the air on its great grey wings. Then it flew back west toward the marshes of the swans.

Tomilo looked again at the letter. For some reason he no longer felt compelled to open it. In fact he now felt a bit ridiculous—as if he had been in some spell. He slipped the letter back into his pack and fastened it tightly with the thong. Then he spoke jauntily to Drabdrab.

'That was close, my friend,' he said to the pony. 'I don't know what might have happened if I had read that letter. If it is as bad as Radagast hinted it was, I might have simply run off mad into the wild and never returned. Mad Fairbairn, like Mad Baggins. Come to a bad end, like great aunt Pemba in the Midgewater Marshes. Or I might have gotten caught as a spy by the dwarves—when they noticed the hobbit prints in the wax—and been hung upside down in a dungeon as bat fodder. If that bird hadn't dropped his dinner when he did, I don't know what I might have done. Makes me question myself, it does. Makes me question my strength. Can't say that's ever happened before, but I guess I never handled a letter from a wizard to a king before. Sort of a trial by fire, I suppose. It appears that Radagast is not the only one being tested and finding himself lacking. I hope we all grow a bit—before whatever it is that is so bad happens. If I nearly melt in the presence of an

important letter, what would I do faced with a dragon, like the great Bilbo was? But I guess hobbits were made of sterner stuff back then. We're just mice and worms compared to the heroes of the past.'

Drabdrab snorted an angry-sounding snort, as if he found this speech none to his liking.

Tomilo laughed. 'Well, Drabbie, your family line may be as spry as ever, and I shouldn't be surprised to find that you were a definite improvement over your ancestry—no matter how accomplished. But I haven't your confidence. Not at the moment, anyhow.'

The rest of that day was uneventful. Tomilo and Drabdrab followed the road league after league, slowly diminishing the distance between themselves and the mountains. But even at the end of the afternoon, after a full day of riding, Tomilo could see little change. The mountains still loomed under the clouds—not too far away, but not too close either.

At dusk they stopped. A few yellowhammers were flitting about with grass in their beaks, hurriedly patching their nests before winter. Several drops of rain fell but it didn't look like pouring just yet. The mist from the mountains had come out to meet them, though, and it glazed the back of the pony and moistened the hobbit's curly hair. Tomilo found his cloak and hood and put them on before unloading Drabdrab. Once the packs were off, the pony wandered away a few yards in search of the best

grass. Tomilo prepared a cold supper and glanced round for a dry spot. There were no trees, but several very large stones lay nearby in a sort of L shape. Two of the stones leaned together and provided just enough of a roof to keep a hobbit dry, provided the rain did not increase and the wind did not begin to blow. Drabdrab returned and huddled against the east wall of the larger rock. He did not seem to find the mist too inconveniencing. Soon he and Tomilo were asleep, the hobbit's head almost underneath the pony's forelegs.

The next day started much like the last had ended. The mist still fell about them, perhaps even thicker than it had been in the evening. It either rained or threatened to rain all day and nothing else of consequence happened. Tomilo and Drabdrab passed another wet night in the wilderness and awoke to another misty moist morning. Finally, at about noon of the third day since he had left Radagast, Tomilo noticed a change. The road turned north and began to descend. The fogs thickened as the hobbit and his pony went down and down, the trees and bushes along the road becoming closer and denser at the same time. There were even signs that the vegetation had been cut back to keep it from overgrowing the way.

Suddenly Tomilo saw two large shapes rise out of the gloom. At first he was startled, but Drabdrab continued walking forward, unconcerned. Soon the

hobbit could see that the shapes were but bridgeposts, standing out on each side of the road. As they got closer, Tomilo saw that they were carven stone figures, in size and countenance much like the dwarves he and Radagast had met at Sarn Ford. The figures each gripped two-headed battle-axes and wore helms strangely shaped. Over the bridge spanned a narrow arch, bearing a message to all who would cross. This it said:

DURIN'S BRIDGE

Dwarf Road

Cross in Peace

or Retreat

MITHI I

Lord of Moria

But someone had climbed the span and scratched with a sharp stone two words under the incised warning 'or retreat.' The words were '*in pieces*.' Tomilo found this dwarf pun rather disconcerting. If it was in fact done by dwarves. Tomilo doubted it, having great difficulty imagining dwarves with any sense of humour at all, even morbid.

Tomilo and Drabdrab passed under the arch and crossed the bridge. Radagast had said the crossing

would be a ford but he had obviously not known about this new bridge. The Glanduin rushed by underneath, icy cold and fleet from the now looming mountains. If the fog had lifted, Tomilo would have seen that he was at their very base, the foothills beginning in a quick rise just to his right. Over these foothills (and on a clear day) a traveller could see the many tiny falls that fed the Glanduin. They shone in the distance as they rushed down the rocky tree-covered slopes and fatefully met one another at the bottom, impelled by the curve of the vale. Now, at the end of a long season of melt, the falls were at their ebb. But in the late spring the water under this bridge would be white with the raging runoff of just-melted ice.

On this late autumn afternoon, under a low sky—one that touched the treetops and merged with the fog of the vale that rose to meet it—no such sights were to be had. So the hobbit trudged off down the dwarf road with his hood over his face and his cloak pulled tight round his waist. He tried to remember what Radagast had said. He thought he had another day or two from the river crossing to the Gates of Moria. Tomilo did not look forward to it. With the rain and fog it appeared to be a wet and weary two days, at the best. The rainy weather made him think of Bilbo's travails with the dwarves, just before they met the trolls. Did trolls still exist? he wondered. If they did exist, where did they live? This seemed as likely a place as any, thought Tomilo. Near

to the mountains, in the wilderness. And what about goblins? Goblins weren't extinct, at least as far as he knew. They hadn't all thrown themselves into a pit when the Great War had been won. They weren't terrorizing travellers, like in the old days, but they were corked up somewhere, biding time and doing what mischief they could, on the sly. How much mischief could they do, Tomilo asked himself, this close to the mountains? Maybe more than enough for him. He whispered to Drabdrab to pick up the pace, and pulled his cloak about him even tighter. The pony jogged on a few paces, just to humour him, but then settled back into a walk. There was no danger *he* could smell. But let him get a sign of trouble on the wind, and see how fast he could go, he told the hobbit with a snort and wag of his ears.

It was the end of the next day and our two heroes were soaked through and very grumpy. It had been drizzling all night and all day, and there wasn't a dry spot on either of them. The night had been miserable, with no campfire and no hot food and only a few hours of shivering sleep. The hobbit and the pony were both cursing the name of Radagast, and recommending the dwarves to their own messengers and mail service, and dratting the whole interconnecting scheme of wizards and high elves and kings and other meddling busybodies who couldn't leave well enough alone. Tomilo thought of his potatoes and his winter lettuces and of his

woodpile that was nowhere near the size it needed to be. By the time he got back it would be too late to catch up. What had the dwarves ever done for him, that he should go through this misery for nothing, as a favour to a stranger in a brown cloak? Confusticate the whole lot of them!

Just as he was working himself into a real steam, mumbling audibly and beginning to wave his arms about, Drabdrab stopped. Tomilo became still and mute as stone. He listened to the road in front of him, straining to see through the fogs. Suddenly he heard the sound of marching feet. Just as he began to see some small shapes looming in the distance, he heard a cry:

'Halt there! This is a dwarf road. It serves the kingdom of the Khazad. State your purpose.'

'I am alone and unarmed,' called out Tomilo. 'I bear a message from Cirdan of the Havens for Lord Mithi your King. I beg leave to pass in the name of Radagast the Brown, who gave this message to me.'

For a moment there was no answer. Tomilo could hear a low discussion from the direction of the dwarves. Then one of them called out again.

'Come forward. Dismount first if you do not come on foot.'

Tomilo dismounted and walked forward slowly, leading Drabdrab. As soon as he came out of the fog, he could see that there were only four dwarves, also unarmed and looking rather unprepared and confused. But when they saw Tomilo, they all

relaxed. One (not the leader) said, 'A halfling?' The leader immediately snapped, 'Silence, Galka!' and walked a pace forward.

'You say you have a message for Lord Mithi? May I ask what it concerns?'

'It is a sealed letter. I do not know the subject. Only that it is urgent and that it comes from Cirdan.'

'Elvish business, eh? Delivered by a halfling. Perhaps it concerns pipeweed?'

'I do not think so,' answered Tomilo.

'No. The elves probably don't smoke. Galka! Have you ever heard that the elves use pipeweed?'

Galka looked at the others. They only shrugged. 'I don't think so, Sir.'

'You don't think so?'

'I have never seen an elf, Sir. But I have not heard that they smoke.'

'No. It doesn't seem like something an elf *would* do, does it? Not pretty enough, is it?'

'No.'

'I say, is it, Galka?'

'No, *Sir!*'

'All right, then. I am Kavan, Second Marshal of the West Gate (to Tomilo). And your name, please.'

'Tomillimir Fairbairn, of Farbanks, Southmarch, the Shire.' He was about to add, 'and you can call me Tomilo,' but he thought better of it. As soon as the dwarves became accommodating, he would become accommodating, too. But not until then.

'Well, Mr. Fairbairn, we shall lead you to the

gates. We wouldn't want you to get lost in the fogs and go tumbling into a ravine,' said Kavan, with little or no expression. The hobbit wasn't sure if the dwarf was being friendly or impertinent. The five of them proceeded north along the dwarf road, Kavan leading and the hobbit in the rear with Drabdrab. The pony seemed calm. He at least was not offended by the Second Marshal's manner, despite what he had said of elves.

They had gone about a league, all silently plodding through the heavy air and soggy ground. It was not raining, but it threatened all the time to begin again in earnest. The hobbit hoped to reach the gates before that happened. In his present mood, any more rain might break the dam in his spirit, and he might say something truly impertinent to the Second Marshal or the Gatekeeper or the King himself. If he could just get near a bit of a fire and have a bowl of hot soup, he might be in proper spirits again. These two wishes took hold of his mind, and he passed the next hour going from fire to soup and back again.

Just as Tomilo was beginning to get dizzy from the circularity of his thoughts, and was beginning to think of climbing back on Drabdrab to save a bit of strength, the dwarf in front of him dropped back and whispered something. It was Galka, the smallest (and youngest looking) of the four dwarves. He was little taller than the hobbit (although Tomilo thought to

himself that a hobbitchild could live in one of the dwarf's boots). Galka's beard, though full, was short and pointy. It barely reached to his breastbone. His hood was red, and it crumpled over to the left. Galka occasionally fixed the point, as if self-consciously aware of its inadequacy, but it was of no use. It always returned immediately to the left.

'I *have* seen an elf, you know,' is what Galka had first whispered. Tomilo looked at him as if there might be some follow-up to this information. But as none was coming, he finally nodded and said, 'Ah!'

Nothing was said on either side for at least five minutes. Tomilo thought the conversation had hit its one and only peak, when suddenly Galka turned again and whispered, 'On the bridge!'

'What bridge?' pursued the hobbit, mostly to be polite.

'Over the Aksul—I mean the Glanduin. He—the elf—he was riding over it. *I* was under it.'

'Why did you tell the Second Marshal you had never seen one, then?'

'Oh, Marshal Kavan—I never tell him anything. He wouldn't believe me anyway. If I said I had seen one he would have told me I hadn't. I don't think he even believes in elves.'

'Ah!' answered Tomilo, to fill the pause.

'Have you ever seen one?' asked Galka.

'No. But I believe in them. This message is from one. It would be hard to have a real message from an imaginary person.'

'Hah! That's just what I think, too! But Kavan. . . no. I think he thinks you are just a salesman of the leaf, with a good story to see the King. He never believes anybody.'

Tomilo thought about this for a moment. It really did not matter what Kavan thought. He had the letter in his pack. That was all that was necessary.

'What,' continued Tomilo, 'were you doing under the bridge?'

'My hood blew off and fell through a crack in the timbers. I had to climb down and fish it from the stream. Just as I got into the water I heard bells tinkling. So I stood very still. I looked up through the crack and saw him. He had golden hair!'

'Galka?' cried Kavan from the front of the line. 'Did you say something?'

'No, Sir. Mr. . . ah. . . Mr. . . ah . . . *what's your name?*' (he whispered to the hobbit).

'Fairbairn,' the hobbit whispered back.

'Yes. Mr. Fairbairn asked me how much longer and I told him we were almost there.'

'Is that it, eh?' called back the Second Marshal. 'Nothing at all about elves?'

'No, Sir.'

'All right. We'll be there in a few minutes, Mr. Fairbairn. See that shoulder of rock? We go round that, turn right, and we are on the steps. Come up to the front so I can pass you through to the Gatekeeper. You'll have to give up your pony, but we'll take care of him while you're under.'

Tomilo and Drabdrab went up to Kavan's side as the little troop passed the shoulder of rock. A series of low steps began almost immediately, climbing slowly over a low prominence and down. Just beyond, a great depression in the mountains opened up and the hobbit and the pony could see before them a small plain surrounded on three sides by the cliffs. Tomilo could not actually see the mountain walls, obscured as they were by the fogs and vapours. But straight ahead, on the eastern side of the plain, the cliff wall was sheer, rising some five and thirty fathoms at its highest points before breaking into rough mountainside. On the north and south sides the rise was less sheer; indeed, the road on this side of the plain curved back and forth as it dodged around fallen boulders and small arms of the hill that reached out into the grassland. The open area was somewhat more than a mile across, north to south; from the shoulder of rock to the east wall was two furlongs. This is the area that had been filled by the lake when the Nine Walkers had arrived from Rivendell. Tomilo remembered the description of the lake well, and was relieved to find that the dam had been broken by the dwarves and that the plain was now dry. As he and the dwarves progressed east along the winding road, they crossed several rivulets, spanned by short low bridges of stone. These rivulets snaked across the plain to meet the Sirannon, the gate stream, which had now regained its old banks. It now filled the Stair Falls with its turbid waters before

continuing on to meet the Hoarwell far to the west.

The dwarves had also replanted the holly trees along the eastern wall. Tomilo counted at least a hundred on the south side of the gate, and he guessed (rightly) that there must be the same number on the north side as well. During most of the two hundred and ninety odd years since the last of the old trees of Hollin had been uprooted by the Watcher in the Lake, these new trees had stood as a symbol of the rebirth of Eregion. Legolas and Gimli themselves had helped to plant them in the first years of the Fourth Age, and the elf and the dwarf hoped that they would be a sign to both their peoples that the years of enmity were at an end. It was even thought for a time that the elves might start a settlement near the gates. However, the loss of all wooded areas in that region had doomed any such plans, as had the diminishing number of elves remaining in Middle Earth. In the first three centuries of the Fourth Age, the elves had found it difficult to maintain their settlements in Lorien and Greenwood, and so they found it necessary to abandon any talk of resettling Hollin. Since the departure of Legolas, no elf (save the occasional messenger) had been closer to Moria than the western edge of Lorien. And the elves of the Golden Wood did not often pass its borders, especially on the mountain side of the kingdom. This may account for the doubts of Kavan.

In addition to the holly trees, the dwarves had

also planted a line of cypresses along the Sirannon. Dwarves were not usually overfond of trees, but cypresses held a strange and unique appeal. The cypress was a tree after their own kind: simple, hardy, long-lived, and fond of rocky places. The cypresses on the plain of Moria thrived, and the dwarves came to love them.

Tomilo and his escort reached the gate without further incident. The hobbit entrusted Drabdrab to a very short dwarf with hay in his blue hood. The hobbit stroked the pony's nose and told him they would be back soon. But Drabdrab seemed less nervous than Tomilo: he just swished his tail and snorted. Tomilo took it as a good sign and breathed out a long breath. They were finally here.

The stone doors stood open and Kavan led Tomilo and the other dwarves past four sentries lightly armed, under the great arch. Just inside were two guards in full dwarvish regalia: mail, high helmets, and battle-axes, all of shining mithril. Beyond them Kavan selected a torch from a line on the wall and continued straight up the long stairway. At the top, the hobbit continued to follow his leader, but the other dwarves did not. Their tour of duty over for the day, they returned on their own to their various posts or families. At the first opening on the left, Kavan asked the hobbit to wait outside. The dwarf entered and Tomilo could hear him speaking to someone beyond the doorway. After a moment he called Tomilo in.

'This is Mr. Fairbairn, from the Shire. Mr. Fairbairn, this is Captain Gnan, Gatekeeper of the Third Watch, West Door. I have told him your story. He will sign you in. Mr. Fairbairn, good day.' And without another word, Kavan turned and strode from the room.

'So, Mr. Fairbairn. You have a message for Lord Mithi? I think I can be sure that he gets it. Thank you for coming. Sign this and leave the letter here and we will see to getting you some dinner and a bed.'

'I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Gnan. . . I mean Captain Gnan. I mean I am supposed to deliver the message to King Mithi personally. It comes from Cirdan of the Havens. Radagast the Brown entrusted me with it. I am afraid I really must see King Mithi myself, if just for a moment. It is really quite important.'

'Yes. Quite important. Something about pipeweed, I believe?'

'No, no. Not about pipeweed at all. I never said it was. I really don't know what it is about, but I know it is not about pipeweed.'

'If you do not know what it is about, how do you know it is not about pipeweed?'

'Oh bother! I'm sorry. I mean it has nothing to do with pipeweed. Why would Cirdan send an urgent message via a wizard to a king about pipeweed? It's absurd. I have ridden 125 leagues without rest, through rain and fog and I don't know what else, and I assure you that I would not have

done so to deliver a message about pipeweed! Now if you will please inform your King that I have arrived, I would be eternally grateful. And some dinner and a fire would also be kindly appreciated.'

'My dear halfling. Mr. Fairbairn. We do not lead every passing tradesman into the presence of our King, distressing as that may be to you. Do you, ah, do you have some sort of proof that this letter is from Cirdan of the Havens. . . whoever he is?'

'What do you mean, "whoever he is"? Don't you know of Cirdan, the ancient shipwright, in the Havens, Eldest of the Eldar? Even I knew who he was, and I'm nobody. Here, look at this inscription.' Tomilo took the letter out of his pack and laid it on the table in front of the dwarf, never taking his hand from it. The dwarf tried to grab the letter, but the hobbit held it tight. 'Just read it there on the table, if you please.'

Gnan read the script but did not seem convinced. He kept his hand on the letter as well, to the rising irritation of the hobbit. 'That's fancy writing, all right. But I'm no judge of whether it's from the "eldest of the eldest," as you put it. Leave it here and I'll have someone look at it. We'll get back to you in the morning.'

'I'm sorry,' answered Tomilo firmly. 'That's impossible. Why don't you call in someone to look at it now. Someone in the King's retinue. Someone who might know what he is talking about.'

Gnan jumped up and looked at the hobbit

harshly, still with one hand on the letter. 'Look here, Mr. Fairbairn, you're not in the Shire anymore. I recommend you act less proud. One word from me and you may spend a bit more time in Khazad-dum than you may like, and a bit deeper than may be good for your lungs.'

Tomilo's anger was rising, but he didn't know what to do. This was a tighter spot than he cared to be in. He stared at the letter for a moment and tried to think what Radagast would do. But that did not raise his confidence either. He saw Radagast drawing a complete blank, or stating his name again, or something equally outlandish. Well, what would Cirdan do? he wondered. This, however, was beyond the imagination of Tomilo. He felt utterly out of his depth. Suddenly he snatched the letter from Gnan's hand and ran into the hall.

'Help!' he cried. 'I'm being robbed. Fear, Fire, Foes! Call the shirriiffs! Call the King! I have a letter for him from Cirdan, from the elves. From the Hav. . . .' Just then he was grabbed by the ankles and taken down. A dwarf hand was clapped roughly over his mouth. Three or four dwarves bound and gagged him and put him in a sack.

Moments later Tomilo found himself being carried roughly down many steps. He was carried like this for about five minutes and then put down. A few minutes later he was picked up and the dark journey continued. It was getting colder and colder. After at least half an hour of climbing down

and down and down, his captors finally stopped. They pulled him roughly from the sack and untied the gag from his mouth.

'Now, my noisy halfling, you may call out all you want,' said the nearest one, a very heavy dwarf in mithril mail and a low helm. Tomilo had not seen him before, or any of them. The dwarf continued, 'No one will hear you down here, I assure you. But I recommend you review your manners. We are not accustomed to visitors being so vocal, and so accusing. You should have plenty of time to think. And no light to get in your eyes, to confuse your thoughts.'

With that the dwarf shoved Tomilo roughly into a cell and slammed the iron door upon him. The hobbit fell to the stone floor on his hands and knees. The dwarves left the hall quickly, taking the only torch with them.

The hobbit knelt there dizzily for a moment, letting it all sink in. This was bad. Oh, this was very bad! The worst possible thing. He could die here. He really *might* die here. Why had he run out and called for the shirriffs? That was the most preposterous, most ridiculous, most utterly absurd thing he could have done. That he had *ever* done, in fact. Did dwarves even have shirriffs? Oh dear! He thought that if he hadn't been so cross about the rain and the lack of sleep and the hunger, he might never have acted such a fool. But it was too late to remedy that.

Finally he stopped thinking about the recent past and began thinking about the present. Where he was now. Not being able to see anything, he crawled straight ahead until he hit a wall. Then he crawled at right angles until he found the other walls. He was in a very small cell. About ten feet square. Stone walls, stone floor, ceiling too high to touch. The cell contained only one thing. A straw mattress, four feet long and two wide. No pillow. No blanket.

And no food and no water. Tomilo's stomach was gnawing at him already. He wondered if he would be fed dinner. And if it would be hot. He was still not dry and he was very cold. He considered taking his clothes off, to help them dry. He thought he might be warmer without them. But he didn't want to be naked if the guard brought him dinner. He thought that would look rather odd. If he only had his pack!

Just then it hit him that he had nothing. *Nothing*. His hands were empty. *Where was the letter!* He must have dropped it when they had grabbed his ankles. It was gone. Oh dear. Without that letter he had nothing to bargain with. They had no reason to ever let him out. He might be here forever. Oh dear, oh dear.



C

hapter 4

Deeper Mysteries

Tomilo lay upon the mattress, looking up at nothing—total blackness. All he could think about was his hunger. He did not think about his foolishness with Captain Gnan anymore, or the rough guards, or Drabdrab standing in some cold stony manger. He only thought of food. He had been lying there many hours. He did not know how many, but it must be night outside by now. They were not bringing him any dinner. Maybe breakfast? He began to think of eggs and toast with lots of butter and potatoes swimming in gravy and other tasty things. He had just run through all his favourite breakfast things seven times, when

suddenly he sneezed.

Oh dear. He was so cold. *So cold.* The cold now began to take over his mind. His clothes were still wet, after hours and hours. It was too cold to dry them and his body was not producing any heat either. He simply must get out of the wet things, the guard be bothered. If he didn't he would surely catch his death. He stripped off his cloak and his weskit and his breeches. Then he curled up into a ball on the mattress and pulled it over him, like a pig in a blanket. At first it didn't want to stay: it was too stiff. So he held it down with one arm.

After maybe a quarter of an hour, this got to be too tiring. Besides, he could never sleep if he had to hold down the mattress all night. So he got up, refolded the mattress and sat on it for a while. Then he got up and jumped up and down on it for several minutes. This gave it a permanent crease; and the exercise also warmed him a bit. When he climbed back into his shell, it stayed put this time, and in a little while he was warm. A few minutes later he was asleep.

He slept for a very long time. He slept for about eight or nine hours; and then, having no reason to get up, and feeling terrible anyway, he went back to sleep. He slept for several more hours. Still no guard. No food. So he slept for several more hours. Finally he got up and checked to see if his clothes were dry. His cloak was almost dry, but the other things were still damp. So he took the cloak

into the bed with him, to warm it. He had a slight cough and felt dizzy whenever he stood, so he stayed in the bed, turning himself every few hours to keep from making his ears sore. The mattress was so hard that if he had stayed on one side, his shoulder and hip and ear would have been crushed into a permanent dent.

He had fallen asleep again when the guard banged on the iron bars and yelled at him. 'Get up! Food!'

Tomilo pulled his cloak about him and ran to the door. The guard had a torch, but he was even then going out. There was just enough light for the hobbit to see the food and then it was dark again. The food was not hot. It was a square of cold brown. . . something. And there was a can of water. Tomilo drank off the water in one long pull. It was cold and good. But the food was awful. It tasted like rusty sawdust. Or moldy dirt. It was barely edible. Tomilo choked it down regardless. He needed nourishment, and something told him there was nourishment in this slab of foul stuff. It was a form of 'cram', the waybread of Dale (although Tomilo did not know it). But it was the dwarves' own recipe for cram, and was much worse than the tasteless kind eaten in the north and baked by men. The cram of Dale was as much tastier than this dwarvish waybread as lembas was tastier than cram. That is to say, the difference was very great indeed.

This diet only increased Tomilo's

troubles. Already cold and tired and malnourished on his arrival, he had added to that a crushing setback to his spirit—caused by the loss of the letter—and a complete loss of light. He fell into a fever that night and suffered from delirium for many nights after. He moved only in order to eat his daily dose of cram and drink his can of water. At the height of his fever, he did not eat at all, but hid the cram under his clothes for later.

It was now many days later. The hobbit had been feeling somewhat better, and was beginning to wonder what sort of life he should settle into here. He was thinking of what he could possibly do to keep his mind and body from completely failing him in this tiny dark cell. A routine might save him for a few months; but he could not imagine living much longer than that without sunlight or conversation or hot food. That idea made him feel dreadful again. What if no one ever rescued him or asked about him or sent for him? How long would it take Farbanks to miss him? To send inquiries to Moria and to Radagast? And what of Radagast? Would Radagast remember to check on his messenger, or would he be too busy with greater things—kings and councillors?

Just then Tomilo heard a noise. It rather surprised him, since he did not feel that it was time for his one meal of the day. At first he feared it might be some deep cave animal, nosing about in the

dark. A great rat with sharp whiskers—or worse. But then he heard a clinking. Rats did not carry keys or wear mail (it was to be hoped). Finally he heard heavy footsteps coming right up to his cell. He shrunk back against the far wall. It was not the guard. The guard always carried a torch and called out to the prisoner to stir himself. This was a two-legged creature, with metal on it or about it, and it was now staring into the cell, trying to hear his movements.

Then a voice whispered, 'Mr. Fairbairn?'

Tomilo was too frightened to answer, although the voice sounded somehow familiar.

The voice continued, 'It's me, Mr. Fairbairn. Galka, from the bridge.' A lantern was uncovered, and light streamed in through the bars of the cell.

Tomilo walked toward the lantern, but still could not speak. He had not said a word in more than a week, and his tongue would not loose itself.

So Galka began again, not waiting for the hobbit, 'Oh, Mr. Fairbairn, thank Aule I found you! I have been searching these cells for days. It is a very honeycomb down here, and I couldn't often risk a light to look at a map. Not to speak of avoiding the guards. There aren't many, and that's one thing. I believe you are the only one down here in the lower chambers. There are a few dwarves in the airier cells above, and the guards seem to prefer to stay up there and talk to those prisoners. Discipline here is

bad. Yes, things are very bad. I shall probably find myself among those prisoners, for what I am doing. But I couldn't leave you down here to die.'

All this time, Galka had been working at the lock with a metal file or some similar device. Dwarves were very good with such tools, of course, and it was difficult to keep a dwarf in a cell. In the cells above, where dwarves were imprisoned for local infractions, the locks had been reinforced and made dwarf-proof. But these lower cells were not so strong. At last he forced the lock open and signalled for the hobbit to follow him. At this point Tomilo found his tongue and began to whisper something to the dwarf. But Galka quickly stopped him, indicating with his hands that they must be absolutely quiet for the next few moments. He took Tomilo's right hand and put it on his own shoulder, as a guide; then he replaced the cover on the lantern. The dwarf and the hobbit crept almost silently along the dark stone passage: the dwarf making some little noise with his boots and the hobbit following like his shadow. The hobbit was so quiet that if he had not had his hand on Galka's shoulder, the dwarf would not have known he was still there.

They made a few turns, left and right and then left again, and then began to climb a long flight of stairs. They had passed more than two hundred steps when suddenly the hobbit felt a draught from his right. They had just shot by an open doorway. This happened again some hundred steps

beyond, on the left. Then Tomilo looked up and saw a dim light falling down the stairwell from far above. As they continued to climb, the light got brighter and brighter. It was orange and still rather dim, being but the light of a single torch in another room off the stairs, but it seemed dangerously bright to the dwarf and the hobbit. They went a bit slower and stopped to listen every thirty steps or so. About ten steps below the light, they stopped again. Neither could hear a sound coming from the room. So they inched their way up the next nine steps, holding their breath. All at once Galka leapt forward and Tomilo followed. They were past the doorway in an instant.

But even that instant had not been fast enough. For the room was not empty. The voice of a dwarf cried, 'Who is that?' And then, 'Gnorin? Is that you?' And then the guard came to the stairs and looked up. He saw the retreating figure of the hobbit closely following the dwarf.

'Halt there! I say, stop!' he cried. But Galka and Tomilo only increased their speed. So the guard gave chase. Galka was young, and Tomilo, despite having just recovered from a fever, was sprier than the lightest and youngest dwarf. He did not have to carry gigantic boots up those steep and winding stairs, for one thing. And he weighed a good deal less than any dwarf, even when he was not limited to rations of cram and water. Soon he was pushing Galka up the steps, urging him on faster. This only

made the dwarf topple over, so Tomilo moved ahead so that he could pull the dwarf along behind. Soon they were out of sight of the guard.

Just as they began to think they might be out of immediate danger, they heard a horn blow from down in the depths. Then a horn answered far above them. They could hear, very distantly, the sounds of many boots moving above them. Galka stopped for a moment. At first Tomilo pulled on him, but then he also stopped. He was not sure he wanted to continue racing upwards. It was again completely dark, and the hobbit did not know what to do. So he risked a bit of speech.

'What now?' he began. But Galka again put his hand over Tomilo's mouth and put Tomilo's right hand back on his shoulder. The dwarf breathed deeply for a time or two and then regained his place ahead of the hobbit. They climbed only about forty steps before another dark doorway opened on the left. Galka pulled Tomilo through it. It was not a room. It was a short hallway to another flight of steps, these also going up, but not as steeply. The two ran up these as the sounds from above got closer and closer. Just as it seemed to Tomilo that they must meet the dwarves coming down, Galka led him through yet another doorway to the left and along another passage. This one was level and straight. They made excellent time and soon the sound of boots began to recede. This level path did not last long, however. After maybe five minutes it

began to go down. It was only a slope at first, but then it broke into shallow steps. Galka took them through a passage to the right and they hit another flight of steep steps, these also going down. They went perhaps two hundred steps almost straight down into the earth before Galka stopped. He was breathing hard. He sat and pulled the hobbit down beside him. It took several minutes for him to compose himself, but then he leaned close to the hobbit's ear and began to whisper.

'They will not find us here,' he said. 'Most of the chambers and passages below the third level are not much used on the north side of the West Gate, save for holding cells and the like. The air is not as clean down here, as you have no doubt noticed.' (Tomilo hadn't noticed anything, but he had no means of comparison, of course). 'It cannot even be used to store provisions—they spoil so much quicker here, you see. We have drained the water down to the twelfth deep, but it is still not fit for habitation. And the mining is mostly poor in this direction. Most of the dwarves of Moria also fear this area. They say that the den of the balrog is somewhere below the eighteenth deep, away northeast of here. Where there are fires depths rather than water depths. I have been part of the way down there, past where anyone else ever goes, and I think it is all bogey stories. Besides, the balrog was killed hundreds of years ago, on the bridge below the East Gate.

'Once we have rested, we must go a bit further in

that direction,' he continued, pointing invisibly down into the solid blackness. 'But nowhere near the fires, don't worry. From there we can climb to the first deep far from the West Gate. They will not expect us there. No one would be expected to flee in this direction. Especially a hobbit who did not know the depths of Moria and who would only be looking for the gate.'

This did not sound especially promising to Tomilo, but the hobbit felt he must trust in his guide. He certainly had no hope of escape on his own. He did not fear fire monsters in the bowels of the earth, whatever they were called, but he definitely did fear being lost in this endless cave. Whatever Galka's plan might be, it was better than starving in a deep sunless cell or lying lost at the center of the earth.

'What will we do at the first deep?' asked Tomilo. 'Won't they simply put me back where I was, with you to join me?'

'No. At least I hope not. There are some royal chambers at the first deep. The only ones on the Westside where the King's family spends any time. I know a few fellows in the King's service, minor courtiers and whatnot. I hope to get you a hearing, if not with the King or his household, at least with someone with some connections.'

'But why are you doing this? Why risk your freedom for me?'

'It is not just you, Mr. Fairbairn. The letter has

not been sent at all, you see. I have kept my ears open. It's like this. Once you mentioned elves, back on the road, I could not get them out of my head. I was keen to know what the message from the elves could be. When you first said it, I hoped that King Mithi would tell us soon—I was that curious. But you made Gnan so angry that he resolved to hold the letter as long as he could. As long as the letter was not sent, the King would not need to be told anything, and you would be miserable and forgotten. You see the letter was not dated. Captain Gnan opened it and saw that. So he still has it. He must send it eventually, of course. He would risk much by not sending it at all. But there are some of us who think he is doing a great wrong. A few of us young ones in the West Guard who know of the letter. I thought of sending a message myself to the King's Guard, but I feared it would be intercepted and I would be charged with insubordination.'

'You don't think you will be charged with insubordination for letting a prisoner out of his cell?' answered Tomilo.

'It is mad, I know. But I couldn't think of what else to do. This way you are free, at least for now. And I have you as proof that my story is true, when we are caught.'

'Well, I suppose that makes some sense,' admitted the hobbit. 'I just hope we are not caught by Gnan, or his men. . . dwarves, I mean.'

'Yes. Well, we better be going. They may begin

searching all passages before long, likely and unlikely.'

Galka and Tomilo hurried down the steps. The hobbit now had one hand on Galka's shoulder and one hand on the near wall. The staircase was quite narrow and the stone walls were a comfort to a free hand in this mad rush down. Despite the utter darkness, Galka did not seem to fear falling into a hole or tripping on a loose stone. Tomilo assumed this meant he had been down these steps many times. In this he was right. Indeed, Galka had been on a maintenance team five years before—one that had scoured all these passages from the second deep to the twelfth. Below the twelfth, Moria was still flooded near to the West Gate. And further east there were fires. Maintenance below the twelfth deep had therefore been left off for many decades, except on the Eastside. Near the East Gate, below the permanent halls of the King, the dwarves had excavated and thoroughly explored and repaired to a depth of 65 fathoms and more. There were livable chambers at the 21st deep. The Kings of Khazad-dum had not wanted any unclean air coming up from below, nor any risk of attack by tunneling orcs. All water had been sealed off and all fire had been shafted into vents that often rose more than a hundred fathoms to release their smokes above the Misty Mountains.

But here, less than three miles from the West

Gate, things were not so tidy. Galka discovered this when he suddenly plunged waist deep into icy water. Tomilo held fast to the wall, only getting his feet wet.

'Ugh!' cried Galka, climbing back dripping onto the stairs. 'This was not here when I last came this way. The waters must be rising. And it is dirty too. Can you smell it?'

'Yes,' answered Tomilo. He had smelled it for the past quarter of an hour, but assumed it was just more 'bad air'.

'We are not even to the tenth deep, if my calculations are correct,' said Galka. 'Obviously we must go back. There is an alternate route, not to worry. We will have to climb back a little way, I am afraid, but it may actually save us a bit of time. It is more direct, but it goes slightly nearer the fires. I must admit I could stand a bit of heat right now. I can barely feel my legs!'

Tomilo stamped his feet and shook the water off them. 'Ick! There's some kind of slime in the water, too! Let's go away from this place. It feels unclean. There are things living in these deep waters, if only blind fish and frogs.'

They turned to go. But they had only climbed four or five steps when a voice came down from above. 'Stand where you are! I place you under arrest in the name of King Mithi!'

A lantern was uncovered and a large dwarf in full mail and brandishing an axe could be seen standing

maybe ten steps above. He was alone.

Tomilo expected Galka to surrender immediately. He appeared to be no match for this huge guard. The hobbit did not even think his new friend was armed. But he was to be surprised on both accounts. Galka leaned into Tomilo and whispered, 'Stay at my side. Back up slowly to the water's edge and then stop. Duck when I say, and then run when I give the signal. He is alone and I think we can outrun him. I just have to dodge him into the water. He can't see it in our shadow.'

Galka then drew a short sword from under his cloak. The hobbit stood firm. In answer, the guard set the lantern down and grabbed his axe with both hands. He strode confidently down the staircase. The flickering flame of the lantern threw huge shadows down the stone steps, lighting only the ceiling and parts of the walls. As the guard advanced, Galka and Tomilo feigned retreat, backing slowly down, step by step. On the step above the water, they stopped. But the guard came on. Without pausing he lit on the second step above them and swung the mighty axe at Galka's head. He and the hobbit both ducked and the axe rang out against the wall. Shards of rock splintered down upon their heads and on the steps at their feet. Galka thrust his sword at the guard halfheartedly. Seeing such slight resistance, the guard laughed and advanced to the step above them. He swung the axe again, but even at this close range, the

two smaller adversaries were too quick for him. They ducked, and when the axe hit the wall again, Galka put a shoulder into the guard's exposed right side, near the ribs. As he did so, he cried 'run!' to the hobbit.

Tomilo scrambled out of the way of the wrestling dwarves, but only climbed a step or two before turning to wait for Galka. The guard now dropped his axe and closed with the smaller dwarf. Galka was making no further attempts to stab him, and the guard thought the fight nearly won. He leaned his weight into Galka, using his added advantage of being a step above. But his boot met a shard of loose rock and slipped, just as Galka was turning to the wall to counter his advance. The guard lost his footing completely and fell past Galka into the water in a full dive. Even as he hit the water, Galka was scrambling up the steps and yelling, 'Now, run. *Go!*'

The guard came spluttering to the surface, and the two could hear him puffing and huffing. Suddenly he screamed in terror and began calling for help. Galka and Tomilo had risen to where the guard's lantern was still alight on the stone steps, and the young dwarf was about to kick it over, to cover their tracks. But instead they both stopped and looked down into the shadowy stairwell. Just below the well-lit ceiling at the water's edge, they could see a mass of shiny wet arms, like a hundred snakes, churning in all directions. The guard was already completely entangled in them. A huge

tapering one was winding about his neck, and as the two looked on in horror, the guard's cries were cut short and he fell back into the water.

If the dwarf and the hobbit were wondering what to do next, they did not have to wonder long. Another long slippery arm or snake began feeling its way up the steps, and Tomilo and Galka did not stay to find out its length. They fled with all speed up the dark steps, throwing the guard's lantern back into the searching arms.

They did not speak again for some time. Galka led them up again to the eighth deep, where they turned left, bore left again through a level passage for perhaps ten minutes, and then turned left a third time down another narrow stairwell. It was much like the one they had just fled, save that it was both warmer and fresher. The smell was gone, although the memory of it lingered. They had gone some way down this passage when Galka stopped.

'Sorry,' he said, almost out of breath, 'I am beginning to get dreadfully tired. That last. . . um. . . experience makes me a little faint, too, I think. Not the fight with the guard, but the other . . . thing. What happened down there? Did you see that. . . creature . . . or creatures?'

Tomilo only nodded. He was glad to stop. His head had been pounding for half an hour, at least. He was hungry and tired and now in shock. He doubted that he could go much further,

although he said nothing to the dwarf. The vision of the guard going under, wrapped in slippery arms, kept running through his mind. Once his thoughts had settled a bit, he said, 'I think . . . I don't know, but I think . . . maybe it reminds me of the slimy thing that grabbed Frodo in the story. I have been wanting to ask, ever since we approached the West Gate from outside, whatever happened to that creature. Did the dwarves kill it when they drained the valley?'

'No. I don't think so. Nothing was found in the lake bed but rocks and bones and old refuse. Some of it is in the Gate Museum. But no creature.'

'You know the story I mean, then?'

'Of course. We are all taught of the Nine Walkers, and the words at the Gate, and the breaking of the doors, and the fight on the bridge. But if there is a record of the death of the creature that broke the doors and killed the old holly trees, it is no longer passed on. I always supposed that it was a sort of fish—that could not live without water, and that sunk into some crevice and died in the drying mud.'

'It may have sunk into some crevice, but it either survived or spawned somehow. If that is not the same creature, it is one like to it.'

'Perhaps you are right. It seems the most likely explanation. But why would it wait until now to re-emerge? We have had no sightings of such a creature in all the years that we have worked here,

that I know of.'

'It could be that the creature's existence is known, but that it has been kept hidden from general knowledge so as not to alarm the entire community. From what you have told me, there is already some nameless fear of the fires. If there had been an equal fear of the water, no one could be convinced to come down here for any reason, maintenance or mining or otherwise.'

'Well, if the creature has been here all along, I should think we would have been encouraged to stay away. Why risk drowning by snakes in order to maintain an area that yields no ore? It makes no sense.'

'Your King may have his reasons for keeping these parts open. I do not know.'

'Or, the creature may have chosen this time to awaken, for reasons of *its* own.'

'That thought is even more unsettling, especially to me. Let us not talk of it further.' Tomilo shivered and rubbed his toes. 'Do you have any food on you, Galka? A crust of bread? Anything at all?'

'I'm sorry, my dear Mr. Fairbairn. I have nothing. I can steal a bite for you once we get back up toward the main passages. But for now you will just have to tighten your belt and think of the future. It should only take a couple more hours, at most. If we are successful, the King will probably stuff you full of anything you like. Both of us, even. Let us think of that for the next hour!'

As they continued down the steep steps, it became warmer and warmer. A very dim glow began to rise from the depths. It was red and its intensity ebbed and flowed. After twenty minutes of steady descent, Galka paused.

'I have never been this far down. We are near the twelfth deep, I think. Perhaps even lower. We are looking for an opening to the right, that will take us to the southeast. I have seen the link on a map. There is a main rise somewhere to the east of us, a large winding stair that ends in the Great Chamber of the Midlights. There is a parallel passage to the one we seek, that runs from the stairwell we were on before to the winding stair. I have taken that link before. It is at about our present depth. But it does not link to this stair. We must go a bit lower. Are you all right still?'

'I can go on. The sooner we get there, wherever it is, the sooner we eat. Even prison food, a bit of cram, is starting to sound good.'

'Don't say that! I'll get you out of this yet, Mr. Fairbairn.'

As they descended, the light began to die out. This was a bit of a surprise. They both had expected it to get hotter and redder as they went down. But as they went round a slight bend, the light went out altogether. It was pitch black once more. What was worse is that they could feel the steps beginning to worsen beneath them. No longer

was the way perfectly maintained and even. Small cracks opened up, and then larger fissures. Galka was forced to go slower, for fear of stepping into a hole, or into a chasm. The hobbit was beginning to grumble about this, for the sharp openings in the stone floor were cutting his feet. The dwarf turned to comfort him. 'Just a bit further. I know the turn must be at this depth. . . .'

At that very moment Galka stumbled and fell. He cried out and then was quiet. Tomilo stopped immediately. He feared the dwarf had fallen into a hole. He could see nothing at all, of course, and Galka was not saying anything—not even groaning. The hobbit went down on his knees and felt his way forward. The dwarf was right in front of him, in a heap. He shook him gently and called his name.

'Galka. Are you hurt? Can you speak?' But the dwarf said nothing.

It couldn't be too bad, thought Tomilo. At least Galka was not still falling down some open shaft. What could be wrong? He reached forward to the dwarf's head. He felt no blood. But there was a large rock near Galka's head. He had probably struck it on the way down. Tomilo checked the dwarf's heart. It was beating. Galka was simply dazed.

Tomilo sat on the stairs and waited for him to recover. He sat. And sat, and sat. His stomach

growled and his head swam. Finally he decided he must go for help. If he ended up back in the dwarf prison, that was still better than this—his new friend wounded and unconscious and himself starving and nearly unconscious. He got up and shook Galka one last time. 'Galka. Wake up! Please wake up, won't you?' But the dwarf did not stir.

So Tomilo started climbing down again. Suddenly he stopped and went back to the dwarf. He took the dwarf's small lantern from under his cloak and relit it. He was not so concerned about concealment now. With the lantern he could safely make his way down the broken steps. He kept his eyes on the right wall. Galka had said there was a passage to the right to a winding stair. And this stair led to some large chambers. That didn't sound too difficult. Not with a lantern.

But the passage to the right did not present itself. He had gone some five hundred steps below Galka, and still nothing. So he continued on. And on and on and on. His head was now swimming and he had long lost count of the steps. He was about to turn round when the passage suddenly ended. He raised the lantern. Below him about twenty steps the stairs appeared to stop at a dead end. He thought this strange. Why would a nearly endless flight of stairs be built to end in a stone wall? He continued down to the very end to be sure.

It was not a complete dead end after all. To the right there had been a narrow passageway, but it was

now filled in with stone and mortarwork. It looked to Tomilo to have been a hasty job—the stones did not match properly and the nogging was incomplete. Several holes and cracks remained in the obstruction, and a dull red glow could be seen eking through. One of the holes was almost big enough to crawl through. Not big enough for a dwarf, but perhaps for a hobbit. A hobbit on short rations.

Tomilo worked at the edge of the seam with his fingers, breaking away crumbling bits of mortar and bagshot. Finally he had an opening that looked large enough to crawl through. The hobbit was too dizzy to question the wisdom of this. Galka had told him to turn right, and this was the only right turn available. He was going to take it if he possibly could. So he scrambled through and continued on.

The passageway was flat. It ran off into the distance and then turned a corner. In the red light Tomilo could see that the ceiling was high and curved and that the walls were worked with tracery. The floor, too, although cracked and covered with a layer of soot, had been finely worked and showed many signs of tooling and ancient decoration. This must be the link Galka had been looking for. Tomilo proceeded down it in some hope of finally reaching the winding stair. He made good time, now almost racing along the level ground. After several furlongs the way began to descend again, though, in a gradual slope. The walls

widened and the heat began to be really uncomfortable. There was also a gradual brightening beyond any light his lantern was casting. Before long the whole wide corridor was lit with a red flickering light. The hobbit extinguished the lantern and tied it to his belt.

Suddenly he popped through a low archway and found himself in a great hall. The ceiling rose above him to thirty or forty feet. A grey smoke filled the air and obscured the far walls. Huge carved stone columns ran out into the midst of the hall in a double row, but he could see that they had been blackened and disfigured over the ages. There was a dim constant hum or rumbling from somewhere ahead in the smoke. Tomilo did not know what to do. Galga had said nothing of a great hall.

Tomilo stayed close to what he thought must be the southern wall and made his way across the large open space. He hoped to find another passage running east on the other side. The smoke was too thick to see if he was right. As he began to lose sight of the archway he had entered, he stumbled on something. It was a shield. A mithril shield, scarred and dented. He studied the floor. All about him, partially obscured by the smoke and covered in places by ash and dust, were helmets and axes and piles of still-shiny mail. Within the mail were the disintegrating bones of dwarf warriors!

The hobbit shuddered. He almost fled. He would have fled but he did not know which way to

flee. To go back seemed to admit defeat. If the winding stair was just ahead, he had come too far to give up now. He would at least make it to the far wall, and see if the passageway continued on.

The signs of an ancient battle continued. The bodies were piled up against the wall and strewn out across the open space of the hall in every direction, as far as the hobbit could see. Here and there the bones of an orc or other strange fell creature added to the carnage. Scimitars, curved and stained, lay next to swords and axes by the hundreds. A great stone troll, now only stone, lay on top of a mound of warriors.

By this time, Tomilo was delirious. The only thing that drove him on was hunger. To go back was to climb a thousand steps for cram. To go forward was to climb with the possibility of hot food. Tomilo was a hobbit to the last. He was sure anyway, in his swirling mind, that the winding stair was just ahead. So he followed the wall into the dim red air and the grey smoke.

What he had not noticed is that the wall of this great chamber was curved—slightly concave. He was now following it northward, and getting farther and farther from the arch he had entered. There was no 'far wall'. Only this wall. About half a furlong from the arch he reached a crevice in the floor. The crevice appeared to cut all the way across the hall. Low flames leapt out of it to about knee height. Beyond, he thought he could see—distantly

through the heavy smoke—a dark wall with darker shapes in it. Those must be archways, he thought. One must be the passageway to the winding stair! He jumped lightly over the flames and continued on toward the dark wall. As he got nearer, though, the shapes coalesced into wholly different images. They were not archways in a wall. They were men in tombs!

The dark wall was a wall of dark flame—flame that seemed to suck the red light into it, rather than emit it. And in this wall were vertical recesses, like statuary recesses in a gallery. Standing in these recesses were huge grotesque figures. Tomilo had thought they were men, from a distance. Now he thought they were figures carved in black stone. They were too large to be men. And their eyes were closed. Two of them had wings folded in front, like sleeping bats. These were the largest. The smaller figures—still taller by half than the tallest man—had heads curiously shaped, almost wolfish. Their hands and feet were abnormally large, with blackened nails—as if the stone had been scorched after it had been carved, blacker than black. They wore no clothes, but seemed to be encased in some sort of horny shell, like a beetle.

Still almost delirious, and beginning to be overcome by the smoke, Tomilo walked unsteadily another pace forward. The hum had increased and it now filled the air. It seemed to be coming from the wall. From the flames. Suddenly Tomilo realized

with horror that the hum was coming not from the flames, but from the figures! He was close enough now to see the chests rise and fall in long shallow breaths. These figures were alive! The hum was the hum of their horrible breathing! Wisps of smoke could now be seen passing from their nostrils!

The hobbit reeled. His stomach lurched. He nearly collapsed in fear. For several moments he was frozen. Finally the fear helped to clear his head. He turned and walked away as silently as he could. Never had he been so aware of his stealth. He untied the lantern from his belt, fearing it would rattle, and set it noiselessly on the floor. Even though the hum and smoke covered all his movements, the hobbit could not be too careful. He did not know who these people were, these terrible apparitions; but his instinct told him they were worse than any orc, more deadly than any troll. Once he was well out of sight of the dark wall he broke into a run. He leapt across the fallen dwarves and their scattered weapons and rushed beneath the archway. Without pausing—in truth *increasing* his speed—he passed the level passageway in minutes, squeezed through the hole, and scrambled up the stairs. Very soon he was back at Galka's side, shaking him and crying, 'Please wake up, please wake up, oh, please, please!'

The dwarf *did* wake up. He opened his eyes to . . . nothing; but he could hear that Tomilo was in tears, absolutely distracted. Galka became upset as

well. 'What is it, Mr. Fairbairn! What's wrong? Just be calm and tell me straight. That's it, breathe. I'm all right. Just tell me what the matter is.'

The hobbit was talking in a blur about orcs and demons and dark flame and bones and statues. Galka could make nothing of it. The dwarf felt his own head. 'I must have fallen and knocked myself out,' he thought to himself. 'Maybe Mr. Fairbairn fell, too, and just woke up. Maybe he is raving.'

'Come on, Mr. Fairbairn. We've still got to get to that winding stair. Pull yourself together.' He put the hobbit's hand on his shoulder again, and started down the stair.

But Tomilo grabbed him roughly and whispered grimly in his ear, 'You can't go down there! I've just been there. We've come too far down! We missed the right turn in the dark, somewhere up there. I swear. I'm fine now. Please trust me. We can't go down there. I'll tell you why later.'

Galka touched Tomilo's arm. The hobbit was trembling. He was still distracted, but his speech was no longer raving. 'Well, Mr. Fairbairn, I don't think we passed any doors on the right. Are you sure of what you say? You haven't hit your head, have you?'

'No, no. *You* fell, Galka. Not me. You fell and then I went on. I couldn't wake you so I went on, to get help. I went down. Down. . . down there. *That is not the way!*

'Can't you tell me why? Is there more water?'

Tomilo stopped and listened for a moment. He could hear nothing from down below. There was no smoke, no red light, no hum. 'No,' he said at last. 'No water. Just fire. Fire and . . . firepeople.'

Galka said, 'What?'

'Remember you were telling me about what the dwarves feared down here? About the thing that Gandalf killed? What did you call it?'

'A balrog?'

'Yes. A balrog. I have just seen a sleeping balrog. *Seven* of them.'

'Seven balrogs? Asleep? Are you sure you didn't hit your head?'

'I didn't hit my head. I'm fine I tell you. Now I insist you come up with me to look for the winding stairway. We must have missed the passage. During the time in the dark. After we lost the red light. If you will come up with me a way you will see. There is no way below. Please come now before they wake up!'

Tomilo really was almost mad. Not in the way Galka suspected. He was not making things up, or confused. But he was dizzy with hunger and fear and exhaustion. He began pulling on Galka again, and weeping. Galka thought it best to humour him for the moment. So they began climbing slowly, each with a hand on the wall to the left. In less than three hundred steps, they came to an opening. Tomilo had been right. Galka began to think that maybe the hobbit *had* been down to the

bottom of the stairs. If he had, maybe he had seen . . . well, something.

But that was all neither here nor there now. They had found the link, through shrewdness or luck, and the only thing to do was to go on. Galka resumed his place in front and the hobbit followed wearily. A quarter of an hour passed on level ground and they reached the winding stair. It climbed, but not too steeply. Wide, triangular steps rose up and up. The dwarf and the hobbit took two strides for each step, keeping to the inside to make the distance as short as possible. After another hour they had made it to the fourth deep. They could hear commotion above and in some of the passages to the side now.

Galka stopped. He told Tomilo to sit and rest. 'I will get us something to eat. You will feel better after a bite. Then we can tackle the next step.'

When Galka returned the hobbit was asleep. He shook him awake and gave him a small loaf with butter and a rasher of still-warm bacon. Also a large tumbler of water. Tomilo drank the water first, all at once. Then fell to the bacon greedily, like a dog that had not eaten in days. He followed that with the bread, which was soon also gone. He felt better almost immediately. Still sleepy and groggy, but not so dizzy. He felt he could now make it up the final stairs.

The two did not delay. As they worked their way up the last flights, now well lit and airy, Galka told

Tomilo to stay close. The dwarf would look for someone he knew outside the royal chambers. If guards from the West Gate recognized them, they would have to make as large a commotion as possible, and shout 'King's men, King's men!'* Tomilo was too tired to ask why, so he just nodded.

They were now at the first deep. Dwarves were everywhere. Some few looked at Tomilo curiously as he and the dwarf emerged into the open and strolled along the corridor outside the Hall of the Midlights, but no one stopped them. The royal chambers were nearby, and guards in blue and black livery and gold-plated mithril were a common sight here. They continued down this crowded passageway. At the gate of the King's Third Hall stood two guards in full mask. That is, rather than helms and cheek guards, they wore mithril masks painted gold and black, with only the eyes uncovered and a slit for the mouth. The masks had been fashioned by the dwarf smiths into a horrible grimace to terrorize enemies. The chin especially was huge and long—it served to make the face larger and more terrible and also to protect the neck from weapons.

Galka stood at this gate for a moment, looking round hurriedly. But he could see no one familiar. Finally he asked one of the masked guards if Captain Laki was on duty. The guard didn't know and told him to be off. Tomilo could feel the eyes of the guards looking at him through the holes of the

masks. He shuddered.

He was just following Galka back along the wide corridor when a horn sounded nearby and four or five armed guards came rushing up in the livery and mail of the West Gate. Galka grabbed Tomilo and ran back to the gate of the masked guards. He began yelling at the top of his voice, 'King's men, King's men!' and Tomilo joined him. Several of the King's guards rushed up at the same time as the guards of the West Gate, and the masked guards stepped into the fray as well.

The leader of the West Gate guards spoke first. 'This halfling is a prisoner of the West Gate and has escaped from his cell. This dwarf is a renegade member of our guard who has helped the prisoner escape and we claim his

*The actual phrase was 'King's khazad', of course. But I find 'King's men' to be a more expressive translation here (LT).

punishment as our own.'

'If you are a guard of the West Gate,' one of the King's guard said to Galka, 'Why did you cry "King's men, King's men"?''

'I pledge myself to the King and ask to be judged as a King's man rather than a guard of the West Gate!' answered Galka.

'You cannot do that,' said the West Gate guard. 'You are one of us, and must be judged

accordingly.'

'Nay,' interrupted the King's guard. 'All of the Khazad are King's men and may invoke the right to be judged in our court. But ours is the harshest court, Guard (to Galka). You would do well to appeal for clemency to your own superiors.'

'I ask no clemency. I ask for justice. We are falsely accused.'

The guard of the West Gate pushed the other guards roughly away and stood next to Galka. 'Did you not just flee from this halfling's cell, which lock you broke? Did you not disregard orders to stand? Have you not disregarded orders from Captain Gnan to speak to no one of this halfling?'

'This halfling was falsely imprisoned by Captain Gnan.'

'That is for Captain Gnan to decide, not a guard.'

'Nonetheless, I plead as a King's man.'

'I will not allow it,' cried the guard, pulling his axe from his belt and standing in front of Galka.

'That is for the King's judge to decide, not a guard of the West Gate!' answered one of the King's guard. He and all the King's guards raised their axes and the masked guards lowered their spears. The other guards of the West Gate blew their horn and also fingered their axes. Many other boots could be heard running up.

At that very moment the gate of the King's Third Hall opened and a chamberlain emerged in long blue and black robes. A tiny mithril hammer on a slender

chain hung about his neck. Emblazoned on his robes in silver and red thread were a hammer and anvil—the emblems of Durin.

'May I help you?' he said quietly. Immediately all axes were lowered and the spears taken back up. The guards all began talking at once, but the chamberlain raised his hand and they all became quiet once more.

'Guard,' he said to the masked dwarf to his left, 'What seems to be the matter?' That guard began relating the recent events, but he was soon interrupted by the chamberlain.

'If you would be so kind as to raise the mask. I can't hear a thing you are saying.'

'Yes, Sir. This West Gate guard in the middle has done some mischief and asks to be judged as a King's man.'

'And is that a halfling?'

'Apparently, Sir. He has escaped from the cells of the West Gate.'

'Guard,' the chamberlain now said to Galka, 'I recommend you to your own court. They have experienced your duty as well as your abrogation of that duty, and I think they will be more likely to pass a balanced judgment.'

'That's what I told him,' began the King's guard.

'Guard,' the chamberlain replied to the King's guard, raising his hand again, 'I do not require your corroboration.'

'I nonetheless ask for your protection and

judgment,' interrupted Galka.

'Then it is settled. Take them in and we will dispense with this at once. The rest of you will return to your duties.'

The guards quickly dispersed and the gates of the King's Third Hall closed with a clang behind the hobbit.



Chapter 5



Of Minecarts and Stout Beer

Two King's guards were retained to escort Galka and Tomilo into chambers. The chamberlain led them all into a small subroom and asked them to wait. In a few moments he returned with a scribe, and the six of them proceeded to 'court'—that is, an inner chamber where cases were heard in the name of the King. There were three such courts in Moria: this one and one at each gate. The King himself rarely sat as judge. He never sat at the West Gate, rarely at the East Gate, and occasionally here at his Third Hall. King Mithi was thought to be in the apartments of his First Hall, near the East Gate. So the chamberlain had no idea of disturbing him on

this occasion, for what looked to be a minor incident. Only ranking members of the King's family could sit in judgment, according to the dwarvish law, so the chamberlain had sent for Mithi's youngest son, whom he knew to be nearby. This dwarf now entered the court, and the chamberlain rose to meet him. They exchanged a few words and then the chamberlain left the room.

Mithi's son was wearing decorative mail above and civilian dress below. He wore no helm or headgear. Only a brooch of seven stars above the crown of Durin. He also wore a dark blue cloak with silver trim.

'I am Prince Kithi,' he said in a businesslike manner, looking at the far wall with no expression. 'You will state your names.'

'Galka, Lord, guard of West Gate and King's man.'

'Tomillimir Fairbairn, My Lord, of Farbanks, messenger for Radagast of Rhosgobel and Cirdan of the Havens.'

'Now Galka, I want a brief description of your case and a plea. I have sent for Captain Gnan of the West Gate, so do not think your testimony will go uncontested.'

'I would welcome Captain Gnan's presence here, Lord, as I'm sure Mr. Fairbairn will agree. The case is simply stated. Mr. Fairbairn carried a letter from Cirdan of the Havens to our King Mithi. Captain Gnan intercepted that letter and imprisoned Mr.

Fairbairn without cause or hearing. I myself, Lord, simply helped bring Mr. Fairbairn here.'

'Wait a moment. We have heard nothing of a letter. How many days ago did you arrive, Mr. Fairbairn?'

'I am not sure, Lord. At least a week, I should say. I fell ill.'

'He arrived nine days ago, Lord,' corrected Galka.

'Well, this is more serious than I thought,' said Kithi, turning to look at the two and pulling on the hem of his cloak.. 'But why would Gnan fail to send on a letter? I suppose we are about to learn.' At that moment, Gnan arrived, looking rather wide-eyed.

'My Lord Kithi, you requested my attendance.'

'Yes Captain. Thank you for your promptness. You were not at the West Gate, I take it?'

'No, Lord. I was nearby, leading a team of searchers.'

'Captain Gnan, have you a letter from Cirdan to King Mithi? Yes or no?'

'Yes, Lord.'

'Why has it not been delivered?'

'It was to be sent over today. I couldn't find a runner yesterday.'

'Is it true that you have had this letter for nine days?'

'No, Lord, not that long, I think,' answered Gnan, looking at the floor. 'A few days maybe. I couldn't find a runner yesterday or the day before.'

'Captain Gnan, Sir, do you take me for an absolute fool? Yes or no?'

'No, Lord.'

'All right, then. I don't want to hear anymore about runners. Have you anything else to say before I decide your case, Captain?'

'Yes, Lord. This halfling arrived with a letter, saying it was for the eyes of the King only, and acting high and mighty, as if he was a king himself. I informed him I would be glad to send it on. He insulted me to my face and then ran into the hall, crying that I was robbing him. I put him in a cell for a few days to teach him some manners. This elf he was talking about I took to be an invention of his. A letter from a halfling didn't seem urgent, but I was forwarding it to the King today, Lord.'

'The urgency of the King's correspondence is not for you to decide, Captain Gnan. Your explanation is not at all satisfactory in other respects either. You will deliver the letter into the hands of my personal guards immediately. I will look into this matter further. For now, you are stripped of all rank and relieved of your post. You will be detained until the King has seen the letter and spoken to your lieutenants.' Lord Kithi rang a bell and an attendant rushed into the chamber. 'I want twenty guards fully armed,' he said to the attendant.

The attendant returned within a count of thirty with the guards. 'Please take ex-Captain Gnan to the West Gate,' continued Prince Kithi. 'I require a letter

he has there. It must be delivered to me personally. I want him gagged in transit to prevent him from calling his guards to action. I want a level-three warning to be sounded in all the West halls. I want his lieutenants sent back to me now. And I want a message taken to the King immediately. You may go.'

The guards gagged Gnan and took him from the room. Lord Kithi scribbled a note and handed it to the attendant. Then he returned to Galka and Tomilo.

'I must beg your pardon, Mr. Fairbairn. I am afraid we have paid you a poor welcome. Can we offer you food and drink? All we have is at your service. And I assure you you will sleep in the finest chambers tonight. Would you like a bath?'

'Thank you, Lord Kithi. May I ask first how long it will take, do you think, for the letter and the King to get here?'

'Not more than a few hours, I should say. The letter will certainly be here within that time, unless there is more trouble. The King was on the Eastside until recently, and has not returned. He may take a bit longer. He was expected here tonight, though, and I think he may be nearby. Let us hope so. If he is still at First Hall, it will take more than two days.'

'I would like a bath, and I need a bath, no doubt, but I think I will wait. I still must see the King as soon as possible, whatever state I am in. I think I have time to eat, though, if you have anything at

hand.'

'My dear Mr. Fairbairn, you may give your order to my attendant for anything that you desire—food, beer, pipeweed, absolutely anything. And that goes for you as well, Galka. Please excuse for me for a moment. I must leave you to my attendants. Make yourself at home and we will talk much more in a little while.'

As it turned out, the King *was* on the road between First Hall and Third Hall, but was more than a day away. This gave Tomilo and Galka time to eat and bathe and sleep and talk, and then eat some more. Dwarf food did not compare to hobbit food (in Tomilo's opinion), but the hobbit was given the finest Khazad-dum had to offer, and he received it gladly. It was much superior to cram, at any rate. Tomilo tried some dwarvish delicacies, like roast badger and pickled bat bellies, but returned immediately to standard fare: sweet cakes and honey, ripe cheeses, mutton and hot potatoes, and cold beer. The dwarves were second to none in the fermentation of grains, and their stout beers were the match of any in Middle Earth. Tomilo had to be careful not to have too much of this beer, lest he meet the King in a swoon. After their troubles, though, he and Galka felt deserving of a pint or two (or three). They made certain to make their three pints last the whole day, and they also drank a good deal of water as well—to take some of the head off

it,' as Galka put it.

Galka had been told by the chamberlain to stay with Tomilo at Third Hall, not only as a companion for the hobbit, but also because the King would no doubt want to see him as well. This whole matter, they were told, had grown into a rather weighty concern. A mine cart had been sent east to inform the King of the urgency, and to bear him back west with all speed.

Tomilo had been ignorant of the existence of the mine cart, and Galka explained it to him. The dwarves had used simple carts to aid them in the extraction of ore or dirt, or whatever might need to be excavated, since time immemorial. They drew the carts toward the surface with ropes, and then allowed them to return down the shaft by their own weight, with the same ropes to keep them from hurtling unchecked. Since the passages in Moria were of such great number and length, some ingenious dwarf had devised a method for transporting not just ore, but dwarves as well. The trick was to make every journey a downhill one—but not too steeply downhill. Therefore a dwarf who wanted to travel quickly from west to east would climb to the Fourth Level. The mine cart would then travel gradually downhill to the Sixth Deep on the east side. From east to west this method was reversed. A traveller left from the Third Level above and arrived at the Seventh Deep on the west side. The small grade of the incline (about ten levels change in forty miles)

made it easy to handle the speed of the cart. A quicker trip could be managed by pushing the cart at each checkpoint. And a brake allowed for slowing, should things get out of hand. At the checkpoints were failsafes, to avert any catastrophes. That is, every few miles the cart could be diverted up a short uphill run, to save runaways.

These main cart runs from east to west and back were the only ones used by dwarves to carry themselves; and even they were mostly used for payload. In fact, many if not most dwarves refused to ride the cart, and only the King and his family were regular travellers. The King had business on both ends of the mines, and often needed haste in going from one side to the other. The vastness of Moria made the mine cart a necessity, even though it was a grudging one.

The speeds achieved by this mine cart should not have caused much alarm. The dwarves never allowed it to equal the pace of a running horse, say, or even a canoe racing with the stream. A trotting pony might have passed the cart at most times. And yet even this seemed breakneck to the dwarves, who never rode horses and never ran themselves, even into battle. Still, the cart allowed for a journey from east gate to west gate in twenty hours, less than half the normal walking time. And even that time could be improved, with pushing at the checkpoints. The importance of this fact had never been recognized, but it was to play a major role in events even then

unfolding.

King Mithi arrived with his retinue early the next day. After a bit of sleep (the dwarves could sleep at any time, and paid little heed to night or day—there being no sunlight in much of the caves) he called Tomilo and Galka to his chambers. Neither the hobbit nor the young dwarf had ever been in the King's Chamber of the Third Hall of Khazad-dum. Prince Kithi had questioned them in court, which chamber was much smaller and humbler. But the King's Chamber was magnificently adorned with many of the greatest treasures of Moria. Only First Hall, on the east side, outshone it, and then only in size. Glittering jewels of every imaginable color and shape were set in precious metals in a multitude of devices and utensils: goblets and saltcellars and plates and horns and standards. Weaponry hung the walls like pictures in a crowded museum—swords and axes and spears and shields and maces competing for dwindling space among corselets of mail and fabulous helms and grotesque masks and studded gauntlets.

The light from the innumerable flickering torches reflected from the metal and jeweled surfaces in a thousand colored shapes, dancing on the walls like a kaleidoscope. The whole room seemed to move among the shifting hues. As he entered the great chamber, Tomilo's eyes widened, and for a moment he staggered. All the stories in all the books he had

read had not prepared him for such magnificence. Galka, too, was awestruck, and he looked for many minutes at all these treasures of his kingdom. At last, though, he remembered his King and pulled on Tomilo's sleeve to proceed. The King had not noticed them yet, or he would not have been patient with their goggling (especially after a night's rushed journey in a mine cart).

The two small friends advanced timidly up the great aisle, between a double row of columns running from one end of the chamber to the other, supporting the ceiling far above. Galka's boots echoed in the vast hall, and even the hobbit's soft footfall could be dimly heard as subtle hiss, like the leaves of distant trees moving in a gentle wind.

The King sat at the far end of the chamber on a stone seat. It had no cushion to add to its comfort. No rug was at its foot. No curtains or other hangings were behind the dais, or on the walls. Nothing in the room bespoke of ease or of softness or of subtle grace of any kind. The hobbit noticed this as for the first time, and wondered at it. Neither the King, nor indeed any other dwarf, seemed to have any use for textiles beyond rough clothing and even rougher blankets. This brought to mind something else. Tomilo wanted to ask Galka about dwarf women, their duties and preferences. Did they not sew? Did they not care for fabrics? As he stood waiting for the King to notice them, he thought of other questions. Where

were the dwarf women? He hadn't seen any in the passageways or in any of the halls. Did they stay in domestic quarters, in the living chambers, whatever the dwarves called them? Were they not allowed to leave? And what of dwarf children? Where were they kept? Did they even exist? Or did the dwarves spring full-grown and fully armoured from the mountainsides?

The King looked much like the Prince Kithi, save that he was older and broader. His beard was completely white, however, hanging down to his broad belt and curling into his lap. He wore the emblem of Durin on his breast, with crown and seven stars, but was otherwise unadorned. He wore no crown and bore no sceptre. Only his cloak betrayed his full rank. In colour the deepest sable, it was trimmed at the bottom with finest mithril leaf, at the collar with otter fur.

'You are the halfling?' began King Mithi*, speaking rather slowly.

'Yes, Lord. Tomillimir Fairbairn, of Farbanks, messenger of Cirdan of the Havens and Radagast of Rhosgobel.'

'And you, good dwarf, are Galka, guard of the West Gate.'

'Lord.'

'I have read the letter. I thank you, Mr. Fairbairn, for delivering it. And you, Galka, for seeing it into my hands.'

'Lord,' they both said, in answer.

'I apologize for our poor welcome of you, Mr. Fairbairn. It is inexcusable. Gnan has been sent to the mines in Krath-zabar, and will not be delivering any mail for quite some time. As for this letter. . . . May I ask, Mr. Fairbairn, if Radagast said anything to you of its meaning—beyond what is contained in the letter, I mean?'

'I have not seen the contents of the letter, of course, My Lord, so I cannot say, really. Radagast told me nothing of the matter except veiled hints. I know that there has been bad news of some kind. Something so bad that it put Mr. Radagast out of balance. I suspect it is all beyond my understanding.'

'Perhaps. Perhaps it is beyond anyone's understanding. The letter states no more than what you have just so succinctly stated. Bad news. That is all. And a meeting. A council at Rhosgobel. A council the likes of which haven't been seen since. . . well, not in my lifetime. Since the White Councils of old, or since the Council of Elrond, I suppose. The same message has been sent to the Glittering Caves and to Erebor and to Krath-zabar and to Minas Mallor and to Lorien and to Imladris and so on. Representatives are expected from beyond the Sea of Rhun and Far Harad. It is as if Aule himself, or Manwe, were arriving by ship and we all needed to greet him. But it is *bad* news. Large news, and bad. More we are not told. I hope you can see how

disconcerting it all is, Mr. Fairbairn.'

*Mithi was the son of Durin VII, son of Thorin III Stonehelm, son of Dain II Ironfoot. He had been the Lord of Moria since FA211. He was therefore quite old at the time of this story—227 years old, to be exact.

'Yes, Lord. It would be better just to be told, and be done with it, I would say. But maybe Cirdan and Radagast have some reason. Maybe it is especially volatile, like. Just think what might have happened if Gnan had read the letter, and if everything Cirdan knows had been in it.'

'Yes, I had not thought of that. A letter may be lost, or stolen. A council, however, is closed to its invited members. Are you a councillor, or a prince of the halflings, Mr. Fairbairn? You must pardon my asking: I know nothing of your customs.'

'No, Lord. We do not have kings or princes. We have a Thain, and we have mayors and wardens. But we do not train armies or keep any guards, save the shirriffs. I am just a messenger. But I believe Radagast sent the message to our Thain.'

'That is well. I suppose those who desire more information must go to this council at Rhosgobel. Thank goodness it is not too far away. According to the letter, Rhosgobel is almost due east of here, near to the Anduin. Have you been there, Mr. Fairbairn?'

'No, Lord.'

'Then there is nothing more to say, is there? I can only apologize once more for your troubles. I have a gift of parting for you so that you may find your journey to Khazad-dum was not completely without worth.' With that he handed Tomilo a beautiful belt with a small mithril buckle. And hanging from the belt was a short axe, also of mithril. 'May this axe cut you from some tight situations, in future. Use it well. It will cleave wood—and other things—like air, and will never dull or tarnish!

'As for you, Galka, I believe that you are also deserving of some reward. Prince Kithi and I would like you to have this.' King Mithi reached into a bag at his feet and pulled from it a mask—one like to the horrible mask worn by the guards at the gate of the King's Third Hall. Then he waved at an attendant, who approached carrying a long spear. The King took the spear and presented it to Galka. 'You are now truly a King's Man, a guard of the King's own chamber. Your duties begin in a week, Lieutenant Galka. Until then, please act as an escort to Mr. Fairbairn. If he is not in a great hurry to return to his home, you might give him a tour of our halls. We do have other sights worth seeing than the tavern, Mr. Fairbairn.'

The King said this last with no smile at all, but there was a slight twinkle in his eye, nonetheless, and Tomilo couldn't help but laugh. Galka took his spear and the two of them turned and walked back

together down the aisle in high spirits.

And they did begin a tour of Moria at that very moment, a tour that commenced (I am almost afraid to admit) at the tavern, where they nodded again and again, professing an almost artistic admiration for the stout beer in their mugs. The rest of the tour somehow got itself put off for many hours.

The next day, Galka and Tomilo began a tour of the Dwerrowdelf in earnest. They still remembered to eat well and drink deeply along the way, but Tomilo was beginning to feel stronger and he felt somehow guilty spending all day in the tavern. So first thing after breakfast they walked out the West Gate to check on Drabdrab. The dwarves had cut a recess in the hillside some way from the gate: this they used as a manger. It sheltered several ponies. The other beasts were short and shaggy, like the ponies Bilbo and Gandalf and the dwarves had lost in the goblin cave. But Drabdrab stood proudly (if uneasily) among them. He looked quite relieved to see Tomilo, and he swished his tail and shook his head when he recognized the hobbit. Then he commenced to a neighing and a blowing. The short dwarf with the blue hat was also there with the ponies, still sporting hay in his brim. He paused in his mucking duties and addressed the hobbit.

"That one there feared you was as good as gone," he said with a wrinkle of his brow, motioning toward Drabdrab. "Can't say as I had much hope neither, to

disabuse him of the notion. Onc't you was down under, I thought I had a new permanent tenant, and told him so. But he wouldn't believe it: he refused to give up all hope. He's been a waiting as faithful as may be. You look as you might be feeling a bit better, Sir, if you don't mind me saying so. I heard about the whole harum-scarum. It'll be a bit yet, though, I suppose, before we can put you back together as was.'

'Yes, it's true. I can't seem to fill up, Mr... ah Mr...?'

'Ermak. Just Ermak.'

'Yes. Ermak. Well, as I was saying, I can't seem to eat my way out of this dizzy feeling. I mean to keep trying, though—I will tell you that.'

'Keep at 'er, Sir, that's it! Lieutenant Galka will see to it that the tavernkeeper takes care of you.'

Tomilo laughed and shook the groom's hand. Then he reached into his pocket. He had an apple from the tavernkeeper for Drabdrab. The pony took it from Tomilo and made a great mess in disposing of it. He sniffed the hobbit's pockets to see if there were any more.

But Ermak continued, looking at Galka in his new livery, 'How do it feel, Galka my boy, to be a lieutenant? And at your age! I guess I can't be calling you *boy* anymore. You outrank your own dad and granddad, now. You'll make captain sure now.'

Galka blushed. 'I don't know. It just happened. But I get to wear the mask, Ermak, did

you hear?'

'That I did. Don't wear it around here, though. You'll scare the ponies away and I'll have to go a hunting for 'em.'

After leaving Drabdrab and Ermak, Tomilo and Galka walked down the Sirannon to the falls. There, they looked out over the rolling hills of Hollin. The day was clear and sunny, and Tomilo squinted as he studied the distant horizon. Far down below them, beyond many a line of blue-grey hill, he could just see the flash of the little gate stream as it neared the Hoarwell.

The hobbit thought to himself that it felt good to be outside for the first time in a week and a half. He breathed the crisp air of approaching winter and thrilled to the sharp breeze from the north. He wanted to stay in the sun all day, basking under the open sky. But Galka had other plans. They were to ride the mine cart part of the way to the eastside, and then climb from there to the 21st level. At that point they would emerge out of one of the first low peaks of the Misty Mountains, where Galka promised they could see the Hoarwell itself. Tomilo looked forward to the view, but not the climb. He told himself he needed another week of food and drink and rest before he returned to normal.

Just then, as Tomilo took one last look at the sky before they prepared to return to the caves, he saw a black speck against some high gauzy clouds. As he

watched it got nearer. It was a bird flying from the west and making directly for Moria, by all appearances. He pointed it out to the dwarf, and they both watched for many minutes as it flew directly over them and seemed to settle in the mountain crags over Khazad-dum.

"That's right where the look-out is!" cried Galka. "That's right where we're going. It must be a messenger. I wonder what it means?"

'I wager we'll find out soon enough.'

But they didn't find out immediately. The courier of the message (from the bird to the King) passed them in the west mine cart as they went east in the other cart. But since the carts were in different tunnels, they did not know this. When they had finally climbed out on the mountainside, the bird was gone. Only the guard remained, and he would tell them nothing.

This lookout point was not fortified. It was only a low stone parapet and a small tower. And the ledge overhanging the precipices below was shallow. There was room there for less than a dozen to stand. Behind them the peaks continued, up and up. Some still had snow from last winter in small patches. Above the tree line it was bleak and bare. Even a troll would be lonely up there, thought Tomilo. He wondered if any strange creatures of Middle Earth could make a home in such a place. Then he remembered the stone giants from

'There and Back Again.' What sort of giants were they? What did they eat? Did they have children? Did they only throw huge rocks when it was stormy?

Galka interrupted this chain of thought. 'I wonder if that black bird brought another message from Cirdan? It seemed to come from the west.'

'Yes, it was definitely the west. At least by the time we saw it.' But Tomilo could not keep his mind on the bird. His eyes wandered back west, though, to match Galka's. Then he looked down into the vale below them. He could clearly see the line of the Cypress trees. 'Did you tell the King about the creature in the water?' he finally remembered to ask the dwarf.

Galka's attention was pulled from the sky, and he looked at the hobbit. 'Yes. Yes I did. He didn't seem to know about it already. I'm not even sure he believed me. He may have thought I was trying to cover having to kill the guard. He seemed more concerned about the rising water. At least he believed that part.' He paused for a moment. 'Did you say anything about. . . you know?'

'The balrogs? No. I have been so happy to get the message from Radagast delivered and all, I haven't wanted to ruin my welcome again. Besides, I am not so sure what I saw myself. I was in a pretty bad way that day. I suppose I might have been dizzy enough, what with no food and all that climbing, to have started imagining things.'

'I don't know. You were bad, but I can't say if it was from weakness or from fear. I have to admit I thought at first you might be raving. But anyone who told me they had just seen balrogs, I would think was raving. I think you ought to warn King Mithi anyway. If it is true, it is something he needs to know. If it is not true. . . well, you had every right to be delirious that day. And it won't do any harm to be wrong. You'll be home soon, and won't care what we think of you here.'

'Perhaps. But what if I'm right? What will you do? I mean, what will happen to Khazad-dum? Will you all leave again?'

'I don't know. There are a lot of us. Maybe even a balrog would not want to attack an entire dwarf city.'

'I hope you are right. But remember what I told you about the signs of battle. That dwarf army didn't look like it fared too well last time. Is it possible that King Mithi has sent an army down there since the fall of Sauron? Or are those dwarf soldiers from another age?'

'Again, I don't know. There has been no muster in my lifetime. And I know no tales of battle like that in the past three hundred years, since Moria reopened. If those warriors were sent down by King Mithi, it was done secretly.'

'Hmm. I guess I will say something to the King. I have been sitting on it, thinking I might have a flash—you know remember for sure what I saw,

and whether I really saw it. But my mind is still not clear.'

'Well, wait then if you think it will help. But do not wait too long!'

The next day the King called Tomilo into chambers. The hobbit wondered at first if there had been some rumour of the balrogs. But King Mithi had news from the Shire.

'I have had a message from your Thain. From a place called Tuckborough. He desires that you travel on to Rhosgobel as a representative of the halflings. He says there is no time to pick and equip another representative.'

'Oh dear!' cried the hobbit, at first. Then he caught himself and shut his mouth quickly. He realized that was not the proper response. But he could only think that now he was not going to get back to his hole before winter set in. He might not make it back to Farbanks before March or April. It was quite upsetting.

Suddenly he thought of something. 'Did you get the message from a bird?' he asked. 'A large black bird?'

'Yes, I did,' answered the King in some surprise. 'A raven. How did you know that?'

'We were out at the falls when it flew in. We thought it might be coming from Cirdan.'

'No, it was from your own country. I am sorry that this news does not please you, but you should

feel honored to represent your people at this great council. Perhaps you are only concerned that you are not qualified. If so, I will be happy to assist you in any way I may. We will be riding down to Rhosgobel together, at any rate.'

'Yes, thank you, that will be fine,' said the hobbit distractedly. He was still thinking how he could get out of it. 'I wonder why Cirdan didn't send his message with a bird, instead of me?' continued Tomilo, surprised to find that he had said this out loud

'I should think because he found you and Radagast to be more trusty than a bird. Also because the letter you carried, though more important, was not so urgent. We won't be leaving for Rhosgobel for several days yet, you know. The council is on the first day of *quelle*, or, in Steward's Reckoning, *Narquellie* 28*.'

'That makes sense, I suppose,' admitted Tomilo grudgingly. Still, he did not like thinking he was only a useful substitute for a raven. He was regretting again that he had ever agreed to leave Farbanks. Not for the last time!

*October 29. For Tomilo it would have been Shire Reckoning Winterfilth 28. But all hobbits were by that time taught the Westron months as well their own. The calendars were similar enough that the math was easy: even the least clever hobbit was never more than a day off (the first three months and the

last three had the same days, so those were the easiest).

The dwarves used the Westron calendar—at least when dealing with outsiders. King Mithi gives the elven date first because he is speaking of the letter from Cirdan. He converts to Steward's Reckoning rather than New Reckoning, since the New Reckoning had been rescinded by Eldarion in Fourth Age 196. March 25th (the fall of Sauron) was kept as a special holiday—it became the extra day *tuilere*. And Frodo's birthday (September the 22nd) was celebrated on *yaviere* (the day after 30 September). But the people who relied on the new calendar—mainly Men and Dwarves—did not like having their mid-year holiday in late September. They fondly remembered all the mid-year celebrations of High Summer, when the weather was at its warmest and merriest. Under popular pressure, the King found it easiest to simply return to the calendar of Mardil.

'Does it snow much here at the base of the mountains—in winter I mean—or only up in the higher elevations?' asked the hobbit, still trying to think of a way to get back home before spring.

'It snows down here, too. Though not as much. Still, we get many feet, and may be snowed in for weeks at a time.'

The hobbit groaned. By the time he got back to Farbanks there would be foxes living in his

hole! There would be rabbits in the pantry. His garden would be gone completely to seed and weed.



Chapter 6



Meonas and Phloriel

It was now several days after Tomilo's meeting with the King, and preparations were in full swing for the short ride to Rhosgobel. A small group of dwarves had arrived the evening before from the Glittering Caves, including Gnadri, nephew of Glindri, King of the Mirrors. Several other important-looking dwarves were also among the host. All in all, the dwarves of the Glittering Caves seemed to Tomilo to be more richly encrusted with jewels, and less richly adorned with mithril, than the nobility of Moria. They shone out perhaps a bit more brilliantly, but somehow never managed the prestige and

bearing of the dwarves of Khazad-dum.

Galka had been chosen to walk as a King's Guard in the escort to Rhosgobel. Tomilo suspected he was also chosen to act as a friend and guide for the hobbit. He hoped Galka would be far enough away from the King to talk a bit on the way. The hobbit had been feeling somewhat glum since his interview with the King, and did not look forward to a procession of much ceremony and pomp. He was more than ready to get out of the caves for a while—to walk out in the fresh air—but he couldn't imagine what purpose he would have at a council of the wise. He hoped he would just be expected to listen and take notes for the Thain. He had no idea what he would say if anyone asked him anything. He would probably spill his water or scrape his chair, or faint altogether. Now he began to understand how Radagast must feel. A little hobbit in a soiled weskit at a table of worthies from Rivendell and Minas Mallor and Lothlorien. Preposterous!

Tomilo had already polished Drabdrab's saddle and strapped his beautiful new axe on the outside of his packs for all to see (besides, it was too heavy to wear on the belt). It was his only adornment in a company of glittering and armoured travellers. Galka had his mask and his spear and all his dwarvish regalia. He looked quite heavy. But Tomilo supposed that dwarves didn't really mind all that weight. They seemed constitutionally fit for great burdens. The other ponies had been likewise

burdened with dwarvish provender and excess weaponry; but all the dwarves themselves would walk. It was a march of only three days, and no dwarf would think of riding such a short distance, not even on a pony. Tomilo was therefore the only rider. This had the benefit of making him somewhat taller, but it also set him apart even further. He felt his oddness sorely.

Not sorely enough, it is worth adding, to walk. No, he had had enough of that, climbing about in the caves—fleeing guards and balrogs and whatnot. Besides, he still felt tired. The effects of the nine days in the cell, and the lack of food, and the fever, had not left him entirely even now. It is true, Galka had continued to see to his nourishment in the preceding days. He had lacked for nothing. He had eaten and drank and smoked to his heart's content. And yet he still was not back to his old self. He was thinner and gloomier and crosser. His experiences in the depths still weighed on his mind and made it difficult to achieve a full recovery. He considered that he might never fully recover from such shocks. That is, he might never be exactly the same hobbit he had been back in his garden weeks ago, when Radagast rode up. At other times (usually after a pint or two) he thought, Yes, well, but give him another week of food and rest: he might not be the same, but he would be as strong. Or stronger!

Tomilo and Drabdrab left from the West Gate with a small company of dwarves and all the pack ponies. They were to ride over the Redhorn Gate and meet the remaining travellers at Mirrormere. The King and all the important dwarves who were going to Rhosgobel were of course leaving from the East Gate. The ponies could not go through the caves, though, and so were to be taken over the pass. Galka would not accompany Tomilo on this short trip. He was busy learning his new duties, and was required to stay close to the King.

Ermak, however, did go along with Tomilo and the ponies. The little company found the pass invigorating but not at all dangerous. The air was cold—Tomilo got his heavy cloak out of his pack for the first time—but the bad winter weather was still weeks away. Or so the hobbit hoped. He would need to return over this pass on his way back to Farbanks after the council.

A couple of days later, the group descended the Dimrill Stair into the Dimrill Dale and left the triple peaks behind them. Tomilo had found Redhorn, Silvertine and Cloudyhead to be majestic and beautiful; but he remembered the Nine Walkers troubles there and was glad to be past them without incident. The company from the East Gate was already waiting beside the beautiful lake, and Tomilo saw the reflection of each and every dwarf perfectly mirrored in the still waters as he rode down the last

slope.

The number of travellers had been kept small. Only three were invited to the council proper: one representative each from Moria and the Glittering Caves and the Shire. That would be King Mithi and Prince Gnadri and Tomilo. The others were only attendants and guards. Since there was no enemy, the guards were really only for show. Tomilo counted about twenty in the King's retinue, and there were another eight from the West Gate. A rather large party, really, for a council; but it was the custom of the dwarves to protect a king—even in a short peaceful jaunt like this one. Besides, the council was an announcement of bad news. Who knew what that meant.

The hobbit only had time to find and quickly greet Galga before the dwarves were off again. They kept to the main road for about half an hour, marching almost due east. At that time the road split, one fork going toward Lothlorien and the other northeast. This northeast leg was fairly well-travelled, being the beginning of the route between Moria and Erebor. About ten leagues further on it turned due north and headed for the Gladden Bridge. From there it continued north all the way to the Old Forest Road (which was now the New Forest Road, open and maintained year-round) and beyond.

The present party had been instructed, however, to leave the road soon after it turned north, and to

instead bear east, toward the Anduin. If everything went according to plan, an eight-hour march from there would bring them to Rhosgobel.

Two long uneventful days passed as the company made their way across the wide lands between the mountains and the river. Rolling hills were interspersed with lightly wooded areas, hugging the fertile valleys. Many little nameless streams wiggled and wagged their way down to the Anduin, and the road hopped over them in countless little bridges of stone.

They had been walking all day (or riding, in Tomilo's case), and now were preparing to stop and make camp. They were near the turn-off for Rhosgobel and had planned to make that their camp for the night. But before the King's sentinel could call out the signal to halt, the company heard a sound coming up from behind. All turned to see who was following them. What they had heard was the sound of bells tinkling and of song. So no one was surprised when they saw that they were being shadowed by the council invitees from Lothlorien. Many were on great white horses hung with rich fabrics. Others walked, playing strange and lovely instruments. These instruments accompanied the song, which was, of course, the song the high elves have always sung at moonrise ever since the Noldor left Eldamar and the beautiful Queen of the Valar.

*A Elbereth Gilthoniel,
silivren penna miriel
o menel aglar elenath!
Na-chaered palan-direl
o galadhbremmin ennorath,
Fanuilos, le linnathon
nef aear, si nef aearon!(1)*

The reason this contingent of elves from Lothlorien was singing a song of the Undying Lands (despite the fact that none now left in Lothlorien had seen those lands) is that they were led by their lord Meonas—one of the last of the Noldor remaining in Middle Earth.

Meonas has not come into the earlier tales of Lothlorien, or indeed into any of the tales of heroism of Middle Earth.(2) He had been a counsellor of Lord Celeborn and the Lady Galadriel during their long reign in Lothlorien. But despite his rank, he was never a prominent leader of the elves during the Second or Third Ages, due in part to a long-standing grievance between himself and Lord Celeborn. This grievance concerned the love Meonas had borne for the Lady Galadriel since he first saw her in Hollin (in the time when his cousin Celebrimbor yet lived, and before the forging of the rings).

Meonas had left Hollin to follow Galadriel over

the mountains to Lothlorien, although she was already at that time wed to Celeborn of Doriath. He had said then, even to himself, that the move to the Golden Wood was due only to discontent with Hollin, and its growing tension. But in the long years in Lothlorien this love could not forever remain hidden. Not from himself; and not—as it came to pass—from Galadriel and Celeborn. It was not the Golden Wood he loved, but the Golden Lady.

(1)Oh Varda, Star-kindler,/your silver light falls like jewels/
from the glorious heavens!/
Seeing your remote beauty/
from my tree-woven land,/I sing to thee,
Snow-maiden,/from afar, the far side of the Ocean!

(2)The following story has been added by the editor from another (elvish) source in the Farbanks Folios. It was felt that this information was necessary to a contemporary reader's understanding of the narrative.

Meonas was the second son of Meomir, son of Caranthir. This made him the great grandson of Feanor. Meomir was killed in the attack on Menegroth with his father and two uncles*, but Meonas was at that time still a child and took no part in the assault. After the battle he and his elder brother were taken by their mother to the birchwoods of Nimbrethil in Arvernien to live with

the other remnants of the house of Feanor, including Celebrimbor. Meonas became one of the followers of Celebrimbor to the Misty Mountains in SA750, when mithril was discovered in Moria. He was a central figure in the establishment and building of Ost-in-Edhil—the beautiful elvish city of Eregion—although his quiet acts of administration do not come into any of the great tales of the Second Age. He had already long tired of the squabbling between elf and dwarf even before the meddling of Sauron; and when Galadriel and Celeborn arrived some time later from Lake Nenuial he was immediately drawn to their calm prestige. Early on he gave way to them politically—which was in part to blame for the strife that followed. Being accustomed to leading, the Lord and Lady gathered many followers in Hollin in addition to Meonas. But Celebrimbor (and behind him, Sauron) did not divest power willingly. With the help of the enmity of the dwarves—who had ever hated, and been hated by, Celeborn)—Celebrimbor and Sauron finally managed to drive Celeborn and Galadriel from Hollin. They departed in about SA1350 and removed to Lorien, where they had already prepared a welcome for themselves and their followers. As I have said, one of these followers was Meonas.

Meonas was both welcome and unwelcome in Lorien. As a ranking member of the house of Finwe, and as a powerful elf of long-standing, he could not

well be refused a place in the government of that region. He had also been

*Celegorm and Curufin. The Sons of Feanor sought the Silmaril from Dior. The escape of Elwing foiled them.

loyal to the Lord and Lady, and was an able administrator, with much experience. But being of the line of Feanor he was yet anathema both to the line of Finarfin (Galadriel) and to the line of Elwe and Dior (Celeborn). To Celeborn the memory of the assault of Meonas' father and grandfather upon Doriath, and the slaying of Dior Eluchil and Nimloth, and the abduction and starving of their young sons Elured and Elurin, was still fresh. For Galadriel, the burning of the ships by Feanor at Losgar, the betrayal of Finrod and Orodreth (her brothers) at Nargothrond by the sons of Feanor, and the attack upon the Havens* could never be forgotten. Meonas therefore carried a heavy burden. The oaths of the seven sons of Feanor, and of Feanor himself, followed him still. The Silmarils were no more, it was thought, but the evil they had wrought remained even in the Fourth Age.

But in the Second Age, during the flowering of Lothlorien, this burden was fresher still. Celeborn hated the sight of Meonas, even before the rumour of his secret love for the Lady Galadriel came finally to his ears. If not for the pity and wisdom of

Galadriel a civil war might have erupted; for the Lady perceived that Meonas was well-liked by the people. Indeed, half the elves in Lorien loved the Lady of the Goldenhair, and they scorned not the blameless Meonas. In his love, Meonas was not their rival or enemy, he was their representative. He was the secret standard bearer of hopeless passion. Galadriel understood this in her way. She also understood that the passion of Meonas was something that could be controlled—at least by her. He had made no advances, had shown his feelings in no way (save in loyalty and good deed). Celeborn was asked to ignore the rumours, or take them in stride. This he did for many years.

But when Galadriel left Lorien after the downfall of Sauron, Celeborn decided to leave also. He did not, however, go with her across the sea. It may be that there was more to this separation than his desire to remain in Middle Earth. There was no ban on Celeborn. He certainly might have gone with Galadriel. The invitation to Eldamar was not just for High Elves, but for all elves who tired of an earthly existence. And why, even admitting that he simply was not tired of his existence, did he not stay in Lothlorien—a place where he had ruled for an age and a half? A place where he could expect to remain Lord for as long as he liked? Why go to Imladris, where he would be second to Glorfindel?

The answer to all these questions can be found in Meonas. Celeborn may have felt that Meonas had

driven a wedge between Galadriel and him; and now that the Lady was gone, and he himself alone, the Lord felt this bitterness sorely. Once: because Galadriel had left without him. Twice:

*The sons of Feanor (this time Amrod and Amras, Maglor and Maedhros) again sought the Silmaril. They were again foiled by Elwing.

because his rival remained to gall him. Now he and Meonas were alike—they both must live without the great love of their lives. This likeness to his enemy became too much for Celeborn. Also, he watched the popularity of Meonas wax as his waned. Much of Celeborn's power had been tied to Galadriel. Without her, he could not keep the hearts of his own people.

For Celeborn had always been difficult. He suffered from an excessive pride. This pride had at first attracted Galadriel, who was likewise proud and ambitious. Also, Celeborn was very handsome: dark and mysterious—so different from the golden winning ways of the house of Finarfin. Celeborn's raven hair (in the early years) and dark grey eyes had fascinated Galadriel from the beginning. But as the years and centuries passed, disharmony had grown between them. Not only the disharmony of Meonas and the love of a thousand strangers for the beautiful Golden Lady of the Wood. But the disharmony of characters wholly unlike—characters which mitigated

the shortcomings of the other, but which did not grow more harmonious with time.

Just the opposite, in fact. Look at their dealings with the Eight Walkers who came to Lothlorien after the fall of Gandalf in Moria. Celeborn was impatient and quick to judge, and his hatred for the dwarves had not cooled in a thousand years. Gimli was blindfolded at his insistence, despite the assurances of Galadriel. And the dwarf must face his temper even so. The Lady, however, was icily circumspect; kind but distant. She was tempted by the ring. Her ambition desired it, and she was sorely tested. So much so that she admitted this to Frodo. Frodo, though, was not yet wise enough to see how strange this was. Elrond had not been so tempted by the ring. Nor Gandalf. For evil has no charm except for evil. This is how it snared Saruman. But how could it tempt one so beautiful and pure as Galadriel?

We are off the subject, however. Galadriel had proved herself. At the end she was no longer the rash young granddaughter of Fingolfin who could defy the Valar and look upon the Kinslaying at Alqualonde with equanimity. She had earned the lifting of her ban from the West, and had returned in peace.

Celeborn, however, had perhaps not yet met his final temptation. He had grown older but not wiser. His pride had not been tempered by defeat and by true heroism—as had Elrond's, for instance. He had remained mostly an observer in

the wars of the First Age. Nor had he a primary part in the battles of the Second Age. If he was standing by at the fall of Gil-galad and Elendil in Mordor, no tales tell of it. And in the Third Age he had enjoyed the safety of impenetrable Lothlorien.

So Celeborn had taken his bitterness and his pride to Imladris—where these continued to fester under the lordship of Glorfindel. But Meonas became the Lord of Lothlorien. Without the unrequited love of Galadriel to tie him down, Meonas had finally come into his own. Always popular for his quiet dignity and long-suffering ways, he was now also powerful. No one of a rival nobility remained to challenge him.

This change in circumstance had wrought an even greater change in Meonas. His confidence swelled, and with it his pride. Until then, all the slights he had suffered due to his ancestry—all the times he had been passed over for consideration—he had suffered in silence. But these slights had not been forgotten. They had festered for countless years. Outwardly Meonas—seemingly humbled by his love for Galadriel—had taken no offense. Inwardly he was only biding his time. He had never yet schemed: Galadriel had always kept him from mischief, both explicit and implicit. But now he was free to let his secondary passions—the ones that love had kept in check—take the stage. He remembered how he, a Noldorin Prince, a great grandson of Feanor, had been relegated to being a

feckless counsellor to Celeborn—Celeborn, a dark elf, a lowly kinsman of Thingol, an elf who himself had lived in a cave! Now that Galadriel was gone, Meonas could admit that he hated Celeborn. Aye, even more than Celeborn hated him. For Celeborn at least had had the solace of the Lady's love. What did Meonas have? Until now, nothing.

But now he was the Lord of Lothlorien! He was one of the three most powerful elves in Middle Earth—the leader of the largest remaining elvish enclave anywhere. And he was free to admit to himself that he had taken it poorly when the rings of power had been dealt out to lesser elves. Galadriel and the ring *Nenya* he could understand. Galadriel was much older than him—though she did come from the third house of *Finwe*. And Gandalf (having the ring *Narya*) was tolerable: certainly much to be preferred to *Cirdan*—another dark elf of low blood. Gandalf was a *Maia*, and fully capable of wielding a ring of power. But Elrond? A half-elf descended from that debased house of *Tinuviel*! Meonas should have been chosen as the High King of the *Noldor* and Leader of the *Quendi* at the death of *Gil-galad*, instead of this upstart herald. His only solace was that the Elvish house of Elrond had finally ended: all of Elrond's children had chosen to be pathetic mortals and were now dead.

Worse was yet to come, though. For the *Valar* had refused to allow the rings to come ashore at *Alqualonde*; they had returned the Three to

Cirdan. The fool had doled them out as indiscriminately as before. The mighty blue ring Vilya had been given to Glorfindel. Glorfindel was a Prince of the Noldor, but lacked the lineage of Meonas. Gil-galad's only daughter had married a silvan elf of Ossiriand, and their second daughter had married a great-grandson of Aegnor. These were the parents of Glorfindel. But there was silvan blood on the father's side, too. Glorfindel's maternal grandmother was the granddaughter of Beleg Strongbow. A famous lineage, surely, but Beleg, too, was but a dark elf.

If that wasn't bad enough, Narya, the ring of fire, had been given to Erebor. Even Celeborn had found this difficult to stomach. Erebor had been born in the Second Age. He was a Noldo due to his descent from Orodreth. After Gwindor was lost to Morgoth, and before the arrival of Turin Turambar, Finduilas bore an illegitimate child. The father of this child was rumoured to be one of the sons of Curufin and Celegorm who had remained in Nargothrond after the brothers were expelled. It is not known who exactly was the father, except that it is assumed that it was not Celebrimbor. This maid child was taken to Eglarest after the battle of Tumladen (and the kidnapping and murder of Finduilas). There she grew to maidenhood and married a silvan elf fleeing the ruin of Doriath. Several generations later, Erebor was born in Lindon, again to mixed parentage. He spent time

with both Cirdan and Elrond, finally settling in Imladris after the Last Alliance. There he became one of the chief counsellors of Elrond. Only Gildor Inglorion and Glorfindel claimed precedence over Erester in Rivendell. But Gildor had passed over the sea with Elrond and Galadriel. When Glorfindel had become Lord of Imladris, Erester moved to the Havens of Belfalas, taking with him a small number of elves from Imladris. They were joined there by a sizable contingent from Mirkwood: wood-elves who had been fired by the stories of Legolas and wished to live by the sea.

But the final blow to Meonas' pride came when Cirdan gave Ninya to Nerien, daughter of Galdor of the Havens. Cirdan had done this at the request of Galadriel herself. But Meonas did not know this. He only knew that he had once again been passed over. Passed over for a elf girl born after the Fall of Numenor! A girl having no high-elven ancestry. A girl of lesser lineage and age than Arwen Evenstar.

The dispensation of the rings was of course supposed to be a secret. Only perhaps a dozen elves in Middle Earth knew that they had returned. But because of his position, Meonas was one of this small number (Thranduil also knew, for instance; and of course Galdor). Galadriel had sent warnings from Eldamar with the rings, cautioning Cirdan of what Meonas might be capable of. But Cirdan had not been active in the politics of Middle Earth since his

presentation of Narya to Gandalf. And no one had ever heard a bad word of Meonas, the warnings of Galadriel notwithstanding. Cirdan did not see how the entire realm of Lothlorien, the largest host of elves in Middle Earth, could be kept wholly ignorant of so important a decision as the refusal of Manwe and Varda to allow the rings across the sea. If the Lord of Lothlorien was apprised of that fact, he must needs be apprised of their present bearers. Meonas, he thought, must be trusted until he prove himself untrustworthy. The peace of the Fourth Age could not proceed under a cloud of suspicion. Especially of elf by elf.

This is how things stood as Meonas' retinue approached the bevy of dwarves at twilight on the road to Rhosgobel. The elves stopped their merrymaking and made proper greetings to the travellers from Khazad-dum. There was no ill-will between the two parties. The elves of Lothlorien were on good terms with the dwarves, and had been for over a century. Meonas, remember, was the grandson of Caranthir, who had been friendly with the dwarves of Nogrod and Belegost. The Noldor, and especially the house of Feanor, had always paid a grudging respect to the dwarves. They were also keen enough to see the benefits (to themselves) of an elf/dwarf alliance. Meonas had led the way in re-establishing the good relations the two peoples had enjoyed in Eregion. The current compromise was in

fact very similar to the one begun by Celebrimbor two ages ago, save that now the elves lived on the east side of the Misty Mountains rather than the west.

Tomilo and Galka both looked on in awe as Meonas embraced King Mithi and the two parties joined together without incident or ill-feeling. The elves invited the dwarves to join them in an evening feast, a feast as only the elves could manage it. There would be singing and dancing and piping and harping and storytelling and food beyond the description of mortal tongue. The elves led them off the road into a small copse of beech trees. It was just large enough to act as a tent for the merriment. The elves hung lanterns and faery torches with lights of gold and silver from the boughs, and then unlade their horses of plate and cup and all manner of provision. There were sweet airy cakes made of honey and soft magic. There were ripe berries and subtle cheeses. Flavorful meats were heaped upon the fires to roast as the company drank a light elvish mead, transparent as winter ice and scented like a summer meadow of wildflowers. Seats appeared—as if just by wishing—moss-covered logs and tuffets and rocks perfectly concave for sitting.

Tomilo blinked a couple of times to wash away the dream-feeling that seemed to be before his eyes like a mist. But it was to no avail. He looked through the mist at Galka and the other

dwarves. They, too, seemed to be dazzled by all around them. The dwarves (except perhaps the King) were as amazed as Tomilo because, like him, none of them had ever seen an elf. The two kingdoms lived in close proximity, and had been trading now for many years. But the elves did not care for the caves of Khazad-dum, and the dwarves were not ones to go willingly into any forest. So only a few guards at the East Gate had dealt with messengers from the Golden Wood. And only a few team drivers had been to the borders of Lorien to make various deliveries, or to haul off supplies of dead wood for the fires of Moria. The vast majority of those living in the caves of Khazad-dum had never seen an elf despite living within a day's march of thousands. So that those living and working near the West Gate, like Kavan, might come to believe that elves were no better than storybook characters. Fictional explanations of the source of firewood or of fantastic birthday presents.

As the fire burned mysteriously in the midst of the camp, sending its coloured smokes up through the canopy, an elf-maiden—looking to Tomilo to be not yet out of her tweens—approached, offering the hobbit a cup of mead and a plate of autumn strawberries. Then she sat on the log beside him. Galka leant forward to stare at her across Tomilo's meal; and the elf maiden catching him at it, laughed.

'Your friend has strange manners, to my eyes,' she said to the hobbit. And then to Galka, 'Have I lost a button on my dress, Sir Dwarf?'

'No ma'am! I apologize, I surely do,' answered Galka, blushing. He looked quickly at Tomilo for help, but the hobbit was now staring at the elf maiden, too, and he was worse than useless.

'I don't know what came over me,' continued the dwarf. He straightened his mail and pushed his hood back into a proper point. Then he looked down at his boots. 'I haven't ever seen someone so beautiful, is all. I was looking at the colour of your hair. No dwarf ever had hair that colour, and I was kind of mesmerized by it, and well, the torches and the singing and everything. I hope you won't think I'm a fool.'

'No, my good dwarf. Your pleasant words have earned your forgiveness, impertinent though they might seem to an elf of greater seriousness. I am not so stern as all that, though. I was afraid I was staring at you two as well, and might be about to be accused of impertinence myself. I haven't seen a halfling in a very long time, and then only once. Though I have read about them, of course. And I did not know that halflings and dwarves rode together as friends. Is this common on the west side of the mountains?'

'Not at all common,' answered Tomilo. 'I only arrived at Moria a fortnight ago. Before that I had never seen a dwarf in all my life—except once. And I never saw an elf at all until tonight'

'Well.... your life is changing fast, is it not? I do hope for the better? Are elves as you imagined? Do we look in life as we did in your imagination, I wonder?'

'I don't know how to put it, Lady... um, Lady....'

'Pfloriel,' she said. 'You pronounce the first syllable like "flower," but start with the lips closed, like this.' She showed them how to shape the strange consonant correctly. When she did it, it looked like a little kiss. Galka always remembered her name as a flower begun with a kiss.

Once the three of them had gotten past the little game of pronouncing her name, Tomilo continued. 'Where was I? Oh, yes. I think the way I should put it is that you seem even more imaginary sitting there before me than you did in the books. In the books I could get some kind of hold on you. . . elves, I mean. But here before my eyes you are more like dragonflies, or like mosquitoes (if you'll forgive the comparison). They always move just before you can get a good look at them, flying away in the opposite direction you expected. It isn't a very good description, I know, but I haven't had much time to think it through, yet. My head isn't working too well right now, if you know what I mean.'

'I think I do,' Pfloriel answered, smiling. 'And what of you, Galka? Are elves as strange to dwarves as to halflings?'

'The strangest thing is how you know our names without being told. How is that? Is it magic?'

'No, no, not magic. We simply listen very well. We hear all those around us speaking, even those far away, and we notice words of address. We heard all that your company had to say, for many miles back. And we remembered it, each of us, even as we conversed with one another. It is our way.'

'That explains many things. We had best speak in signs from now on, Tomilo, if we want to keep our conversations, and our identities, to ourselves.'

'That would not help you. Our eyes are even keener than our ears. And we are very clever at decoding signs. The wise resort to speaking only with their eyes if they happen to be near elves, and if they have this talent. But even eyes may be read, and the wisest keep their inmost thoughts to themselves, or converse with their allies only within walls. But Galka, again, what is your opinion of elves, if it is not too private a matter to speak of?'

'I think you are very strange. I do not know what to think.'

'That is honest, at least. And does our beauty suffer for the strangeness, do you think? Has my hair dulled in the past few minutes, in dwarvish eyes?'

'Not at all, Pfloriel. It is as rich as ever. What colour is it, by the way? Is it red or blond? Or light brown? It seems to change with a turn of your head.'

'In Lothlorien we call it *rhesseme*. It is the colour of a kind of grass in the autumn. I do not know if you have this grass in Moria. Or outside Moria. It would certainly not grow in the caves. We do not

call it red. Red hair we name *rhodisseme*, after the leaves of the maple before they fall. We do not have the maple in Lothlorien, but it grows across the river in Greenwood, especially farther north. Very very few elves have hair that is *rhesseme*, and even fewer have hair that is *rhodisseme*. It is more common with the Rohirrim and the men in the far north. For this reason it is thought by some that any elves who do not have black hair or golden hair must have an ancestor who is a mortal. I do not believe this, however.'

'It is wavy like a hobbit's hair, but I do not think you have any hobbit ancestors,' joked Tomilo.

'Do halfling's have hair that is *rhesseme*, Tomilo?,' Pfloriel asked, suddenly quite serious. 'Or grass of that colour?'

'The colour of your hair, you mean? Maybe. It is hard to say in the torchlight. Your hair may look redder than it is. I will consider it again in the morning. But I would say now that your hair looks about the colour of what we call foxhale—because foxes like to stop there and hide, you know. It grows quite tall, almost as tall as me. In the summer it seeds out at the top, soft and frondy. But in the winter it is like straw at sunset. Like the mane of a chestnut mare in the midday sun. Some hobbits have hair almost this colour. Never as long as yours, of course, and not likely as rich. But certainly curlier.'

At that point a tall black-haired elf pulled Pfloriel

away from her new friends. Apparently her flute was needed for a song by the fire. Tomilo and Galka finished eating and prepared to listen to the entertainment. The song was a long wavering one, with the flute and a harp leading the words in lovely patterns. The patterns were all the more lovely, and noticeable, since neither the hobbit nor the dwarf could understand the words. The song was in Sindarin, and so gave the friends only the faintest hints of trees and of the sea and of the winds blowing clouds across the moon. Galka and Tomilo's heads began to nod as they pictured a ship sailing under a dim sky, the foam cresting on the prow shaped like a great swan. As the ship flew across the calm water and a distant shore came in sight through the mists, they fell asleep upon each other's shoulders.

The next morning they awoke very early. The sun had not yet cleared the trees in the East, but the dwarves were already preparing their packs. The elves were bright eyed and yet singing, as if they had not slept at all. Their instruments were still at hand and the torches were still lit. The moon shared the sky with the rising sun, and the elves left its charms slowly and with regret.

At last the combined groups departed, travelling at a leisurely pace and speaking little. Before noon they reached the turning. They left the road and made due-east. There was a horse path, narrow and

overgrown, save that there were signs of recent travel: broken twigs, crushed grass, and fresh hoof-prints in the dirt. Galka pointed out these telltales to Tomilo as they passed; there was no doubt they were on the road to Rhosgobel. And there was no doubt that they would not be the first to arrive.

A message was passed back from the front: they expected to reach Rhosgobel within an hour after sunset. Tomilo and Galka found this cheering. The road was now moving through empty fields and tall waving grasses, and there was nothing to do but talk. They had remet Phloriel that morning, and they had continued to converse with her on the road. But mostly she was preoccupied with the other elves, and Galka and Tomilo were left to fend for their own entertainment. About an hour before sunset she returned. She said she had been speaking with the Lord Meonas. Meonas had told her that Tomilo looked much like the ringbearer Frodo, but she had answered the Lord that he had a poor memory. According to her, Tomilo looked more like Pippin, except that Tomilo was older and so a bit heavier. Then she corrected herself. Of course, she said, she was speaking of Peregrin Took as he had been in Lorien, before the meeting with Treebeard. She had not seen him after that, but she had heard that he had grown tall and hale on the draughts of the ents.

Tomilo stood dumbfounded, and then said, 'But that was over three centuries ago. You could not have seen Frodo or

Pippin. You are younger than I am!

'Not unless you are more than fourteen centuries old, Mr. Fairbairn. I am a young elf. But even an elf child is ancient by your reckoning.'

'I'm sorry, Pfloriel, I just can't get used to it all,' said Tomilo, still wide-eyed and shaking his head. 'I had it to mind that you were about eighteen. And here you are fourteen hundred! It does take some believing.' He paused, and then he turned to Galka as if he had just thought of something. 'Galka, I have been thinking you were younger than me, too. Don't tell me you are hundreds of years old as well!'

'No, Tomilo, not hundreds. But I think I am likely older than you. Dwarves are mortals, like men and hobbits, but we live longer than most. Only the ancient Numenoreans were as long-lived as us. I am seventy-one, by the Westron tale of years.'

'Twice as old as me! Goodness! Who would have thought it? You seem just a boy.'

'Yes, I am just out of my "boyhood," by dwarvish reckoning. But already a lieutenant, remember! I can have you arrested and forced to study the longevity charts, if you don't pay the proper respects,' Galka finished with a nudge and a laugh.

'You seem very merry for a dwarf, Galka,' interrupted Pfloriel. 'We are taught that all dwarves are serious and gloomy, trudging through the deep passages, pulling on their beards. I see that it is not so.'

'No, some of us laugh and play, especially the "boys." But mature dwarves are expected to have a more serious mien. I am learning this with difficulty, though, and it has gotten me into trouble many times. King Mithi scolded me three days ago, just before we left. He warned that a King's Guard must show the proper face. It would not be right for a guard wearing the mask to laugh through the face of terror. I suppose if I am ever really in battle, I will not feel like

laughing.'

'The elves laugh, even in battle,' replied Pfloriel. 'The most fearsome warriors can laugh in the face of *any* enemy. The Noldor would say "laughing, I die!" Imagine how it must be to face someone who shows so little fear. Even the greatest servants of the Enemy must have been cowed by such confidence, and such recklessness.'

'Yes,' agreed Tomilo. 'I am glad to be on the side of the elves, regardless. Whether they laugh or sing at the enemies, or only shoot their arrows from behind high walls. But I do not think I could laugh in the face of any enemy. Even a small orc would shut my mouth immediately, I imagine.'

'You now have an axe that would hew any orc neck, my friend,' reminded Galka.

'I know it, and I am grateful. But I hope to have to use it only on firewood. And I hope the orcs keep their own necks to themselves!'

'I hope so, too, my dear hobbit. But a guard—or even a messenger—never knows. It is best to steel ones nerves for any occasion. If I were you I would swing that axe a few times in practice. Once your arms have become used to the weight of the weapon, the foe will not seem so strange or so unwonted.'

'Galka speaks like one who will make a fine warrior,' said Pfloriel. 'And his advice is good. Even in times of peace, weapons should not be allowed to become rusty, or the sinews in the arms allowed to become slack.'

Tomilo again looked at Pfloriel in surprise. He did not expect such sentiments from an elf-maiden. It seemed that everyone in Middle Earth was made of sterner stuff than him.

Then again, who knew how stern he might be in a pinch? He had acted the fool with Captain Gnan, it is true. But he had not been cowardly—just rash. And, yes, he had fled in fear from the balrogs. But perhaps even the bravest warrior would have done the same. Not even a wizard or an elf prince would have stood confidently and waited for

the balrogs to awaken.

Tomilo continued to walk alongside Pfloriel and Galka, but the three had fallen into silence. It was now after sunset and they were nearing the end of their journey. Each looked ahead to the vanguard, listening intently now for a call or the sound of a horn. But none came. Only the continued ringing of the saddle bells of the elf horses and the heavy fall of many dwarf boots.

Tomilo momentarily sunk into his own thoughts once more. Balrogs. What of the balrogs? Had he seen what he thought he had seen? Was his mind clearing? Had he come to a decision? He had not told King Mithi anything: the preparations for the council had left him no time for consideration or for discussion. But he must do something. Either decide that he had not been in his right mind and forget about it. Or tell someone.

Tomilo had still not arrived at an answer when the sliver moon began to rise up above the Misty Mountains that evening. And he had still not done so when the company came into a blue-grey clearing and the elves in front espied a house at the far end, backed up against a line of shadowy trees.

In the distance a dog barked. Then several geese broke into a chorus of honking. Suddenly a snowy owl flew low over the heads of the company and then turned back to the house, moving on silent wings. A clear note rang out through the evening air—a high horn from the house of Radagast—and it was answered by a peal from the elves, even higher and sweeter. They had arrived at Rhosgobel.



Chapter 7



The Council of Rhosgobel

The sun stood just above the peak of Caradhras. Its red light reflected keenly from the snows that already covered the arms of the Redhorn and the adjacent crags of the Misty Mountains. A few high-flying birds, like shining specks against the sky, were making their way south through the passes, honking and calling out to each other to stay in formation. From a distance they looked like they might be the first stars in the west, flickering into the evening sky.

Some twenty leagues east of the mountains, in the vale of the Anduin, this red light and those starry moving shapes met the eyes of many guests gathered for a council. Turning south, these same eyes might

just discern the outlying trees of Lothlorien. Those eyes looking east might see the eaves of a forest much larger and darker: Mirkwood, now renamed Eryn Lasgalen—the Forest of Greenleaves. In the uttermost distance, to the southeast, the keenest elven eyes might pick out a hazy tower on a hill, raising its head above the inky trees. This was the deserted ruin of Dol Guldur. Reclaimed but not yet reinhabited by the wood-elves.

A great council table of aged oak had been set out of doors, though it was already dusk of a late November day. Candles and torches innumerable lit the dais and the surrounding area. Indeed, the day being clear and brisk, but not yet cold, the only inconvenience concerned the moths, which, being partial to the flames, fluttered and worried the guests as they waited for Radagast to commence.

Radagast's house at Rhosgobel was in many respects as Beorn's has been described by Bilbo in 'There and Back Again.' This is not to be wondered at, since the Beornings had had a hand in building it, many years hence when Radagast first settled in the valley. It was all of hewn wood, taken from trees of great girth that had been felled by huge men in places unknown even to the wise. There were few rooms in the dwelling, but what rooms as existed were expansive—high of ceiling and extraordinarily well-aired. The house was completely unadorned, save for a few carven animal images on the various mantels, and a variety of devices of wood and leather

hanging about on the walls—devices that might at first have been taken for decoration by the uninitiate.

Rhosgobel's outbuildings were also prominent and they played a primary role in the daily living there. For Radagast had an even more extensive and exotic list of animals in residence than Beorn himself. To house all these fine creatures there were numerous barns and dovecotes and open aviaries and the like, and also a well-stocked pond. As for the animals themselves, there were horses, to be sure. And goats and sheep with weirdly curving horns. And donkeys with black noses and asses with dun noses and mules with grey noses. There were several kinds of cattle, some short and white with long coarse curly hair, some tall and black with sweptback horns and hair as soft as eiderdown. Others had rust-red coats and white feet and faces. And still others had horns five cubits across and shoulders strangely humped.

The most ubiquitous of Radagast's many co-lodgers, though, were the birds. Ravens and thrushes, pigeons and doves, falcons, osprey, kites, hawks, and eagles. There were geese on the front lawn, fowls in the kitchen, ducks in the pond, storks on the roof, swallows in the eaves, swifts in the chimneys. And outside, above the oblivious council, nightjars competed with the bats, both snapping up any moth foolish enough to rise more than three or four ells* above the torchlight.

But now let us return beneath the torchlight, to the eyes no longer looking to the mountains or the forests. No, these vistas have been lost many minutes to utter darkness—the darkness of the new moon and the deep wilderness. The eyes now look to their coats and cloaks and gloves as the temperature begins to drop noticeably. Then they nervously look to a last sip of ale or a final pull on the pipe (or a last swat at a moth) before rising at last to peer at the head of the table.

There the eyes see a snowy owl perched like a statue on Radagast's shoulder, as they both pretend to preside. But—the eyes may notice—though Radagast and the owl's body face south, the owl's head faces north; so that none at the council can see that the owl is only pretending to doze, unless he should swivel about occasionally and peek at them from beneath his feathery lashes.

The white plumage of the owl is reflecting a sparkle of gold from the torches upon the company there; and each set of eyes could see, if it had been in an artistic mood (which it was not), a golden flicker in the eyes of each of his neighbors. As it was, no one at the council was in anything resembling a jovial mood, and the assembled eyes only saw the lesser sparkle of Radagast's brown stone. And many wondered why he had called them here in such haste. And some wondered how a wizard—a wizard sent to Middle Earth an age ago by the Valar themselves—could be such a fool.

Finally Radagast began the council. 'I welcome you all to Rhosgobel,' he said, bringing his hand up to his brown stone and turning it about nervously. 'This site was chosen because it happens to be near the center of all your various realms. Many of you have travelled great distances, I know, and I thank you for your attendance, inconvenient though it may appear. If it seems out of the way, remember that if it had been held nearer to some, it would have thereby been farther from others—perhaps even out of the question at such short notice. Erebor, for instance, would have been unreachable from the Blue Havens of Erebor in the time since the message was sent. Likewise, the Grey Havens could not have waited for representatives from Gondor, nor the reverse.'

Radagast stopped to see if this had been clear to his audience. He felt lost in his speech already, and was wishing that someone else could have been the one to preside. But Cirdan had remained in the west, of course, and the position of news breaker had therefore fallen to Radagast. So the wizard stood up and prepared to make the necessary introductions.

'At this table. . . .' he began, but stopped at once to clear his throat. Then he resumed (a bit too hastily perhaps), 'At this table sit many of the wise remaining in Middle Earth in the Fourth Age. Most need no introduction; indeed, it may be said that the alliances made and the friendships maintained among

you have made the prosperity of the Fourth Age, even the Fourth Age itself, possible.' Here he coughed again. 'However, there are several who are unknown or unmet among you. For their benefit I will start at my right hand and introduce each member of the council as briefly as I may. I hope you will forgive my brevity [cough]—I cannot possibly list all the honors due, since some of us have histories which reach back to the First Age and beyond.

First is Celeborn, who comes to us from Imladris, although he was a Prince of Doriath and the Lord of Lothlorien. He is the eldest of the Eldar at this council (second only to Cirdan in Middle Earth) and mighty among the wise. To his right is Glorfindel, the Lord of Imladris, and the last Prince of the House of Finarfin. From Lothlorien is Lord Meonas, last Prince of the House of Feanor and now leader of the host of the Golden Wood. From the Havens we have Galdor, Viceroy of Cirdan and a descendant of Elwe Singollo. With him is his daughter Nerien, previously an attendant to the Lady Galadriel, and now the Jewel of the West. From Belfalas is Erester, formerly counsellor to Elrond, and now Master of Lhunlond, the Blue Havens. Also a representative of the elves is Lindollin, son of Lindolas, son of Thranduil, King of Eryn Lasgalen, the Greenwood.

From Erebor is Kalin son of Kain son of Dain. As you all know [cough], Kalin is the second

son of Kain, the first son being Kurin, now King under the Mountain. To Kalin's right is Mithi, Lord of Moria. And the Dwerrows are also represented by a messenger from the Glittering Caves, Gnadri, kinsman of

*The manuscript says *ranga*. A Numenorean man would have been approximately two *rangas* tall, we are told; in that case the *ranga* would be equivalent to an English yard. However, the Numenoreans measured their height with arms raised, in order to ascertain a man's greatest reach (and so that men with longer limbs would measure the tallest—as should be). I have therefore translated *rangas* into ells. An ell is here understood to be 45 inches (the length from an archaic seamstress' left fingertip to her right elbow, arms outstretched). To retain the archaic flavour, I have also used the term 'cubit'—elbow to fingertip.

Glindri, King of the Mirrors. And by Macha, emissary of Krath-zabar. The Steward of Minas Mallor, Ecthelion III, has come as representative of Gondor. With him is Eosden, son of Feognost, King of the Mark. From Fornost in Arnor comes Prince Kalamir, son of King Elemmir of Gondor. As you all know, the rule of Arnor re-established has fallen—since the time of Elessar—to the first son of the King, if there be any such.

Seated beyond him is Tomillimir Fairbairn, a

descendent of both Samwise Gamgee, ringbearer, and Peregrin Took, great among hobbits. Finally [cough], at my left hand are my fellow wizards, Gervain the Green and Ivulaine the Blue.* They have travelled far and in great haste from the East and South. They have been in distant lands since they came to Middle Earth long ago, and may be unknown even to the wise.'

'Nay,' interrupted Celeborn. 'Not to us all. I have known of the Five since they arrived, although the travels of the Istari have ever been clothed in secrecy, and were never discussed even in the White Councils. But Galadriel and I knew whence they came and whither they intended to go, and indeed gave them aid as they travelled east and south. They were the guests of Laurelindorenan before even Mithrandir or Curunir came there.'

'I, too, have known of their existence, though not of their colours, or their... *persons*,' added Glorfindel, looking to Ivulaine. 'Elrond spoke of them to me when they arrived. He was told of them, and their purpose, by Cirdan. But Elrond never mentioned that one of the Five was a woman, if he knew it. And I had believed both wore the colour blue. I believe it is written so, somewhere. Certainly green is not far from blue, especially the sea-green that you wear, Gervain. Perhaps Cirdan, seeing the sea and sky reflected from your mantle, was confused. However that may be, it is certain that you two never came to Imladris, and so have remained

but a rumour to the elves of the north. May we welcome you to the lands of the West, though it be a time of little welcome, I fear. There are new rumours among the elves of Imladris.'

'Yes, Glorfindel, we speak to that presently,' interrupted Radagast. 'However, allow me first to inform those among the council who are not acquainted with these members of my order somewhat of their histories. Gervain was instructed to go beyond the Sea of Rhun, to discover if there might be other enemies of the Easterners, and to draw off somewhat of their power during the War of the Ring. There is a proud people to the east of east, living as unknown to us as we are to them, and it was these people that Gervain brought to bear on the eastern flank of the Easterners even as they fulfilled their alliance with Sauron. But for the work of Gervain in distant lands, the Parley at the Gates of Mordor might have been engulfed by insurmountable enemies despite the fall of Sauron and the passing of the ring. Likewise, Gervain's twin sister Ivulaine travelled beyond Far Harad and worked to undermine all the plans of the Cruel Haradrim. Many valiant deeds have been done in regions of Middle Earth so remote that their reknown is not even an echo here for the Lords of the West. Only the Valar know all the pieces in the great game, and perhaps even they know but a part of the mind of Iluvatar.'

*Also known as Alatar and Pallando. But these are their names from Aman, as Galdalf's was Olorin. I use their Westron or common names here. There has been a longstanding assumption that Pallando, the "friend of Alatar", must be male, due, I suppose, to the "o" ending of the name. But the language of Aman was not like modern Italian in this. The ending "o" did not in any way imply the masculine. Ulmo and Irmo were male, it is true, but remember that Irmo was also known as Lorien. Lorien sounds feminine to our ears, but we cannot trust our ears in these matters.

'But I would know what they have done since,' said Mithi. 'Gandalf returned over the seas after the destruction of the ring, it is said. Why are others of the Istarí still here?'

'I will answer that,' returned Ivulaine. 'We remain for the same reason that Radagast remains at Rhosgobel, for the same reason that Celeborn and Glorfindel remain at Imladris, for the same reason Bombadil remains with Goldberry. We love Middle Earth and would not leave it before our time. We were sent as adversaries of Sauron, it is true, and our great work was, we have assumed up to now, complete with his fall. But as Sauron was a Maia, so are we, and as Maiar we are free to return to Valinor or stay here as we will. Just as Thranduil still loves to wander among his trees in Greenwood, as Glorfindel loves the moon over Rivendell, as the elves of

Lothlorien still love the golden mallorn leaves and the flowers in the grass, so we too love our homes. I have remained with my people under the golden sun because the earth is warm and fertile and the water calm, and the people and their children are hale and beautiful in their dark nakedness and in their bright clothing. Your land too is lovely, and the snows gleaming there in dusk above the city of the dwarves are worthy of all the songs that are sung of them. But I come here with sadness and longing, and only in direst need, for my years of rest have been blissful and not overlong by my count, for the years race by in the eyes of the Istar, and many lives of men are but a season for us.'

'It is true,' said Radagast, when Ivalaine had fallen silent. 'Like the elves, our desire for the things of the earth is not quickly sated, and all the beauties of Middle Earth do not become less lovely with time. It has been said that all things fade, and that nothing is as it once was. However that may be, even a faded flower is beyond the ken of the wisest, and is perhaps the more beautiful in its fading.'

'But will the wise not tell us why we are called here, before the night itself fades,' said Kalin.

'Assuredly,' answered Radagast, with a sharp glance at the dwarf. Radagast reminded himself that dwarves had little use for flowers, and no use at all for politeness. 'As you know, and as has been said already, Gandalf has returned over the sea. Saruman is one of us no longer. And I am the least of my

order. I have therefore called upon Gervain and Ivulaine to hasten west and north to this council to give aid in the matter at hand. What that matter is can be stated in a moment. But I must tell you first how I became apprised of it—no matter the impatience of my good neighbour dwarf here. About a month ago I found myself just south of Tyrn Gorthad and the Old Forest, searching for something I had been searching for for years (but which need not come into this account). I had just given up and was returning home, riding on the banks of the Baranduin, near to Sarn Ford, when a single elf on a white horse, ringing in the wind and galloping as if all the cats of Queen Beruthiel were under his saddle, rode up and hailed me. 'Radagast!' he cried as if he knew me, although his name was unknown to me. 'I come from Cirdan with urgent news. He requires you immediately. Please follow me!' And without awaiting an answer he turned his great horse and sped off. I kept up as well as I might, although Pelling, my good steed, was no match for his. We arrived at the Grey Havens, where the mighty Lune spills into the sea, early in the morning a few days later. Cirdan was awaiting my arrival. He dismissed the elf and spoke to me alone.'

Here Radagast stopped, as if to regather his thoughts. He coughed and fingered his brown stone for a moment before continuing. The owl still appeared to doze.

'Cirdan had news so bad that I blanched and

nearly collapsed. I asked him where this news came from. Cirdan, as some of you know, has been at times a confidant of Osse, the greatest of the denizens of the sea, excepting only Ulmo. Therefore, I assure you, the news may not be doubted. It is true. Cirdan directed me to gather together the wise, since he would not leave the Havens. I have sent messages to all of you and many others, being aided by the birds of Greenwood and Lorien. Some of you were called upon by Laymir himself, Lord of the Eagles.* It has taken several weeks to plan this council and await the arrival of all. Laymir's children, Narnoval and Swainir, carried Gervain and Ivulaine from the ends of the earth that they might be here this evening. We owe the eagles a great debt, as we ever have and always will.'

'Radagast,' said Celeborn with some concern. 'We give thanks to all who have deserved it of us, and thank you especially for your hospitality and energy. But I am sure I speak for all when I demand that this news be given immediately, and without further preface. We have ridden far and with urgency and discomfort, and would be spared any more delay, no matter how bad the news. I for one do not understand why the eagles could not have spread the news, if it is so dire and immediate.'

'It is dire, Celeborn, but not immediate. Not so immediate that I may not take things in their proper order. Nothing I have said is unimportant. You were called here not as a warning, but to aid

each other. 'This is a council, not a war cry. It must be decided what to do. . . .' Radagast paused and coughed one last time. 'Morgoth. . . has escaped!'

A hush fell over the council. For many moments no one spoke. Then several cried out at once.

'Impossible!' shouted Lindollin, jumping to his feet. 'Is it not written that he was cast out into the void by the Valar themselves, and that the Walls of the World are forever guarded, even by Earendil himself?'

*Grandson of Gwaihir.

'And yet even the guard of Earendil may ultimately fail,' said Gervain, standing up and spreading his arms, as if to calm the group. 'Remember, Lindollin, that all the Valar, and not Morgoth only, were imperfect from the beginning, as we all are. This was the wish of Iluvatar, although it cannot be understood by the imperfect mind. Think how oft the Valar have misjudged or slept on the question of Morgoth, as was seen with the two trees, and the unchaining of Melkor. If the Valar may err, consider that the elves, yea, Earendil himself, also are not perfect. This is not blasphemy, it is wisdom.'

'But surely the Wise were under the impression that Morgoth was unmade, had become of the Void himself, was no more.'

'Not so, Lindollin, though I wish it were so,' answered Celeborn. 'I was present at the Ruin of Doriath and the ultimate defeat of Morgoth. We did indeed hope that the Valar had utterly vanquished Morgoth and banished him forever. But many of us believe that Morgoth was made with the earth and cannot be finally destroyed while it lasts. His song is one of the songs of creation, and it is part of all that is and will be.'

'It is true,' added Radagast. 'Cirdan told me somewhat of it. Morgoth's body can be cast out into the void, but he himself cannot be unmade, unless Iluvatar should remake the world completely. Just as Sauron did at the fall of Numenor, Morgoth has given up his body in order to escape from the void and from the chain Angainor. I asked Cirdan why Morgoth had not done this long ago. Osse said it was the belief of the Valar, especially Ulmo, that it was due to Morgoth's pride—not only in his importance but in his bodily existence.

'Few of elves or men, or even Maiar, have seen Morgoth. Galadriel had seen him in Valinor, and in Middle Earth Beren and Luthien and Hurin, but few others. None now living in Middle Earth can tell aught of Morgoth, unless Bombadil or Fangorn have glimpsed him in the far ages of time. As is known to the wise, Morgoth was created by Iluvatar first among the Valar, and in the beginning his power was greater even than Manwe Sulimo. So, we are told, was his beauty. His physical beauty was so great it

rivalled even Elbereth. When the Valar chose the male or the female form, as Manwe chose male and Elbereth female, Morgoth was loath to choose, and desired to be both. Iluvatar would not allow it, but Morgoth was yet the fairest of the Valar, and from the beginning took great pride in this, as with all things. Indeed, it was this pride of form that set him against Feanor, among other things, for Feanor was the fairest elf that ever lived, it is said; though many would prefer Galadriel or Luthien or Arwen Evenstar or the Lady Nerien, I among them.'

'I thank you for that, Radagast the Brown,' said Celeborn.

'And I,' added Galdor.

'*And I,*' smiled Nerien herself.

'In the end the body of Morgoth was scarred by many battles, by the hard hands of Tulkas and the points of Orome and the lesser cuts of elf and mortal. But he retained the original pride, and even the scars became precious to him, because they were his own. Also he grew weary of existence, and it is believed among the Maiar that for a long time he did not desire to return, but revelled in the void, and the long sleep, only dreaming of his final return, and final victory. So said Osse, and so Cirdan.'

Mithi moved in his chair uneasily. 'If that is so, if the Valar and Maiar cannot be utterly destroyed, what of Sauron? What of Saruman? Need we still fear them as well?'

'That question came also to my mind,' offered the

Steward of Gondor. Many other voices rose in agreement and the council had to be called to order. The owl turned his head to the front and squinted mysteriously for a moment before turning back to the north.

Gervain was the first to speak. 'It is not known what has become of Sauron and Saruman. Sauron's body was destroyed with Numenor, as was already said. Saruman's was destroyed by Wormtongue. Neither of them are allowed in Valinor, nor in Mandos. Much of Sauron's power passed into the ring, and was destroyed with it. Saruman was greatly diminished by the breaking of his staff and his being expelled from the order by Gandalf. This power they can never recover. They have not gone wherever mortal men go, for they are not mortal. I have told you where they are not. Where they are I cannot say.'

'This is only a little less evil than the story of Morgoth,' cried Lindollin. 'The three of them may join forces and assail us, and all our fathers' toils are in vain.'

Gervain laughed. 'Whatever else it is, Lindollin, it is less monumental than that. If Sauron and Saruman remain in Middle Earth, they may be capable of some petty mischief, but I for one no longer fear them. Morgoth is another matter. He has also been diminished by the long defeat, but so have we. What his intentions are we must wait to see. He may not come here. I have not felt his

presence. We have been told of his escape from beyond the Walls of the World. We have not been told of his arrival here, unless I am mistaken. It is possible that as Melkor he may go to Valinor, to plead his case again with Manwe, or to seek a place in Mandos, or in Lorien across the sea—to be tended by Este. Or he may plead with Iluvatar, for things beyond our ken. Or he may dwell unknown in places far from all of our knowledge and care. We must remain vigilant, but it is too early for panic.'

'If Lindollin is too fearful, Gervain, I misgive me that you are too confident,' Celeborn said, standing up and addressing the table solemnly. 'The Maiar were not in Middle Earth during the First Age, save Melian only. I was. Morgoth is not an enemy to be laughed at. Nor is Sauron, wherever he may be and in whatever diminished form. I would hear from Radagast the rest of Osse's news. Is more known of Morgoth, or is Gervain correct in his guesses?'

'Cirdan had nothing to say of Morgoth's movements after his escape from the Void. Nothing is known. But Cirdan clearly believes that we must expect him here sooner or later. Morgoth has ever desired dominion, and it is a fool's hope to think that he would be satisfied with peace in Mandos or Lorien, even were he offered it, which is doubtful. I myself look first to the north, for Morgoth has preferred the ice and the ash since the days of Utumno. Imladris should fortify itself, for his spies may already be at work in Forodwaith, or anywhere

north of the Ettenmoors. Erebor should also look to its smithies.'

'This seems good counsel, Radagast,' said Glorfindel, 'but for the fact that there is naught to fortify. Imladris was never meant to be a place of defiance, or of adamant. It is a house of secrecy and peace. Even in the battles against Angmar, Imladris was not fortified. It remained undiscovered by the enemy, safe behind the waters of the Bruinen and invisible amongst the lower arms of the Misty Mountains. Still, we will double and treble our watch and look once again to our discipline of old. This will not be hard to do. It seems to us but yesterday that we prepared for the Nine and provided refuge for the One Ring and its bearer.' Glorfindel looked to Tomilo and smiled.

But Prince Kalamir rose from his chair. 'What of the Nine? Will they too return like these wraiths of Sauron and Saruman, diminished maybe, but still capable of "mischief"? Have all the deeds of our great grandfathers been for naught?'

'No, Prince,' answered Ivulaine. 'The Ringwraiths are no more. The wraiths of men have no lasting power, unless they are ensnared and set up by a greater power. The Nine persisted unnaturally in this world only at the will of Sauron, and by the oversight of the One Ring. Once the One Ring met its doom in the fires of Orodruin, the Nine perished completely—and forever.'

'That is the only good news to come of this

council, I fear,' added Eosden, fingering the horn hanging at his side. 'Then it is also to be hoped that the Paths of the Dead are now open and clear?'

'They have been clear since Aragorn passed through. You have no need for fear in that direction. The Rohirrim should look to their defenses to the north, especially along the Limlight. The mountains will continue to defend them from the south.'

'The Shire, too, should look to its defenses,' said Radagast to the hobbit. 'I know that your people are not organized for warfare, but the shield of Arnor to your north will be a narrow one, should Morgoth come down upon you. The rangers will not be a guarantee of peace in the years to come, and you should expect the role of the Perianth to remain an active one in the defense of Eriador. Indeed, the halflings must continue to stand with the elves and men and dwarves in all things.'

Tomilo could not even answer, so frightened was he by this turn of events. What terrible news to take back to the Thain. Mustering for war! He expected half the hobbits of the Shire to flee south at the first mention of such a thing. Many might not stop running til they ran into an oliphant, or pitched into the sea.

But Glorfindel interrupted, seeing the hobbit fidget, 'I think Mr. Fairbairn need not alarm the Shire with talk of warfare just yet. The Thain must be told of Morgoth's escape, I suppose, but he should be

assured that there is no immediate danger. As Gervain said, we cannot predict the moves of the enemy. It would be foolish to dismiss this news, I agree; but it would be just as foolish to begin living in fear before there is a reason. We should all enjoy the peace as long as it lasts. Morgoth cannot inundate the world in a day. There will be time to resist him, once we know where he is.'

'Glorfindel is right,' added Galdor. 'I should stress that we also do not know the minds of the Valar on this question. They may not allow Morgoth to assail Middle Earth a third time. Or Iluvatar himself may intervene. The elves are not the only hindrance to the mind of Morgoth.'

'I do not like that "only," Galdor,' said Kalin.

'Nor I,' agreed Ecthelion. 'Dwarves and men, and not only elves, have resisted Morgoth and all his minions from the beginning. This is no time to be forgetting that.'

'I have not forgotten, Steward of Minas Mallor and Prince of Erebor. I beg your pardon for my speech. I intended no insult. You have been strong allies, and the houses of those here at this table were faithful always. And yet the wrath of Morgoth has always been directed first at the Eldar—and of the Eldar, first at the Noldor.'

'Yea,' replied Meonas. 'And of the Noldor, at my house first of all. We have always borne the highest hatred of the First Enemy. I have more to fear from this news than any here. My great grandfather

Feanor was Morgoth's greatest enemy, and I am the last in Feanor's line who is Noldo through and through. Unless Morgoth again assails the Blessed Realm, he will find no other of our lineage to harry. I would offer myself in single combat, to save Middle Earth from sharing my fate; but we know Feanor did this very thing, and was betrayed. Nor did his death assuage the hatred of Morgoth. Besides, I am no Feanor. As you grasp at hope that Morgoth may fight other foes or may have forgotten old hatreds, I myself grasp at the hope he may overlook lesser Princes of a diminished line. I hope; but I have no faith that it is so.'

'Nonetheless, Meonas, I counsel hope,' continued Glorfindel. 'I counsel both hope and faith, for these have always been the legs on which the elves—and the elf-friends—have stood. We were created by the One in order to live—and when threatened, to resist, that we may live more! Even the wisest know little beyond this; and yet it has always been enough.'

'I say that when the time comes we will resist, if need be. Until then, we should continue to live, and not to despair. Go, my dear hobbit. . . go back to your people in hope, and not in fear. Retell your stories of heroism, and rejoice! And Meonas, you do not stand alone, come what may. My Noldorin blood may be mixed with that of my silvan brothers, but I do not expect that to spare me—or them—from our share of the future, good or bad. That is what this council was called for. We have had allies

even at the ends of the earth, when we had forgotten them altogether. And they are here today to remind us of it, and rejoin our counsels. Let this be a merry meeting, despite the news. Welcome back, Gervain and Ivulaine! Let us pass round the mead once more! 'Three wizards at one table—it is a council to remember, my friends!'

Glorfindel raised his glass to the company. Gervain and Ivulaine joined him; and then the rest, some but grudgingly. Meonas only looked on without expression, seemingly dissatisfied by the speech. In truth he found Glorfindel's words to be far from reassuring, and he resented that elf's proud demeanor and presuming ways. 'The Lord of Lothlorien did not need to be exhorted by a son of a wood-elf—one who bragged at council table of his mixed lineage. But Meonas hid his thoughts, finding it easy to conceal his disdain for Glorfindel by assuming a fear of Morgoth. This mantle of false humility had served him well under the eyes of Celeborn, and it continued to serve him under the eyes of these other council members. The Wise there could perceive that Meonas was troubled. What was troubling him was not as clear.

In fact, Meonas had little real fear of Morgoth. He had been hardly more than a child when Morgoth was taken away in chains by the Valar. He therefore assumed that Morgoth would remain the charge of the Valar, wherever he might be discovered. Besides, the enemy—whether he be

Morgoth or Sauron—had always taken those first who resisted him most. Meonas had never been a warrior and never would be. Let the Gil-galads and boastful Glorfindels go to war, waving their shiny swords and standards; and if they failed to return, so much the better!

As half the table drank to the return of Gervain and Ivulaine, and Radagast emptied his glass to his fellow wizards—feeling somewhat cheered by the turn the council had taken, thanks to Glorfindel—the owl on Radagast's shoulder turned his snowy head back to the south and opened his eyes to the long oak table. His gaze fell on the figure of Meonas, brooding in his chair. The owl's long white lashes blinked once, twice, thrice. His sharp beak opened narrowly for a moment or two and shut again quickly. Then the bird turned its head back to the north. Suddenly it rose up into the air and flew away above the canopy, heading east. Radagast looked up in surprise. He whistled twice, but the bird ignored him, continuing to move away. The company watched it recede into the darkness.

At that moment Kalin arose.

'I must return to Erebor,' he announced. 'This news must be taken to the King, and the road is long. I cannot tell the others at this council what to make of the warning from Osse, but I can say that the dwarves will not take it lightly. The Lonely Mountain is twice as strong already as it was in the

time before Smaug. It will be twice again as strong by next year's end. Our kin in Moria and Krathzabar and the Glittering Caves, as well as the Iron Hills, could swell our defenses ten-fold within weeks. And yet we still would not feel secure. We will not rest until we have done all within our power. We, at least, will not fail our part of the alliance. Good journeys to you all!"

Mithi and Gnadri and Macha also bid their hasty farewells and retired to their quarters to prepare for early departure in the morning. Soon thereafter they were followed by Ecthelion and Prince Kalamir and Eosden. Tomilo was left with the elves and the wizards. He had thought of taking his leave with Mithi, but he had been addressed directly (and smiled at) by Glorfindel and did not want to seem rude. Besides, the elves seemed to have more business to discuss, and Tomilo was curious to hear it.

After the departure of the Prince and Steward of Gondor, the conversation returned to the newly arrived wizards and their welcome. Their stories of the War of the Ring were compared to the stories from the west, and many strange things that had seemed coincidence or fate were explained as the work of Gervain or Ivulaine. Ivulaine surprised the council by her knowledge of the Lord Aragorn—not only his deeds but his person. Indeed, Ivulaine had met Aragorn during his travels in the south. Those travels had been not only as a spy for Gondor, but as

an emissary between Gandalf and Ivulaine. This had been unknown to all at the council, even to Celeborn. In times of emergency, the eagles had been used to communicate between the north and the south; but the eagles could not easily arrive and depart unseen, nor could they act as counsellors as well as messengers

The elves had questions for Gervain as well. They wanted to know of Almaren and Cuivienen. Had the wizard anything to tell of these ancient places? Had he visited the former site of the Valar? Was its place yet remembered, or had it been wholly desecrated by the easterners? And what of the birthplace of the elves?—did it yet exist unspoiled and undiscovered?

Of Cuivienen, Gervain knew nothing. The Inland Sea of Helcar had not dried up; nor had the Mountains of the East, the Orocarni, been levelled by the winds. They still stood, as Gervain could attest. But as for Cuivienen, it was said to lie on the far side of the Sea—a Sea more than twice as great as the great Sea of Rhun. Gervain had not combed its heavily wooded shores, sniffing the air for the history elves. That was for an elvish pilgrimage to discover.

As for Almaren, the place certainly existed, but it was no longer a place of nostalgia or fond memory. It was now a blasted plain, much like the battle plain in front of what had been Mordor. The marker that had been placed there many long ages ago had long since been swallowed by the earth, and

all that remained was waste and desolation. The sadness of that plain could only be matched by the sadness of Valmar after the loss of the two trees, save that Valinor was fair even after the deaths of Telperion and Laurelin. Almaren, however, was utterly barren: a place of loss only, with nothing fair or lovely.

The table fell silent as the elves thought of their birthplace in the east and of the loss of Almaren the Fair. Tomilo watched the eyes of the elves and wizards at the table, and remembered the words of Pfloriel. They seemed to be speaking to one another, passing their thoughts across the table like the cups of mead.

Finally Galdor spoke again out loud: 'I think we will lose many more to the ships with this news.'

'You are right,' agreed Erebor. 'That thought also came to me. I fear to lose a great part of the southern elves, even though Morgoth settle again in the far north—or come not at all. Those in the havens will not stay to fight another protracted battle, or to live in constant terror.'

'But not all the elves in the havens, whether north or south, are there in preparation to sail,' argued Nerien. 'Not all live with one foot in the sea. Some, like me, were born there. Some are there by chance. Some love the sea, like Cirdan, but have not stopped loving Middle Earth. I do not think this is the end of the elves, even though Morgoth arrive in

full strength.'

'It is not the end of the elves,' agreed Lindollin. 'The Wood of the Greenleaves is clean for the first time in centuries, and is now home to more elves than at any time since the Second Age. Lorien has dwindled little, and is still strong. There are many young elves who are far from tiring of the open woods and the wide moon-travelled skies of Middle Earth!'

'It gladdens my heart to hear you speak so, Lindollin!' said Glorfindel. 'They say that the children of men are the rebirth of hope. But it is no different with elves. Our children must remind us that Age follows Age, and that even for the eldest of us, the future is longer than the past. It is good that you are here at council. And you, Lady Nerien. Your father Galdor is very wise, but like me his eyes have seen so many years and so many defeats that even the clearest, starriest skies begin to seem hazy. Mayhap it is not the earth that is waning, but only our view of it.'

'Mayhap,' said Meonas. 'Or mayhap the eldest taking counsel from the youngest is itself a sign of degeneration. I do not deny that Lorien is still strong. Nor do I deny that elves must surely increase by way of elf children,' he added, looking at Nerien, 'lest they finally lose all to the ships. But I do not like to hear it implied that the wisdom of ages is only a mote in the eye, a film preventing clear thinking'

'Nor I,' agreed Celeborn, looking at Glorfindel

rather than at Meonas. As much as Celeborn disliked the idea of agreeing with Meonas, he could not let this opportunity pass for contradicting the Lord of Imladris. 'Nerien means to reassure us that the elves will not wholly forsake Middle Earth, come what may in regard to this news. But that is not the question, here. The question is, how many will remain? And what will those who remain *do*? That second question begs another—who will lead them? I think you will find that experience remains the first qualification of leadership, even in the Fourth Age.

'Which reminds me of something I should have said earlier. It is just such experience that leads me to ask you, Radagast, if any message was sent to Esgaroth? I see no representative of the Bardings at this table. The men of the far north may prove to be indispensable allies in the years to come. I suggest that a briefing of this council be sent to the Lake and to Dale in care of Kalin. Or, seeing that Kalin has already excused himself, with young Lindollin.'

'I will see that word is sent to the villages of the men,' answered Lindollin stiffly, not liking Celeborn's rebuke.

'You and Meonas misconstrue my words, Celeborn,' said Glorfindel. 'Though I hope not willfully. The leadership of the elves has changed many times in the past, and will continue to change as change is necessary. As you know better than anyone, Celeborn, the Lady Galadriel was one of the

greatest of these leaders. It may be that another elf princess will someday do great things. Even the greatest and wisest were young once.'

Ivulaine stood up and made a great show of moving her chair back and rearranging her blue robes. She desired to change the subject, but also to continue to encourage Nerien. This argument of elf against elf she deemed unproductive; but what she saw as the implied criticism of the elf maiden—because she was young, or more likely because she was a maiden—could not be allowed to rest, not even on the strong defense of Glorfindel.

She looked hard at Meonas, and then said, 'It seems, to one has little knowledge of the subtleties of western ways, that disagreements are being invented—perhaps only to prolong a pleasant evening under the stars. As entertaining as this is, I for one am taking a chill and wish to retire to a room and to my warm blankets. Before I bid you all a pleasant good night, I would like to add one consideration. Morgoth, should he return in any age in which we persist in living, has a way of being very disagreeable. He will set old against young, elf against man, dwarf against halfling, Maia against Maia. The disagreements we have had at this table tonight were likely sewn by him in the depths of time. Or, perhaps they are being sewn even now, in ways too subtle even for the wisest among us. This news should be a warning—not just to our armouries and smithies and wall builders. It should be a

warning to all of us strengthen our minds. Morgoth will be enemy enough. We do not need to fight each other, or ourselves. As for the Lady Nerien, I recommend her counsels be taken in the same scales of wisdom as the counsels of Celeborn or Meonas or Glorfindel—or of myself. Counsel is wise based on its inherent wisdom, not on its source. Now, good night to you all. We may speak of all things again in the morning. Though the council may have ended for the dwarves, I myself—and Gervain (she added, with a nod to her brother)—are in no hurry to climb back on the wings of the eagles. There is much work left to do, and we plan to remain at Rhosgobel for many days.'

Ivulaine retrieved her staff from the back of her chair and leant heavily on it as she walked back to the house. Tomilo could see her long tapered fingers gripping hard the carved ashwood as she passed by him. Her ancient veins stood out on the back of her hand, and her knuckles were creased with age.

The hobbit wondered why the wizards looked so old, whilst the elves looked so young. They were all older than the rocks and hills. The Maiar could take any shape they chose, he thought. Within reason, of course. He remembered in Bilbo's *Translations from the Elvish* how Sauron had taken the form of a werewolf, in the First Age, when he fought with Huan in the pit of Tol-in-Gaurhoth. In the jaws of the great hound he had changed to serpent to balrog to beautiful elf. All to no avail. But why would

Ivulaine choose to be old? Who would want to lean on a staff and walk with a stoop? Did the bones of the wizards ache? Did the Istari truly suffer from age, or was it but a mantle of power? Tomilo thought to himself that a little wisdom was a difficult thing to manage, at least for him. The more he learned about elves and wizards, the more mysterious they became.



 Chapter 8 
Early Snow

After the council, Tomilo did not return immediately to his room. He found Galka and Pfloriel in the main hall of the house with many of the rest of the company who had not been part of the council. There they were talking and merrymaking, as they had been for much of the evening. Few of the dwarves had gone to bed, and none of the elves. With them were several men from the retinue of Ecthelion III. It was immediately apparent that none of the revellers in the hall had yet been told of

the news of the council. The dwarves from Erebor had already departed for a night march, but nothing had been said to the company at large of the reason for their hurry. The dwarves of Erebor did not know themselves, and would not find out until they had reached the Lonely Mountain and a general announcement had been made by King Kurin.

Although Galka and Phloriel pressed him, Tomilo did not tell them the news himself. He thought it more proper that they hear it from Mithi and Meonas, respectively. The hobbit remembered Radagast's concern for the proper etiquette, and he just managed to hold his tongue. There were lots of other stories to tell his friends, though, and they soon forgot to press him about the news from Cirdan. It may be that Phloriel learned somewhat from his eyes, and so was no longer curious. But Galka only refrained from begging because he could see that his friend was already struggling with the information himself, and he did not want to be the cause of more distress in the hobbit. Besides, it truly was a short road back to Moria. He would know all soon enough. From the look in Tomilo's face, that might turn out to be all too soon.

Galka and Phloriel led Tomilo from one table of food and drink to the next as he told them of the blue and green wizards and of the Lady Nerien and of the snowy owl and of the Steward Ecthelion. At one of the last tables, the hobbit found warm mushrooms and melted butter, and the three friends

remained within reach of that table for the rest of the evening. Tomilo also remembered his pipe, and when the three finally sat down, he and Galka shared a cut of Farbanks' best that the hobbit had packed all the way from the Shire. Phloriel found the smoke a little too fragrant, and retired out of doors for the time. When she returned, the subject had changed to dragons, and Phloriel had stories (not first hand of course) that the other two could not match. She told them of Ancalagon the Black, lord of the fire-drakes, and of Earendil who had come down from the stars in his swanship to slay the horrible worm even as he flew over the host of the Valar.

By the time Tomilo fell into bed he had eaten an armload of mushrooms and drunk a barrel of ale and smoked a full pouch of leaf. He had almost forgotten the fears of the council, and he slept as contentedly as a fat hobbit child. Ancalagon bothered his dreams only once, and even then the dragon was quickly dispatched by Tomilo and his shiny mithril axe, swung from the magical prow of his flying mushroom ship. Such is the calming power of sleep and dreams (and ale).

The hobbit arose many hours after sunrise. The night before, Galka and Phloriel had packed him off into a quiet corner of the house; and he might have slept 'til noon if a goose hadn't found a cache of snails under a nearby window and begun honking in excitement. Tomilo splashed some cold water on his

head and sauntered off in search of breakfast. He found a kettle of strong tea left in the kitchen, and a plate of cold biscuits and ham. He made quick work of that and then wandered out the back door to see if he could find Galka. He looked all over the grounds, but there was no sign of any dwarf. So he went back to the great hall. He thought there might also be some food left over from the night before. Many elves were there, resting and telling stories. Tomilo could see the Lord Celeborn at the far end of the hall, speaking to a tall elf from Lothlorien. But again, there were no dwarves (or men) to be seen. Finally the hobbit espied Phloriel sitting on the floor near the fire, practicing a tune on her flute. He sat down beside her, still munching on a biscuit.

She paused in her playing, and Tomilo asked her if she had seen Galka this morning.

'The dwarves of Moria departed at sunrise,' she said. 'Galka did not want to disturb your slumber, but he asked that I give you this note.'

'He left? Without saying good-bye?'

'You will see him again soon enough.'

'Yes. I suppose. Still, it is strange..'

'I think it is not the custom of the dwarves to be so fastidious in farewells. I would not let it concern you. Galka meant no discourtesy. He considers you a great friend, Tomilo.'

'Thank you, Phloriel. You are right. I'm being silly. I must pass through Moria on my way home. I can say good-bye then. But I had thought of

travelling with the dwarves on the road from here, at least.'

The elf maiden played for a few more moments and then stopped. 'You can ride with us, Tomilo. Our road and yours is the same for two days. And then, if you would like to, you may ride on to Lothlorien with us. There will be much snow in a few days, and you may find the passes closed. Unless you mean to travel down to the Gap of Rohan—being in a hurry to return to your home—it might be best to winter with us. The woods are very beautiful in the winter, with the snow glittering from the laden trees and the golden leaves blown into great piles and the naked limbs shivering beneath the ice and the smoke rising from the elf fires.'

'Snow this early in the season! I hope not! Oh dear, perhaps I should leave today. But I had wanted to hear the rest of the council. I had wanted to find out if the wizards meant to return east and south, or if they might stay here in the west. I think we need them here now. And I wanted to look upon the Lady Nerien again. To think that she has been living so close to the Shire for so many years, and I never knew it.'

'Do you find her so enchanting, Tomilo?'

'Oh yes! Indeed!' said the hobbit at first; but then he caught himself. He looked at Phloriel. She was combing her hair with her right hand and looking sadly down at her flute. 'I mean, her gowns

are very rich,' continued Tomilo quickly. 'Of course her hair is just black, which isn't very exciting, really. But she wears some lovely pearls in it, which liven it up somewhat.'

Phloriel looked up and smiled. 'Yes. Her pearls are lovely. I should try pearls in my hair. We are far from the sea in Lorien, and pearls are uncommon. Perhaps I could trade for some here, with the attendants from the Havens.'

'Your hair would be beautiful with pearls, Phloriel. Though it doesn't really need them. They would almost be lost in the shine of your hair, you know.'

Phloriel looked at Tomilo again, and this time she laughed out loud. 'I had not known that halflings were so sweet-tongued. You *must* come to Lothlorien. My sisters and I will have great fun with you. You won't even have to sleep in the trees. It is written that the halflings did not care for the flets. We also have houses on the ground, you know, though none *in* the ground. The flets sometimes become too cold in the winter, and even the elves prefer to sleep on the ground then. You can remain on the ground every night, if you wish it.'

'I will consider it, Phloriel. It is very tempting. But I had meant to return to Farbanks as soon as possible. I suppose I must decide today. Elves seem to know many things, and if you tell me snow is coming, I had better leave soon if I want to beat it to the mountains. We will see. I will

go now to discover when the council is today. Maybe Radagast can tell me what they are planning to discuss.'

On his way out of the hall, Tomilo stopped to read the letter from Galka. This is what it said:

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*My Dearest Hobbitfriend,*

*We received orders to march early this morning. As you were still soundly asleep, and in need of several more hours, I did not wake you. We are told that the council continues, and I (and King Mithi) assumed that as a representative of the Shire, you would be expected to stay. It is a short ride back to Moria, and we have no fear for your journey. Especially as you will no doubt ride with Phloriel and the elves as far as the crossroads. I will see you at the West Gate within the week. Do not eat too many mushrooms between now and then, or Drabdrab will not be able to carry you. Until then, good-bye. Tell Phloriel I will miss her.*

*Lieutenant Galka, King's Guard*

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Tomilo smiled and put the letter in his pocket. Then he went in search of the wizards. He did not immediately find them. As it turned out, Radagast had holed himself up all day with Gervain and Ivulaine and Glorfindel, and the hobbit did not have

a chance to talk to him until almost suppertime. In the late afternoon, however, the wizard had gone to the stables to check on his beasts, and Tomilo finally caught up to him.

Radagast was forking hay into the horses' stalls and Tomilo was nearby, talking to Drabdrab. He had a few oats in his hand, and he was telling the pony about Lothlorien—to see what his opinion of the matter was. Of course Drabdrab was quick to voice his decision that a house full of elf maidens was far superior to a dwarf manger—if there was no chance of returning to the Old Forest by mid-winter—and he snorted and whinnied and stamped his feet. Radagast looked over and shook his head.

'Drabdrab thinks he wants to go to see the elves, but you better tell him he'll just get his heart broken. It is mighty hard to leave Lothlorien once you get there, whether you be beast or man or halfling. The elves are accustomed to such a fine existence. But a little pony from the sheds of Bombadil may not know what to do with it. Or worse, how to forget it once it becomes custom.'

'I don't understand you, Radagast. Are you telling me not to go?'

'I am saying, *be careful*. Lothlorien has many dangers, and not just for the enemies of the elves. For the undisciplined, such beauties can corrupt.' Radagast paused for a moment, and then continued. 'Did you know that the Lord Meonas once loved the Lady Galadriel?'

'No. It is not told in *The Red Book*. Not that I remember.'

'Well, it is no secret. They sing songs of it in Lorien, and even in the Havens I believe. In Imladris it is not sung of. Not since Celeborn came there. For two ages, Meonas loved Galadriel and then she went away. Beauty, my dear hobbit, is like love. It may bind or cleave. The heart may be overwhelmed. Think of the Lord Celeborn also. He was wed to the Golden Lady for nearly three ages. And now she is gone. It may be unwise to take what you cannot give up. It may be unwise to go where you cannot leave.'

'But one cannot go through life fearing loss! That is the philosophy of a coward, surely!'

'Yes, Mr. Fairbairn. That is the proper answer to my warning. Still, be wary. Even the brave must know when to stand tall and when to raise the shield. I am not counselling avoidance. I am counselling firmness and all possible foreknowledge. If you go, go with a full heart and an open eye. But be prepared for a strange parting.'

'I will, as far as I understand you. Which is not very far. But the reason I came out here is to ask you about the council this evening. Is there an agenda? Is it necessary that I stay? Will things be discussed that I should take back to the Shire, and to the Thain?'

'I do not know. It is hard to predict what may happen. The news has all been given, and the

dwarves and men have already departed, so nothing of final authority may be done. Still, much may be said to interest you. Much will be said, that is certain.'

'Do you know if Gervain and Ivulaine intend to stay in the west? And how much longer will Galdor and Nerien stay at Rhosgobel? Maybe I could travel back with them.'

'I believe that the party from Mithlond intends to return through the northern passes, if the weather allows it, and to stop in Rivendell. They leave in a few days. As for Gervain and Ivulaine—they have not made final arrangements. I desire that they remain here, but it is not yet decided. There was much discussion of that question this morning, but nothing came of it. Gervain, I think, would remain here; but Ivulaine is torn. She desires to return to the south. It may be many days before she reaches a decision.'

'Well, I don't want to ride all the way through Rivendell. That is very far out of my way—though I don't suppose it is any more out of my way than it is out of the elves' way. And it would be nice to see Rivendell. Ever since I first read "There and Back Again" I have wanted to go to Rivendell! Oh my. Such decisions. My head is spinning already. I think I may need another nap. What time did you say the council started?'

'Sunset.'

'All right. I will be in my chair. Maybe something

will happen that will help me decide.' Drabdrab snorted again and stamped his left front hoof. But Tomilo was too confused to make sense of it this time.

Tomilo sat patiently through another evening's council. He was asked only one question the entire time, and was unable to answer it. Nerien had asked him what the halfling population of Eriador was. The hobbit hadn't even a guess. Glorfindel put the number at five to ten thousand. Galdor thought it slightly higher, if one included the new settlements west and north of the Shire and the older settlements like Bree and Archet. And many hobbits lived outside the towns, growing leaf or other crops on small farms. It was difficult to estimate their number. The only thing that was agreed upon was that the hobbits had very little weaponry and therefore could not be expected to play much of a part in any resistance to Morgoth, should he come.

Tomilo was already feeling very insignificant—sitting at a table of Elf Chieftains and Princesses and robed Wizards. This talk of the Shire's weakness only added to that. But Nerien used this opportunity to remind the table that there were other parts to be played than those of battlefield valour. Frodo the Great had destroyed the one ring—and with it Sauron—while wielding no weapons at all.* Tomilo thanked the Lady Nerien, adding humbly that the hobbits did have their moments. Every people, he

supposed, had their heroes. The Shire was no different. He was only glad that there were those outside the Shire who still remembered their deeds of the past.

'For the elves,' answered Nerien, 'The deeds you speak of were but yesterday. And even had they occurred many ages ago, they would not be forgotten. The bravery of Frodo Ninefingers will be sung by all peoples for ages hence. It is sung of now in the Undying Lands across the sea, and will therefore always be sung. It is one of the songs that is.'

After this the council passed into other matters that little concerned the hobbit. These matters consisted primarily of the fortification of the north and the strengthening of the northern alliances—especially between Erebor, Dale, and Thranduil's realm.

At last Tomilo stopped listening. He began thinking of his own problems. How was he to get home? If he left tomorrow, he thought he might beat the snows. Of course, he could always go under the mountains (through the caves) but that would entail leaving Drabdrab behind. Drabbie would never willingly pass through Moria, even were he allowed in. Maybe he could send the pony to Lorien. But then what would he tell Tom Bombadil? And how would he get from Moria to Farbanks on foot? And possibly in the snow on foot? No, that didn't sound like a good plan at all.

What about travelling with the elves of the Havens, through Rivendell and on down the Great East Road? But that would take a long time. Perhaps a month. Still, it would be faster than travelling alone through the Gap of Rohan, or staying all winter in Lorien.

All of those alternatives appeared unpleasant to Tomilo. Lorien or Rivendell would be beautiful, but the hobbit really wanted to just return to Farbanks. He missed his hole. He missed his pillows and his sheets and his fireplace and his garden. And he had told Prim that he would be back soon. There was no real reason why he shouldn't stay away longer, simply on account of Prim; but he didn't like to break his word, not for any reason. He hadn't really promised, he had just said it, like. But still.

He had just made up his mind to leave in the morning and try to get over the Redhorn Gate while it was still passable, when someone touched his shoulder. It was the Lady Nerien. The council had ended for the evening and she wanted to speak to Tomilo in private.

The hobbit was taken rather by surprise. Not only had he not noticed that the council was over—having been long lost in his thoughts; but he had no idea what the Lady Nerien could have to say to him. He had been in awe of her from a distance, and now here she was at his side!

'Mr. Fairbairn,' she began, 'Radagast has informed me that you are in some doubt how to best return to your home. Also, I have seen for myself tonight that you were troubled, and should have guessed the cause, even had he said nothing. Your thoughts have not been with the council for many minutes.'

'It is true, Lady. I was thinking just that. But I believe I know what I should do, now.'

'That is well, then. But I came to tell you that you are welcome to travel with us. We will go through Imladris and then pass through your lands on the way to our own. Your home is somewhat south of the Great East Road, I am told. But that is a short trip, compared to the journey as a whole. I did not want you to avoid us, simply because you were not invited. Consider this our formal invitation to you. We would enjoy your company on the road.'

'It is very tempting, Lady. Travelling with elves is always a wonder, so to speak. But I am in some hurry to return to my home—for reasons of my own—and I had just decided to try the most direct route. That is, over the Redhorn Gate. Phloriel—an elf maiden from Lorien—tells me that snow is expected soon. So I think I may leave in the morning. That reminds me. . . I wonder how your party plans to negotiate the snows? Won't there be *more* snow in the northern passes?'

'It is still early in the season. By the time we get to the New Forest Road and go west, the high passes may be closed. But I think not. We cannot see that

far into the future. The birds tell us the passes are clear now, but in eight days they may not be. If we cannot hazard the pass there, we will go farther north to the lower passes—where the three rivers rise. The lower elevations will not likely inconvenience us, even with snow. As for the Redhorn, it is a very high pass. And, as it happens, Mr. Fairbairn, the passes of the north are often open when the highest passes in the south are closed. It depends on the local weather. Snow is like to rain, as the elves say. It may be raining on one side of the river and sunny on the other. Regardless, I would not risk the Redhorn alone, if I were you, even though it looks clear when you are at the base. Always travel the passes in company! But I think your friend Phloriel is right: the first snows of the season are likely to come in two or three days, in the mountains west of here. We can see that far ahead—in the place where we are—with a fair amount of certainty.

*Tomilo thought to himself that Nerien was forgetting Sting. But Sting had been used only against Shelob, and then only by Sam. Frodo never used Sting against any orc or other servant of the enemy after the single stab at the troll's foot at the door of Balin's tomb.

'I must consider it,' answered Tomilo, finally. 'I don't know what to do, really. I want to get back to the Shire as soon as possible. I never meant to be

away this long. My garden, and my woodpile, and the pillowcases, and. . . Oh well, anyway, thank you for your offer. I will let you know what I decide as soon as possible. You are not leaving for several days yet, I think you said?'

'Yes. The council will continue for two more days—possibly three. It is uncertain. We will take the time we need, within reason. We cannot linger too long, though, or we shall have to travel through the Gap of Rohan to return to our home. Like you, we have little desire to do this. It will take long enough by the northern route. The southern route might take two months—and in the middle of winter. So we are in some hurry ourselves. We have no fear of the snows, but bad weather is bad weather, for elves as well as men and hobbits. We also prefer to be indoors near a blazing fire, with a cup of hot drink. In fact, let us go into the hall now with the others and find just that. The air is cold outside, and I can hear the fire crackling. See how the smoke rolls from the chimney, Mr. Fairbairn, and hugs itself in the cold air? Even the vapours keep close to themselves on a night like this!'

'Please, call me Tomilo. In the Shire we are unused to these formalities. I am afraid I have trouble thinking of myself as "stately." I hold no rank at home, you know, and no one but hobbit children would think of calling me "Mister Fairbairn." Come to think of it, even they don't do it. The lads and young misses in Farbanks address

me as Master Tomilo, you see, which has a fair ring to it. Fair enough for a hobbit who is not so fair to look upon, I mean, Lady Nerien.'

'All right. Tomilo it is. Though I must say that hobbit faces are quite pleasant to all, elves included. You needn't feel uncomfortable on that—or any other—account.'

Nerien and Tomilo joined the company indoors. The other council members were already by one of the three oak fires. The hobbit left the Lady at the second fire, where Galdor and Erestor were talking to Glorfindel, and continued on to his room. He had much to think of, and wanted to reach some decision before he went to sleep. If he was going to try to make it over Redhorn Gate, he must leave first thing in the morning. But the invitations from Phloriel and Nerien must be considered as well.

It was far past midnight. The elves and wizards were still in the great hall, talking and singing and telling stories. Tomilo could hear the tintinnabulation of muffled song and laughter and serious conversation from behind the walls and doors. At times a voice would rise above the rest in some high melody from far-off lands, chanting in words strange to the hobbit's ear. But still he would stare at the dark ceiling, forcing himself not to be lost in dreams, or in the dreamlands called up by the elven voices. He must decide. He must keep his head clear until a

proper decision was reached. He must do the right thing, he must. . . .

But Tomilo's eyelids were heavy and his mind would not stay on the matter at hand. He could hear himself breathing and he could hear the voices beyond the walls and he could see pictures dancing before his face. Subtle pictures, taking shape from nothingness. He saw an owl flying at night over a vast expanse of woods. The woods were inky black; but the owl was white. Yes, it was Radagast's owl—the owl that had sat on his shoulder during the council. It was flying away north to the mountains. Tomilo could see a lofty peak in the distance, coming nearer. The dream shifted slightly and he was the owl now. He could see the peak from the owl's shining eyes. It was a peak of ash and ruin, rising up beyond the mountains, a single sharp peak surrounded by a vast plain. The plain was empty of all life. As he flew nearer he could see fires belching forth from the peak's crest. Fell creatures, lit by the fires, encircled the peak, screeching to each other in terrible voices. But he was the owl now: he felt no fear—these creatures were his brothers. He could hear himself speak. 'I come, Master. I have news for you, Master.'

At that moment there was a knock at the door. Tomilo awoke in a daze, forgetting where he was.

"Tomilo? Are you still awake? It is I,

Glorfindel.' The elf uncovered a silver lantern and held it before his face.

'Glorfindel? Oh, yes, I'm sorry. I'm afraid I was having a bad dream. I couldn't remember where I was for a moment. I thought you were an owl. No, I thought *I* was an owl.'

'An owl?'

'Yes. Like Radagast's owl. I dreamt I was flying over the forest, looking for someone. It was very strange.'

'Well, I am sorry to awaken you, but I have something rather important to tell you, and I feared you might leave in the morning before I could find you. Nerien says that you are in a great hurry to get over the mountains. She has invited you to travel with us, but she says that you seem more likely to travel back to Moria by yourself. I have come to tell you not to sneak off in the morning, if that is what you have decided. The snows have already begun. See, pull back the curtain and open the shutters. There will be a frosting in a few hours. The first snow of the season has come very early this year. Here at Rhosgobel it will be no more than a nuisance to chill a hobbit's toes, I think. But in the high passes it will be treacherous. Do not go by yourself, Master Tomilo! You would make it to Moria with little difficulty, I am sure, but it would be to no avail. Unless you leave your pony at the East Gate and travel on foot from there, you will have to look for another road.'

'Oh dear! Snowing already! My luck has gone from bad to worse to worser on this trip.'

Glorfindel laughed. "That only leaves the double superlative, "worst." Unless the hobbits include the triple superlative "worstest." Let us hope we can keep those very correct adjectives in the distant future, at least. No, Tomilo, you are unlikely to encounter anything of that sort travelling with us. We don't go by the shortest road, but it will be a good road and a safe road. You have my word on it.'

'Hm. I am a bit groggy right now, as I'm sure you'll understand, Lord Glorfindel. But I suppose I haven't really any choice. It appears I must winter with elves one way or the other. I can't make a final decision in the middle of the night, though—especially when I think I am an owl. I'll give you an answer tomorrow. And I promise I won't "sneak" off toward Moria by myself. I'll either come with you and the Lady Nerien or I'll go to Lothlorien.'

'Fine. I know that you have been invited to stay there as well. I will not worry about you more tonight, then, Tomilo. Sleep well. And may you find whatever wisdom you seek in your dreams!'

Tomilo lay staring at the ceiling once more. The whole conversation with Glorfindel seemed odd to him. He was still confused by his dream, he thought. But there had been also something strangely unguarded about the Elf Prince. Probably Nerien had told Glorfindel that he had asked to be

treated with less formality. Certainly it had been very easy to talk to him. But it was not how Glorfindel had laughed, or how open and confiding he had been. No, it was something else. What was it?

It was his promise that the trip would be safe. Yes, that was it. Glorfindel was no doubt trying to mollify the hobbit's fears, but the promise was odd nonetheless. It was not something an elf would say. Elves did not make promises about the future. At least in the books Tomilo had read, they did not.

Tomilo wondered if he was still dreaming. He pinched himself hard. Then he sat up and shook his head. He walked over to the window and opened the shutters again. Cold air rushed into the room, clearing his head. Yes, he was awake. He thought that Glorfindel had spoken as he had only because he was talking to a sleepy hobbit. A hobbit talking nonsense. Even an Elf Prince might have a slip of the tongue, speaking colloquially in order to be better understood. That might be it. Or perhaps Glorfindel had become less grave—and less worried by the fate in accidental speech—since the fall of Sauron, thought the hobbit. In the councils he had seemed the least worried of all. He had recommended enjoying the peace, and other such things. Maybe Glorfindel knew something the others did not.

Tomilo thought of what Phloriel had said about the elf warriors, laughing in the face of the

enemy. 'Laughing, I die.' That is how Glorfindel seemed to him. Not fey, but so lofty that it appeared he had climbed right out above the world, even above fear. Perhaps Glorfindel had become so powerful he really could make promises about the future. At least small promises.

One thing the hobbit knew for certain: he would never fathom the actions or words of elves or wizards. So he had best not try.

Finally the hobbit climbed back into bed and fell asleep. Surrounded by all these wise (if unfathomable) beings, he feared nothing. And the owl no longer bothered his dreams.

Several more days passed. The snow continued to fall at night, but the days were warm and the snow would not stick. It melted off before it could accumulate. Nevertheless the council was moved indoors. Since more than half had already departed, there was room and to spare in the Great Hall.

Tomilo began to be weary of the endless talks. Several times he dozed off during the council, only to awaken to what seemed to be the same discussion. He completely lost track of time. He couldn't tell if he had napped for one minute or several hours. It was all the same.

But on the third day after his talks with Nerien and Glorfindel, Tomilo finally learned the answer to one of his questions. It was decided in council that Gervain and Ivulaine would remain in the west for a

time. Radagast had convinced them to stay at Rhosgobel until they found other lodgings. There was even some talk of re-entering Orthanc, by one or the other (or both). But that would have to be settled with the King in Minas Mallor. There would be plenty of time for that (it was hoped). In fact, the two wizards planned to travel to Osgiliath and Minas Mallor soon after the council, in order to meet King Elemmir and to learn more about the present situation of Gondor.

Other than that, nothing seemed to be settled. It appeared to the hobbit that much of the final days was passed in dissention and thinly-veiled rancour. Meonas and Celeborn continued to find fault with Glorfindel and Nerien (and to a lesser extent, Erestor). And Ivulaine continued to play the role of pacifier, trying to conciliate the opposing parties. Galdor and Gervain said little, preferring to listen. And Lindollin also sat quietly, but with a look of brooding. He appeared to be in some hurry to return to his woods and to communicate with his father and grandfather, but he stayed on until the end.



Chapter 9



Narbeleth in Wilderland

At last the council ended and the elves prepared to depart. Tomilo had decided to travel with the elves from Rivendell and the Havens, and he found it necessary to say his good-byes to Phloriel. He and the elf maiden had had many fireside chats in the past week, especially after Galka had returned to Moria. Tomilo had felt that she was the only one he could talk to without being made to feel very small. Even now he could not really accept in his mind that she was so much older than him: he would always think of her like a fairy child—beautiful beyond words, yes, but still fresh and unthreatening. Even her words about war and

weapons had not changed this view. The Lady Nerien he could see riding a white charger into battle, waving a bright sword; Phloriel never. He was wrong, in the event, but it was his impression nonetheless.

Tomilo also found it necessary to send word to Moria—and Galka—that he would not be travelling back through the caves, due to the early snow. The elves of Lothlorien promised to relay the message as they returned south to their homes. The hobbit was now doubly sad that Galka had not said a proper good-bye the morning he had left. They might not see each other for years, if ever again. He tried not to think about it, but it made the day rather gloomy.

On the morning of 10 *Firith* the entire remaining host prepared to depart from Rhosgobel. The elves from Lorien and the Blue Havens would ride with the rest until they reached the main road. Then they would turn south while the elves from Rivendell and the Grey Havens and the Kingdom of the Wood-elves turned to the north and made for the Forest Road.

The three wizards were outside, standing side by side: Brown then Blue then Green. They wished the company fair travels and good weather and all speed. From the back of Drabdrab, Tomilo could see the brown stone of Radagast glinting in the sun, and the weathered hands of Ivulaine gripping her staff, and the long straight nose of Gervain—red on

the end from the cold. The hobbit waved to Radagast as they turned, but the old wizard only reached for his stone, rubbed it, and nodded silently.

At the main road the company divided into two parts, and Tomilo and Phloriel stopped for a last farewell. The hobbit didn't know what to say: he was a little choked up, but he didn't want Phloriel to see it. He just looked at the ground and mumbled that he was sorry he couldn't see Lorien. Maybe another time, now that he knew the road. Phloriel came over and stroked Drabdrab's nose, and told Tomilo he was welcome whenever he would like to return. Since the council he was now known to the elves of the Golden Wood, even to King Meonas, and he would no doubt be allowed to pass the borders unchallenged.

'But you will enjoy Imladris, too, Tomilo,' she continued. 'I find myself wishing I could come there with you, and then to the Havens. I have never travelled so far. Especially to the sea! I have been to the Forest of Greenleaves, but that is the extent of my travels.'

'Then you should come with us! Why not? Why should an elf of Lorien not visit Imladris?'

'I cannot. My family awaits me in the woods. Besides, I would have no one to travel back with, and the roads may be dangerous by spring. It is difficult to know what may come in the near future.'

'Oh, I suppose you are right. But it would have been fun to have you along. I feel terribly out of

place with all these great Elf Princes and Princesses.'

'I understand. But you will be back with your own people very soon. Good-bye, Tomilo. May the Valar be with you!'

'And you, Phloriel. *Elen sila lumenn omentielvo*—I learned that from *The Red Book*, you know. I will never forget you!'

Phloriel reached up and kissed the hobbit on his cheek. He blushed. 'I won't forget that, neither. C'mon Drabbie!' He pulled the pony round and galloped off to catch up Glorfindel and the rest.

When he joined them, the elves were trotting along at a fairly brisk pace. Even making good time, it was still at least a week to the pass. With winter arriving early—or at least this storm—the company felt it was best not to linger. The air now was crisp and lovely, without a breath of wind. If not for the recent snows, the elves would have wandered at will along the length of the Anduin, enjoying the final days of autumn. The leaves were even now just letting go the trees, blowing along the road in gentle rufflings under the hooves of the horses. Even after the storm, some leaves yet decorated the shivering limbs with their gold and red and brown colours. Patches of shallow snow dotted the valley, and further up above them in the west the travellers could see ridges and crags already completely enveloped in white. And if they happened to be passing over a low hill, they might catch a glimpse to their right of a

sparkle far off in the distance. This was the Great River flashing at them from afar.

A few late ducks and geese passed over, struggling to get south before the next wave of storms. Tomilo could hear them calling to each other in the grey sky, urging each other to fly faster, or to stay in proper formation.

With nothing to do but look about him, Tomilo finally tired of cataloguing the landscape and turned his eye to the elves. He noticed the raiment of his fellow travellers and spent hours turning each article of clothing over in his mind, memorizing each cloak and scarf and shoe and beautiful glove. Nerien, the fairest of the host, he thought he could look at forever. He wished he were an artist, that he might paint a picture of the Lady. But he knew that no artist could capture such loveliness. How could paint possibly match the fluidity of her features, the subtlety of her eyes, the richness of her hair, the extension of her arm? It was impossible. No stonecarver or draughtsman could hope to find the perfection of her line, much less the ambiguous combination of youth and wisdom in her every movement and look. Even her dress, her mantle, her horse, seemed to be something from a dream.

Her dress was of palest blue shot through with true green, but it sparkled as if dusted with gold, and shimmered as if rubbed with yellow pollen. The bodice was laced up to the throat with slender ties,

and about her waist was a girdle of silk fabric, sewn with images of sporting fishes. The gown fell to her ankles, but beneath were slender heelless boots of finest leather, with a pointed toe and fantastic inlay—again of fishes. Over the dress she wore a mantle with hood, all of a blue so deep it was almost black. When she stood, it clasped only at the throat with a single loop about a white jewel. But when she rode, it also clasped at waist—with a matching jewel—to prevent the cold air from finding her body. Her mantle also had a fur lining, for the same purpose. In very cold weather she might also wear leather leggings, but she had not donned these as of yet.

The hobbit next noticed her hair. When loose it fell to the length of her fingertips, but when braided—as now—it only reached her hips. She wore it in four braids, the front two pulled back to expose her brow. The two braids behind she tucked into her mantle, even when her hood was down; but the front two she tied into a sort of corolla. This corolla of black hair she entwined with vines of tiny yellow and blue flowers. Although the hobbit never saw her replace the vines, they were always fresh and new, as if just picked.

In poor weather, or on horseback, Nerien also wore a long scarf of sleekest wool about her neck. It was dyed a rich green, to match the counter-tone of her dress. Her only other article of clothing consisted of white kid gloves ending at the elbow,

with narrow palm and long fingers. A single fish, spouting a spray of water, was embossed on the back of each glove.

The Lady Nerien's horse was a tall white stallion*, with forelegs black below the knee and a single black spot on his croup. She called the horse Lisson—which denoted 'one who glides.' He carried no saddle, but the Lady placed an embroidered fabric over his back for riding. Under this was a thicker padded fabric, which acted as a numnah. The horse also had ornamental breastplate and breeching, made only of cut cloth. On this she hung various ornaments of gold and silver. A sheathed sword, the handle encrusted with jewels, also hung from just behind the horse's withers. This was Glamdring, of course, the Foe Hammer. A line of subtle bells fell from around Lisson's neck, though these were often suppressed by hiding them under the fabric. His mane and tail were uncut but marvellously groomed: sometimes braided with shining ornaments to match his fabric drape, sometimes brushed out into flowing tresses. Tomilo thought that Lisson had been chosen by Nerien because his hair was the same rich raven black as hers, though not as fine. But his hair waved somewhat, whereas hers was completely straight (except when crimped by the braids).

Tomilo also noted the dress and equipage of the other riders. Glorfindel was the most decorated of the elf princes. Being of the house of Finarfin, he

was the only one of the company with golden hair. All of his affects seemed to have the common property of increasing the beauty of his hair. His clothes were of yellow or white or gold. Only his mantle was black; but it too had a white collar that stood up above his ears. He wore no hat or hood. His horse was all of white; the horse's fabric of palest yellow and sky-blue trimming. This horse, which Glorfindel named Malfei ("tempestuous one"), carried only a sword and a light bow besides. The quiver of silver arrows the elf wore on his own back. All other provision of the various elves was carried on unmanned horses.

Glorfindel's gloves and scarf were black, and his boots also. Like Nerien, his boots had no heel and were pointed at toe. But they rose almost to his knee. His breeches laced below the knee and tucked into the boots. He wore a golden belt with a hasp in the shape of a leaf. His shirt—worn tight in the chest and waist and bloused at the sleeves—laced from the breastbone to the throat. A large blue jewel on a gold chain hung about his neck. The collar of his shirt was high, and carried an intricate pattern: not laced or ruffled but quilted or mullioned in fabulous curling patterns, like vines or tracery. His hair mirrored this tracery. It was cut somewhat below shoulder length, but the forelocks were tied behind—much like Nerien's corolla, but not so extravagant. The hair behind was thick and wavy, separating naturally into heavy locks. A golden

riband encircled the forelocks (where they were tied behind) and fell down the middle of his back. In cold weather, as now, Glorfindel added over his shirt a kirtle of sable fur.

*the elves never gelded their horses

Celeborn wore mostly black and grey. His horse was black, with silver markings on barrel and cheek. Its mane and tail were chestnut brown. As has been told elsewhere, Celeborn's hair was silver, long and straight. Not grey, as with age, brittle and unruly; but sleek and robust, like gleaming mithril. A mithril chain he wore,* low on his breast, hung with a red jewel. His gloves were black with silver gauntlets. His boots black with silver rings on the ankles. The horse, called by Celeborn Feofan, wore silver cuffs on his cannons and a silver riband in a spiral around his tail. Celeborn's sword, which was especially long, hung in a jeweled scabbard from the withers. This sword, named Celebast, had come from the hoard of Nargothrond, and was said to have been brought over the sea by Finrod Felagund. Galadriel had claimed it, as sister of Finrod, after the fall of Nargothrond, and had presented it as a gift to Celeborn before their marriage. Finrod had called the sword Telepoest [in Quenya, "silver-bar"] but Celeborn had translated it into Sindarin, to match his name.

Lindollin, as befit a wood-elf, wore many shades of green. But his cloak and hood were black, and his gloves and boots wine-red. His horse was decorated in dark reds and greens as well. A tall exquisite mare, she was named Belvist. She wore red cuffs on her cannons and a green drape over her back. Green and red ribands wound through her mane and tail. Golden bells hung about her slender neck. She bore no sword—only a long bow and a quiver of green and brown arrows. Lindollin wore his black hair in one long plait down his back. On his brow he wore a golden band of tiny birch leaves, disappearing behind his ears. On his breast he wore a brooch of golden leaves, set with a yellow jewel. Under this was a quilted and beaded vest, laced at top and cut to a point below. His belt was also of golden leaves, linked tip to tip. His gloves were gauntleted with gold lace, and his boots folded over at top, also showing a lining of gold.

Galdor dressed himself and his mount in tones of sea and sky. His mantle was blue-green and his collar foam-white. His boots, turned at top like Lindollin's, were deep blue without and cream-white within. His great gauntlets, stopping only at the elbow, were also cream-white. He wore two yellow-white jewels on his breast, one pinned and one hung by a necklace. He also wore three pearls on a silver band above his brow. His belt buckle was in the form of a sea-horse, and a string of sea-shells decorated his

horse's neck. Bregallie, the brindled stallion, wore black cuffs and a double drape—black beneath and true-blue above. A silver scabbard with sword was his only armament. Neither were there any bells. Cream-white filament decorated the mane and tail.

*This chain was new to Celeborn. He had acquired it only since the re-opening of Moria. He disapproved of the dwarves and their settlement at Khazad-dum, but the new availability of mithril was a worldwide blessing nonetheless. And it was easier to forget the noise and disruption of its mining at the distance of Rivendell, where Celeborn now dwelt.

These were the invited councillors to Rhosgobel. But the small returning company also included about three dozen guards and attendants, and a troop of horses to carry provisions.

After three days this company arrived at the River Gladden. Here there was an elf-bridge, built and maintained for the convenience of the elves of the three realms. The Gladden Fields had just been passed to the travellers' right, but the elves neither stopped nor spoke of it. Had Tomilo been travelling with men, he might have been taken to see the monument of Isildur—memorializing his ambush by orcs and the loss of the One Ring. It was a place much like the Hill of Awe, Amon Anwar, on the borders of Rohan, where the tomb of Elendil had

lain. On a low hill in a wood near the Anduin, within sight of the Gladden Fields, was built a circle of stones surrounding an empty tomb. This was Amon Ohn, the empty hill, symbolizing the King who never arrived in Arnor, and never returned to Gondor.

But Tomilo knew nothing of this hallowed site of the Numenoreans, and the elves did not tell of it. They sang songs of their own on the road, and had little to say about the other peoples of Middle Earth.

Nerien spoke to Tomilo occasionally, being friendly but not overly talkative. She wanted him to continue to feel welcome. And Lindollin told him somewhat of his home in the Great Forest. The hobbit was interested to know if the wood-elves still traded with the men of the Lake, and especially if they still sent their barrels back down the Forest River. Lindollin laughed and affirmed that indeed they still did, although they were more careful with outgoing barrels—especially the ones that did not feel empty. And they had also refashioned the portcullis, where the stream issued from the caves—to make getting out (or in) more difficult.

It was five days later when they reached the Forest Road. Lindollin and his retinue turned east, to cross the Anduin and enter the Great Forest. The rest turned toward the high passes of the Misty Mountains. There had been no snow in the vale of the Anduin since they had departed Rhosgobel nigh on nine days ago. But it had been very cold and the

clouds had remained heavy in the west. There was already much white ahead of them and above. How deep the snow was, however, was yet to be seen.

Celeborn told Tomilo, in answer to his question, that it commonly took two or three days to get over the mountains, and another day or two to reach Imladris. Glorfindel added, "That was, if all went as hoped. Deep snow might slow the horses greatly. We ourselves might walk over without concern—at least the elves. But the horses, and our dear hobbit friend, could not do so. The horses carry all our burdens. And the hobbit carries the burden of a good deal of mushrooms and ale above his belt. A burden that has not lessened greatly this week on a diet of lembas." He stopped and smiled at the hobbit, and Tomilo burst into laughter, looking down at his rather tight waistcoat. He had more than made up for his losses in Khazad-dum by his eight meals a day at Rhosgobel.

By the end of the next march, the company had made it to the base of the mountains and were climbing steadily up. The road zigged and zagged, meandering slowly from one shoulder of the mountains to the next. It drizzled occasionally, making the ride rather uncomfortable; but still no sign of snow. Sometime after dark the elves and Tomilo stopped under a great outstretched tongue of rock that sheltered the road for perhaps 20 yards. Here they made camp and lit their fires. But

even the elves could not make this spot hospitable. Certainly, without them it might have been much worse. They provided food and warm drink and song. And the drizzle—which was turning to sleet—kept to itself: there was little wind, and the company kept dry, at any rate. The hobbit finally fell asleep feeling almost cozy.

But when he was awoken by Nerien some time later, his cozy feeling immediately evaporated. A brutal wind had arisen and the sleet had long since changed to snow. It was already a foot deep all around and falling fast. The elves had decided to go back. The horses were already re-laden. Tomilo quickly found Drabdrab and loaded his blankets back into the packs.

'Well, Drabbie, it looks like we're never getting back to the Shire, or to the Old Forest. I wonder what we're going to do now?'

Celeborn overheard him talking to the pony. 'We are moving down out of the mountains, for now,' he answered. 'Tomorrow we will go north, to find a lower pass with less snow. I am afraid the horses will not be able to manage this pass. Up above us, the snows are already many feet deep. It is a strange occurrence. It has been many years since I have seen so much snow so early. The heaviest snows usually do not arrive until after *yestare*, and that is still almost six weeks away.'

'How long will it take to get to Rivendell now?' asked Tomilo grumpily.

'This detour will add at least eight days to the trip. We were still three days from Rivendell. With luck, we should be home in less than a fortnight.'

'A fortnight! Great lands! And what if the pass to the north is closed as well? I suppose we will have to winter with the wood-elves—that is, if the Anduin is not flooded or the forest not closed due to lightning fire!'

'Calm yourself, my dear Mr. Fairbairn. You should not take the weather personally. This snow is not falling to spite you. It is a momentary inconvenience. But it will allow us all to see the upper reaches of the Hithaeglin, which are very beautiful in *narbeleth**. Take it as a gift of the seasons, and rejoice that your time with us is extended. You have much to learn, and hurrying back to your hole—pleasant though it is—will teach you little. I would recommend that you attach yourself even more closely to the Lady Nerien. She knows much of your country and your history, as well as the history of this place. I may have spoken against her in council, but she has befriended you—odd though it may seem to you, and to me. Do not waste this opportunity. Few in the Shire have had such an opportunity!'

*Late autumn. Literally, "sun-waning" {Sind.}

The company left the mountains and returned to the North Road. From the crossroads it was four days

journey to the sources of the three rivers. Two of these rivers arose within a hundred yards of each other: one, the Hoarwell—named by the elves *Mitheithel*—going west; the other, the Rushdown—or *Undulag*—going east. The third river, the *Osip*, had its springs less than half a mile to the north. It joined the Rushdown a few leagues to the east before emptying its muddy waters into the *Anduin* above *Tol Echor*.

Where the Hoarwell and the Rushdown had cut their narrow banks, the Misty Mountains divided somewhat; and through this gap was an ancient trail, little used but never wholly lost. Even when long forgotten by the elves and men, it remained open due to the traffic of the deer and mountain sheep who frequented it as the easiest path through the mountains. On the western side, this path led to the rich valleys just south of the *Ettenmoors*. These valleys were so situated that they were protected from the icy northern blasts. Bears and other beasts therefore made frequent trips through this gap to forage in the bounties of both reaches of the Misty Mountains.

The company reached this grass-grown path with little difficulty. The North Road was well maintained all the way to the Grey Mountains by Men of the Northern Vale as well as by the *Beornings* and the *Wood-elves*. In fact, on the second march from the crossroads, *Nerien* had pointed out to *Tomilo* a strange tongue of rock far to the east. This was the

Carrock, standing out between the arms of the Anduin.

'Is that where Bilbo was taken by the eagles?' exclaimed Tomilo in wonder.

'The very place,' answered Nerien.

'I wish we had eagles to take us over the mountains. And one to take me back to my hole!' said the hobbit.

'You might wish it until you saw one of the great eagles, my friend. I do not think you could be convinced to ride an eagle willingly, even in direst emergency. Remember that Bilbo was snatched from the treetops before he even knew what was happening. And he did not like the ride at all.'

'I suppose you are right. But it would be nice to be over these here mountains without so much trouble. Once I get home, I don't think I'll ever budge from my hole again—not even to get the mail.'





Chapter 10



The Mitheithel

Sometime before noon of the fourth day the elves and Tomilo trotted down a long slope and saw the Rushdown before them. The North Road crossed it by a stone bridge and continued on. But the travellers left the road and followed a narrow path northwest along the near side of the stream. Great trees of many kinds shadowed the stream along both banks, and small birds twittered in their branches and dove into the icy water. The sun was out, and although it was cold the atmosphere was merry. Winter had not yet arrived in earnest—at least here in the lower foothills: the rabbits still ran in the midday light and the squirrels still gathered their nuts hurriedly for the coming shortage. The holly was a rich green and the mistletoe with its berries hung down above the heads of the passing company. The fading branches of the oak and the birch were here mixed with the fragrant pines and firs. Tomilo breathed deeply the rich

aroma. Drabdrab frisked and snorted beneath him. The pony wanted to chase the rabbits in the grass and eat the tall reeds along the riverbed.

'You just wait, Drabbie. We'll be stopping along this river in a few hours to have our supper. You can eat all the reeds you want then.'

The pony couldn't tell him that it wouldn't be as fun to run in the grass once the sun was down, so he just sniffed the air and eyed the reeds impatiently. Occasionally he would scamper ahead, to tell the lead horses to hurry up. But Tomilo would rein him in and warn him to behave.

'That is a high-spirited mount you have,' observed Galdor. 'One would think he was the "sun spirit".'

'Oh, yes. The saddle, you mean,' replied the hobbit with wide eyes. 'Do you know anything of this saddle, Galdor? Radagast could tell me little, except what it said. The name "Galabor"—of him who made the saddle—is much like yours. Was he a relative?'

'No, Tomilo. Galabor is Quenya. Galdor is Sindarin. My name just means "tree-elf".* It is very common among our people. Galabor, however, means "softly-running warrior". Both Galabor and Arethule were elves of Hollin, as I understand from this inscription. But neither are known to me. They no doubt were lost in the destruction of Eregion by Sauron. The child Arethule must have been one of the children of the Noldor, perhaps even of Celebrimbor himself, or of Meonas. Did Meonas see

this saddle while you were in Rhosgobel?'

'I don't know. I should think so. I rode with his company to Rhosgobel from near Moria. I never spoke to him, but Phloriel and I were often close by.'

'That is strange. I would have thought this saddle would have been of interest to him. Perhaps he did not see it, surrounded by so many riders; and then all the dwarves on foot. I have spoken already to Glorfindel. He knew nothing of it. Like me, he was never in Hollin. We will ask Bombadil about it next time we see him. No doubt there is some interesting story behind it.'

'I wanted to ask you one more thing, Mr. Galdor. I have noticed that the elves don't seem to use saddles when they ride. Leastways, the elves now, that I have seen. Well, but here is an elf saddle, right before our eyes. How do you explain that?'

'Arethule would have been a very young elf-child. Perhaps only five or six, by your reckoning of age. That is why the saddle is so small. Elf children are sometimes provided with saddles, to teach them how to sit a pony. How to grip with the legs whilst talking to the beast. Where to carry the arms. That kind of thing. Later on the saddle usually becomes unnecessary, by age seven or eight. Older elves sometimes use saddles strictly for decoration. Perhaps you have seen these saddles? Elf saddles, without girth or stirrup?'

'No. I can't say so. But that doesn't mean anything. Everything I know about ponies could be

writ on a fly's wing. And my knowledge of elves on a midge's leg. But it's good to know about this saddle here. I had wanted to ask Radagast about that, but we left Rhosgobel before I could think of it again.'

*A contraction, over many centuries, of the name Galadhor; not to be confused with Galador, which means 'shining lord.'

The next day the company arose early and prepared to journey through the gap. They continued to follow the Rushdown up and up. This was a break in the mountains, but the pass was still far above the vales below. Soon the trees about them were all evergreen, and they trod on a path of soft needles and scattered cones. The Rushdown now earned its name, splashing noisily among the rocks to their right. They began to encounter patches of shallow snow, and by noon the snow filled all the valley to a depth of a cubit—perhaps an ell in some places. The horses were working hard, but there was no longer any fear of having to turn back or give up. The sky was still clear, and no more snow would fall before they reached the top.

The company was within sight of the crest of the pass by nightfall, and Glorfindel convinced the rest to press on. It was a full moon and the clouds were thin and scattered. He thought it best to travel while they could. It made no sense to pause near the top,

not while the weather was so fickle. Celeborn counselled against travelling at night. The Bridge of the Hoarwell would have to be crossed on the way down, soon after they reached the crest of the pass. The footing for the horses was treacherous there, even when the bridge was dry. With an icy bridge and an inexperienced hobbit in the train, it would be best to wait until midday tomorrow, when the ice might be warmed somewhat by the sun. And besides, there was no hurry: the weather showed no sign of changing.

Glorfindel argued that Tomilo's reins might be held by the nearest elf. Besides, his pony was light and sure-footed, and the beasts could see at night almost as well as the elves. And as for the weather, one never knew. A storm might even then be brewing on the west side of the mountains, and remain unknown to elves on the east side. Also, it was difficult to smell rain in the air when water, and the scent of pines, was all around them. The Rushdown was throwing up a constant spray, the wind in the snow blew moisture into the air; even the rocks seemed to breathe out a mist. He did not trust his own senses in such a place and wished to be on the way down as soon as possible.

Celeborn finally relented. He was the only one who feared the bridge more than the weather, it seemed. The bridge had an ill history, and Celeborn remained wary of it. It had played a bloody part in the wars of men and elves against the Witchking—

being so near to Angmar. Many travellers had been attacked by orcs, or worse, on this pass; most of them at the Great Bridge. Celeborn pulled Celebast from its sheath and studied the blade. No sign of blue was upon it. There were no orcs on this side of the mountains. But who knew about the western side? And the bridge was on the western side.

Soon after midnight the company passed the spring of the Rushdown and reached the top of the pass. Glorfindel had been right about the weather. Dark clouds, until just then hidden by the hill, could now be seen gathering in the west. A cold and bitter wind smote them as they came out upon the high shoulder of rock separating east from west. A short distance below them they could see the spring of the Hoarwell leap from the same extension of rock and run flashing down in the moonlight. The sight of it was soon lost among the pine trees. Tomilo could not hear the bubbling of the stream for the wind in his ears. He pulled his hood closer and leaned behind the head of the pony.

About an hour later they reached the bridge. The path over the top had been forced to continue down the mountain on the north side of the Hoarwell, due to a cliff that rose on the south side of the spring. The land on that side ascended sharply and steadily until it met the sheer face of Mt. Massive, frowning down on all below. On the north face of Mt. Massive, no tree grew. Not even moss or lichen clung to the blue rock there, as the mountain resisted

all hold for foot or root.

But on the other side of the little stream the land was less foreboding. The company had quickly passed through sheltered woods where the going was easy amongst shallow snow and rockless upland. When they emerged from the wood, though, Tomilo could see that the Hoarwell—to their left—had already cut its way into a deep ravine. The cliff on the south side had dwindled in the past mile or two, but on the north side the way had descended less steeply, so that the hobbit was now almost at eye-level with the land across the gorge. As they continued on, the river cut deeper and deeper into the gorge; and by the time they reached the bridge, the Hoarwell was racing far, far below them. In the dark, the depth could not even be guessed. The moonlight did not penetrate to the water down there, unless the moon herself happened to be riding directly over the ravine.

Out of the wood, the path became rocky. And while the ice had only created a crust on the ground in the shadowy woods, here in the open the wind made the going treacherous. Large almost flat expanses of rock led down to the bridge. And the bridge itself was paved of flagstones, worn by the melting snows of countless years into a smooth, mirror-like surface. It spanned the gorge in a single curving arc, with no rail or kerb. It was supported beneath by huge iron beams that thrust out from the rock at an angle from either side. But the midpoint

of the bridge hung in the air: it was kept from crashing into the ravine only by the shape of its keystone.

Tomilo measured the bridge with his eyes. It looked to be about 50 or 60 feet across and maybe eight or ten feet wide. On any other bridge this width would have been reassuring, and would have been an excuse for the lack of kerb. But here it was anything but reassuring. He grimaced: only an elf would build a bridge without railing or kerb. Especially a bridge over a chasm. Why oh why had he not gone to Lorien? Or stayed in Farbanks? Why had he been out in his yard looking for his pipe when Radagast came to call? Why could he have not been in the bath, or under the bed?

The elves did not seem to be intimidated by the bridge, however. One of the attendants signalled the hobbit to dismount and took Drabdrab's reins. Another took Tomilo's hand and they immediately prepared to cross.

Just then the storm hit. The wind reached them first, an icy wind with drops of sleet. Then rain mixed with sleet, falling faster and faster.

'Follow me!' cried Glorfindel over the wind. 'Let us cross while we still may! The rain will soften the ice somewhat. We will be over in a moment.'

The great elf led the way. His head was still uncovered and he seemed wholly unaffected by the wet. He pulled his horse Malfei along and the others

came up behind him, first Celeborn and Galdor, then Nerien and the rest. Leaves swirled about them, and their cloaks flapped and ruffled in the tossing air. Tomilo was in the rear with the attendants. He and Drabdrab advanced with heads bowed. The pony's ears were laid flat and his tail shook in the wind.

As the hobbit was climbing onto the bridge, stepping carefully over the uneven threshold and grasping tightly the hand of the attendant, he happened to glance up at the front. Glorfindel was at the top of the bridge, in the very middle, alone with Malfei. The elf's golden hair danced about his head like the locks of a merman. His mantle was pulled violently northward by the wind rushing up the canyon, and Malfei's adornments were likewise ripping about him. Celeborn was a few yards behind, looking down at his feet. Feofan had just slipped and Celeborn was steadying him.

Suddenly a red light surrounded the head of Glorfindel and Tomilo heard a roar. Then the entire bridge was engulfed in shadow. Tomilo dropped to the ground in fear. A wave of terror engulfed them all, and then just as soon was gone. As he grovelled over the ice, he thought he could hear the ringing of swords and a single long cry.

The attendant pulled him to his feet and they ran to the top of the bridge. On the far side they could see Celeborn and the Lady Nerien already lowering themselves on ropes down into the chasm. The

hobbit had never seen anyone descend so fast who was not falling. Against his better judgment he crawled to the edge of the bridge and peered down into the depths. The icy rain was still coming down and the wind was racing across the ramparts of the bridge. Tomilo feared to slip off the edge, but felt he must see what had happened.

Down below, the ravine was now lit by a dull red light. In this light he could see a great dark shape. Even at this distance Tomilo could feel its menace. It was some terrible creature, a creature of dread standing or hovering over the little cold stream. Beneath the creature a dim blue-white light ebbed, seeming to rise feebly from the middle of the water. The light moved suddenly and the creature shrieked.

At that moment Nerien and Celeborn reached the floor of the ravine. Tomilo could see the creature turn to face them. It shrieked again, and the hobbit saw it open its wings and back away. He now knew what the creature was. He recognized it. It was a balrog.

Tomilo looked around him in panic. Where was Glorfindel? There was Galdor on the far side of the gorge, shooting arrow after arrow at the dark shape. And the others were shooting at it now as well, and dropping great boulders upon it—now that it had moved away from the stream.

But Glorfindel was not to be seen. Malfei was also missing.

Tomilo peered back over the edge, afraid of what he might see, but not able to look away. The balrog was now on the opposite side of the ravine from Nerien and Celeborn. The blue-white light still flickered dimly between them. All at once Tomilo was aware of a another light: Nerien had drawn her sword and she was now bathed in white light as well. But it shone out in strength; nor did it fade. The hobbit heard shouts from the Lady, but could not tell what she said. Momentarily the creature quailed, seeming to draw back in uncertainty. But then he swelled at the center of his shadow, and his shape seemed to fill the entire ravine. Red flame shot from his mouth. Tomilo saw a great curved scimitar rise in smoke and then fall upon the figure of Nerien. But it was met by the blade of Celebast, wielded by the arm of Celeborn, and turned away. Nerien herself stabbed at the unshielded left side of the balrog.

The terrible creature shrieked again, but rose up and fell down upon the elves once more, with claw and wing and fang. Both Nerien and Celeborn grappled with it. In the midst of the confrontation, Galdor suddenly dropped upon the balrog from above. He had climbed unnoticed down the nearer of the ropes. As he wrestled with the creature, Nerien and Celeborn continued to stab at it. But all at once the great black shape threw them off, all three, and fled. He flapped his awful wings and rushed in his red light up the ravine, toward Mt.

Massive. The three elves pursued him.

As soon as they were gone, others of the company disappeared down the ropes. Moments later they returned with a terrible sight. Tomilo cried out as soon as he realized what they brought. Two attendants carried a white bier. Under a thin coverlet lay Glorfindel. Other attendants rushed to bind his wounds, but it appeared to be too late. His face was pale with the cold and the wet, and his clothing was torn all over by the pawings of the enemy. His right arm, especially, was awful to behold.

The elves quickly carried Glorfindel on the bier back into the little wood. There they erected a shelter of boughs and built a fire. Just then Galdor returned. He looked at the face of Glorfindel and then looked away.

'Malfei is dead,' he said, finally. The other elves looked to him, and in answer to their questions, he continued. 'He and Glorfindel fell at the first onslaught, so unexpected was it. Celeborn and Nerien are pursuing the balrog, but the beast disappeared into a cave, and there is little hope. We believe he took great harm from us—from Glorfindel first, and then from Nerien—or we would not dare to pursue him. Glorfindel wounded the creature's eyes as it groped at his right hand. . . the balrog apparently believing him to have been killed by the fall. And Nerien gave the creature hurts that may prove fatal, it is to be hoped. Partially blinded, he gave inadequate defense to the swords of my

daughter and Celeborn. Even less with my hands at his throat. Still, I have suffered greatly. I have been scorched all over by the beast's skin and his hot breath. Allow me to rest here. I feel I may faint, from grief if from nothing else.'

All the remaining company had now retired to the woods. The canopy of the shelter was extended and all the blankets and furs were unpacked from the horses. It continued to sleet and snow outside, and the winds buffeted the make-shift walls. Food was warmed over the fires and the company ate. But it was little comfort. All were overcome by grief and worry. Nerien and Celeborn had not yet returned. Glorfindel lived, but was in a fever. Galdor tended him, but was too weak himself to nurse the sick man properly.

As the sun began to rise over the mountaintops, Nerien returned. Celeborn had been lost in the caves. They had separated to search a divided passageway, and he had not returned to the place of meeting. Nerien had heard no signs of trouble; and she now assumed, she said, that Celeborn was only temporarily lost. But the hearts of the company sank even lower.

Nerien herself was mostly unscathed. She was very cold, but her wounds were minor. She lay her wet hands on the brow of Glorfindel and stared at him for many minutes. Finally she looked into the fire. There were tears in her eyes.

She took his right hand and brought it to her breast. 'At least the balrog did not achieve his desire,' she said as to herself. 'He has fled without getting what he most wanted. It is a bitter victory, however. I for one would give him this weregild in return for the Lord of Imladris, as he was but yesterday.'

Tomilo was unsure what she was speaking of, and Galdor alone of the elves knew that the blue elven ring Vilya, first of the three, was yet on the pale hand of Glorfindel. The balrog had clearly desired this ring above all else. Had the fall killed Glorfindel immediately, as the balrog intended (and wrongly supposed), his plan would have been a complete success. He knew that his wings would allow him to swoop upon the fallen elf before his companions could come to his aid. But Glorfindel survived the fall and smote the eyes of his unheeding enemy, even as he himself fell senseless.

Nerien put the hand of Glorfindel back under the coverlet and went to her father. Galdor sat wearily by the fire. His hands pained him, and Nerien put food and drink to his lips. When he had eaten, she applied a salve of herbs and rare oils to his hands, and to his face and neck. Then she spoke to him.

'We must return to Imladris as soon as possible. There is no hope for Glorfindel here. I fear we must all risk the bridge again, despite the weather.'

'The bridge took no damage from the attack?'

asked Galdor.

'No, father. The balrog came up from underneath. Glorfindel and Malfei were pushed off the span before a sword could be drawn or an arrow loosed. The creature then flew down upon them as they lay broken in the streambed. He stooped to take the prize he sought, but the valiant elf struck at his eyes with his left hand. And then Celeborn and I were upon him. The foul beast was nearly or wholly blinded, and so we survived its onslaught. Your timely arrival allowed me to smite it again. Who knows what harm it took from my elven blade? Possibly it is destroyed, even now. Or it may have taken little hurt at all. None of us can know these things, I think, for we have never before encountered such a foe. Not even Celeborn.'

'What did you say to the creature,' interrupted Tomilo, 'that made it quail so?'

'I swore at it an oath of the Valar, warning it of its final destruction, come what may on this present night. And I told it who I was, Tomilo. . . what power of adamant I wielded. Whether it was the name of Elbereth that temporarily froze the beast, or the unexpected shine of my sword, I know not.'

'We cannot leave Celeborn in the caves, daughter,' said Galdor. 'To lose both Celeborn and Glorfindel in a single night is a thing not to be considered.'

'We have lost neither of them yet, father. But if Glorfindel is not taken to Imladris immediately, he will surely die. And we cannot search the caves for

Celeborn. If the balrog still lives, that would be throwing away more lives for naught. For if Celeborn has been overcome in those caves, then so would we all, one by one. We must trust that Celeborn will return to us by the power that is in him.'

'If you could not find him, daughter, with the power and light that is in you, I surely could not. Especially as I am now. I will follow you in whatever you decide.'

'I would stay to wait for Celeborn, as the rest of you hurried to Imladris, if the company was larger, or stronger. But if we are attacked again on the way, I should be needed. You are a hale warrior, father, but even the bravest swordsman has need of his hands. You also we should be carrying to Imladris in haste, where your burns may be properly wrapped and tended. Until then you must continue to use this salve. And lest the pain become too great, I recommend packing your burns in snow once or twice an hour. Except your neck, father. That we will wrap in a cold cloth. But it would be dangerous to get the neck too cold. It would sap your vital strength even further.'

Once Nerien had tended the wounded, she gave orders to the rest to begin preparation for a quick journey down the mountain. The two largest horses were to carry the bier of Glorfindel, resting on a platform between them. The canopy of the shelter

was quickly cut down to act as a roof for the bier, as protection against the wet and cold. All provision, save three days supply of food, was to be left in the woods. This would allow all to ride with great speed to Imladris. Nerien now sent one rider ahead to prepare Imladris for their arrival. And they would leave another horse on the far side of the bridge for Celeborn.

It was five days, at a horse's trot, to Imladris. But the company hoped to make it in three. Nerien's only concern was the pace of Drabdrab. She was uncertain that the pony could keep up. She instructed one of the elves to stay close to Tomilo at all times. The vanguard, with the bier, could not wait for stragglers, but the Lady did not want the hobbit to become separated from the group and find himself alone.

Before noon the company had recrossed the bridge and was rushing down the mountain with all speed. Nerien rode beside the bier of Glorfindel. Galdor followed, hiding the pain of his hands within his gauntlets. Tomilo and his attendant brought up the rear.

After several miles they had outrun the storm. The snow and ice was moving north, or was content to stay in the higher elevations. The company came out below it, and the sky began to clear. By late afternoon the wind had switched round to the south and the cold also began to

relent. Everyone's spirits lightened just a bit.

They arrived at the first oakwoods on the western slopes. The land became less rocky and the horses found better footing in the soft soil. The pace increased and the company began to think that Imladris might be made in two days. As evening began to fall, they stopped momentarily at a stream, to let the horses drink and to refill their bottles. Tomilo lay down in the dry grass for a moment. His whole frame ached already from the ride and he wanted to curl up under a tree and sleep. None of them had had any sleep the night before, and his head was spinning. But then he looked over at the bier of Glorfindel, knowing that there was no plan to rest. The elves would now ride day and night until they were home.

The sun sank below the distant horizon, and the hobbit remounted Drabdrab. The company returned to the road and galloped off, bells ringing dimly through the dense trees. The pony struggled to keep up, but he was no match for the great steeds of the elves. Before long Tomilo and his elf companion were hundreds of yards behind. The bells were now out of ear shot. Tomilo could only occasionally see the white bier of Glorfindel reflecting the waxing moon whenever the company rushed through a clearing.

It was sometime after midnight. The moon was now riding behind them, almost reaching the dark line of

peaks they had just quitted. They were entering the lower arms of the Misty Mountains, as these reached out into the plains of Rhudaur. The woods of oak and fir had been left behind. Here the land became rocky once more, rising and falling in craggy prominences and deep cuttings. Tomilo and the elf were passing down a narrow corridor of rock, dotted with bushes that hung down like tufts of matted hair. Swifts jumped from crevice to crevice above them, sometimes letting out a mournful twittering in the gloom as they snatched insects from the air. The hobbit thought the main company must be leagues ahead. He had neither seen nor heard anything for what seemed like hours.

At that very moment he saw a group of riders in the distance, waiting in the shadows at the end of the rock corridor. At first he cried out in alarm: it was a trap. But the elf informed him that the riders were of their own company. All had stopped there for some reason.

As Tomilo and the elf rode up, they could see that the group was gathered around something just to the right of the path. It was a slain rider and his horse. The hobbit was informed that it was the rider Nerien had sent ahead to tell Imladris of their coming. The Lady stood by the body in confusion and wrath.

'I do not understand it,' she said. 'It has been centuries since an elf has had to fear attack from orcs in these mountains. We are more than ten leagues

south of the Mitheithel; not 30 leagues from Imladris. I had thought the balrog was alone—a terrible aberration. But now I see that it is not so. Evil has returned sooner than any thought. We were ill-advised to travel this late in the year at all, much less in the north. See, Eldaga's body has been hewn by many knives and pierced by many arrows. And the ground is much trampled. We must ride on, but there is a contingent of orcs abroad, and I should not be surprised if we met them on the road ahead. Have your weapons at hand! We can only hope they will not attack a company of elves on horseback.' She returned to her horse and pulled her blade from its sheath. The sword shone out blue in the pale moonlight. 'It is as I said. They are near. Father, stay close to me!'

The company returned to the road, riding at full tilt, but looking to both the right and left, scanning the trees and rocks for a glint of red armour or the point of a spear. Drabdrab began to lag again almost immediately, but the host did not notice. They had forgotten him in their new concern. The attendant still rode with the hobbit, but that was little comfort, especially as the ground began to lengthen between them and the main riders.

Forty minutes later the company was again out of sight of the hobbit and his single escort. Drabdrab was breathing hard and Tomilo was looking uneasily ahead, hoping beyond hope that they could make it

until morning without encountering the orcs. It must be only an hour or so until sunrise, he thought.

But it was not to be. The woods had opened again into a region of rocks. The rocks were no longer large prominences jutting from the earth. Instead, great boulders lay in weird formations on both sides of the path, casting fabulous moonshadows across the way. The moon herself had fallen below the peaks behind. But her light still reflected from the high thin clouds and cast an eery glow upon the upland landscape. Suddenly Tomilo and the elf heard dim shouts in the distance ahead and a dull scrape of weapons. Only seconds later arrows flew past them and went glancing off the stones.

The two riders urged their ponies on. They had gone only a hundred yards further, though, when the elf's horse went down with an orc arrow in its throat. Tomilo stopped and went back. He and Drabdrab immediately lay on the ground behind the fallen animal. The elf was already shooting at unseen (to the hobbit) targets around a grouping of stones. The horse had fallen in high grass just to the left of the road. Most of the orcs appeared to be on the right side. Several more orc arrows stuck in the body of the elf horse. Behind this breastwork, the hobbit found his mithril axe on Drabdrab's saddle. He felt the razor-like edge. The time had apparently come to use it.

In fact, the moment was now upon him. An orc

leapt over Drabdrab with a hideous cry, and fell right on top of the hobbit. He was already dead, though. The elf had cut his throat even as he reached for Tomilo. But many more orcs were rushing upon them from all sides. Tomilo pushed the foul goblin from off him and stood up. He swung the axe in a full circle, his eyes almost closed. He felt the weapon meet metal, and he looked just in time to see the axe cleave cleanly through the mail of an advancing orc, killing him instantly. The elf beside him was moving with lightning reflexes: he had killed four more orcs before the hobbit could raise his axe again. The other orcs paused in their attack, fearful to come too near the flashing knife of the elf. About fifteen remained. The rest of their force was ahead, attacking the main host of the riders.

The orcs were now conversing in their terrible tongue. The elf told Tomilo that they were planning to rush all at once. There was little hope: their blades were no doubt poisoned. A single nick would be fatal. Luckily the orcs had already exhausted all their arrows. Tomilo must swing his axe in a ferocious circle, he was told, to keep them at bay until the elf could kill them all. This plan might have some hope, said the elf, if the orcs had continued to attack in two and threes. But fifteen all at once would likely be too much. The elf took one of the dead orcs' knives in his left hand and prepared to make a last defense. The hobbit raised his axe in both hands.

Just then a silver arrow clove through the neck of the foremost orc. The sound of hooves broke upon them and a horse and rider passed by in a blur. Two more orcs fell, cut in half by a long sword. The others scattered. The rider rode them down, the orcs shrieking and casting off their weapons. The elf ran after one who turned back to elude the rider. He threw his knife into the back of the armourless goblin, piercing his heart exactly.

The rider returned after a few minutes. All the orcs had been ridden down, or shot by arrows. Tomilo could not see the rider's face. The hood from his dark mantle shadowed the moonlight from his features. But the elf ran up at once and cried out in joy,

'Ai! Lord Celeborn! You have come! Praise the Valar! The Lady Nerien said you were lost in the caves, and we feared you were dead. Your return is timely, for myself and the halfling. I had killed seven, but these last were preparing to come all at once!'

'Yes, Daephlas [for that was the elf's name], I found my way out of the caves at last. I searched long for the balrog, for I was wroth, and would be revenged for the death of Glorfindel. But the caves were endless, and the balrog ever far in advance. I came to places where an elf could not breathe, for lack of light and air, and found I must give up my quest. Hunting these orcs was a needed vent for my

anger, but I will never forget the Bridge of the Mitheithel, not though all the balrogs of Middle Earth be piled on the sharp point of Celebast!

'But My Lord, Glorfindel yet lives—or did when I last saw him. Did you not know? He is ahead with Nerien and Galdor, riding unconscious on a white bier. But it is not a funeral bier!'

'That is news indeed, Daephlas! My prayers to Mandos were not unheeded then.'

'No Lord. But we have heard sounds of battle from ahead. It may be that others of the orcs have attacked there as well. We should go now to their aid.'

'Yes, come up behind me. And you, Tomilo, follow us on your pony. This area is clean of orcs. We will meet none until we reach the others, if then.'

Celeborn and Daephlas galloped off on Feofan. Drabdrab and Tomilo followed as best as they could, but the two elves were soon out of sight.

'This is no good Drabbie. We keep getting left behind. If we get attacked now, we're as good as done for. How does Mr. Celeborn know there's no orcs right here? These boulders might be hiding hundreds of goblins and trolls and balrogs and who knows what else? I guess he looked at his blade and it wasn't blue; but those blades don't go blue for balrogs, do they? Or what about trolls? No, we've been left behind as shouldn't be. A dwarf axe isn't

no good against trolls and balrogs.

'Speaking of which, I have to tell Nerien about those balrogs in Moria. After I saw that one in the river with Lord Glorfindel, Drabbie, I knew for sure that the ones sleeping in the caves weren't any nightmare of mine. They weren't a delusion, like. Galka and the rest has got to get out of there, and fast! These balrogs may be waking up all over the place, in answer to Morgoth coming back. If that's the way of it, we've got to see that a message gets sent to Khazad-dum from Rivendell. They can send a bird or something, I hope. Things are just getting worser and worser, Drabbie. And here we are smack-dab in the middle of it. A few weeks ago I was mucking potatoes. Now I'm in the worst thing ever, a story as bad as *any* hobbit story.'



Chapter 11



*From the Lady's Swoon
to the Prince's Head*

Tomilo had ridden only a league when two elves came riding up the road toward him. Neither was Daephlas. Both were tall guards with a grey mantles and green shields. The shields were scarred and bloodied from recent fighting.

'My name is Gasan. This is Lasla. The Lady Nerien has instructed us to lead you to Imladris.'

'But what of the orcs? Shouldn't we all stay together?'

'The orcs have been routed. They will not dare to attack us again. We lost another elf to their poisoned arrows, and two more horses, alas; but we destroyed many tens of the foul creatures and others are being

hunted even now. And Lord Celeborn has returned. You have nothing to fear.'

Tomilo did not answer. But he remembered Glorfindel's promise in the room in Rhosgobel. He had all but guaranteed his safety. The hobbit was safe; but the promise had turned on the elf.

So Tomilo was glad to have two escorts, but he was not carefree by any means. Glorfindel had been too confident, and then Nerien—sending the messenger ahead to Imladris alone. Even Celeborn, thought Tomilo. Going into the caves in his wrath, without any knowledge of the risk or the danger. He was fortunate indeed to have come out again unscathed. What if Celeborn had chanced to find the balrog—or more than one! But the hobbit was the only one in Middle Earth who knew the possibility of that.

Yes, he was indeed. But even Tomilo did not understand why the balrogs had survived in such numbers, or why they had slept for so long.* For the truth was that few of these creatures had been utterly defeated in the Great Battles of the First Age—when the Valar had come from the West and defeated the hosts of Morgoth. As had been stated above, in the council, the Maiar could not be finally destroyed. They might lose their bodies. They might be diminished again and again, losing their powers to do good or evil. But while the earth itself lasted, they would persist in one form or another.

The balrogs were in the beginning

Maiar. Morgoth then turned them to darkness, and they became Valaraukar, demons of fire. The ranks of the Valaraukar included all of what are termed balrogs; but they also included Sauron—who was not strictly, or only, a balrog. And they included the dragons: close kin of the balrogs who had been twisted into even more terrible shapes of dread by Morgoth. In fact, the dragons had achieved such vast size and power only because Morgoth had passed some of his own strength into them. Just as Sauron had invested a portion of his strength into the One Ring, so Morgoth had invested himself into the dragons. In this sense, the greatest blow to Morgoth had been the defeat of Ancalagon the Black by Earendil. Morgoth had been forever diminished by the fall of that greatest of the dragons.

Saruman, too, had now joined the ranks of the diminished Valaraukar. He could never again take physical form. Nor was his power a tithe of his original gift from Iluvatar. But he persisted.

*This discussion of balrogs has been inserted by the editor. It may be of interest to some. [LT]

The Valaraukar that fled from the Valar at the end of the first age and hid in the east (the Misty Mountains were then considered 'east') were in complete thrall to Morgoth. In this they differed from Sauron. Sauron was Morgoth's first advisor, his chief tool, his protégé and his student. Sauron

was the greatest of the Maiar turned by Morgoth to evil. Where the other Valaraukar had been in fact diminished by their alliance with Morgoth, Sauron had been augmented. Most of the balrogs had been forcibly turned to darkness, by intimidation and threats. They had been 'broken.' Not so, Sauron. He had turned willingly. He had not even 'turned.' Like Morgoth, he had lusted after darkness from the beginning—or as soon as the light shone fairly on others.

So when Morgoth was bound in chains and taken away, only Sauron retained his full strength and his independence. In fact, Sauron's power increased once more. For, unknown to all (even to Manwe Sulimo), Morgoth had invested Sauron with a final measure of his own power, even as they cowered in Angband and the Valar advanced. It was Morgoth who instructed Sauron to make a pretense of rehabilitation. It was Morgoth who taught Sauron to invest his strength in external sources—the people and places of Middle Earth—that the seeds of darkness might be planted everywhere and bloom forever more. And it was Morgoth who told Sauron that he himself would return—at a time most unexpected by all.

The balrogs must need await this time, however, since they remained always under the direct dominion of Morgoth. Only the balrog thrown down by Gandalf had awakened before its time, and it had not done so of its own will, but had been

awakened accidentally by the dwarves of Khazad-dum.

And what of the balrog of the Bridge of Mitheithel, you may ask? The answer to that will soon be supplied by the narrative.

The road to Imladris was unchallenged for the rest of the journey, and Tomilo and his escort arrived there safely two days later. They found the rest of the company already settled in, having been there some six hours. Glorfindel was being tended by the Lady Nerien and Celeborn. Galdor's hands and neck were wrapped in white cloths, and his face also was bandaged. The elves of the valley had been thrown into grief by the news of the fall of their Lord and the attack of the balrog. No songs were heard but songs of lamentation and supplications to the West for healing. The songs to Elbereth had been replaced by songs to Este and Nienna.

The hobbit was exhausted, but he felt he must speak to Nerien before retiring. So he waited for her to finish her attentions on Glorfindel and then followed her from the room.

Once she was aware of him, she stopped and called him to her.

'My dear Tomilo, we have treated you with little consideration, and only our fears for the Lord Glorfindel can excuse us. Even so, we should not have neglected you. You have been left behind to fight orcs with little assistance, I hear. I hope you

and your pony have taken no hurt?'

'No, Lady. It was a close call, but Mr. Celeborn rode up just as the orcs were about to make us into pies. And Laephlas was very brave. I killed my first orc, but Laephlas killed at least a half dozen before Celeborn got the rest. I will have to think of some way to thank them both.'

'Do not concern yourself with it, Tomilo. The elves would have killed the orcs in their own defense, if not in yours. But I am glad you are here safely. Is there aught I can do for you before I retire? I must take some rest after our ride. Never have I felt so weary.'

'Then I am sorry to detain you. And I am very tired also. But there is something urgent I have to tell you, and it can't wait until morning. It is about the balrog.'

'The balrog?'

'Yes, Lady. That is not the first balrog I have seen on this journey.'

'You astonish me, Tomilo! Are you certain of what you say?'

'Indeed, Lady. I mean, I wasn't certain, until I saw the balrog in the canyon, and the wings and fire and all. But I saw a creature very like it when I was in Khazad-dum. Seven of them, in fact.'

'Why didn't you immediately inform King Mithi? And did anyone else see these seven balrogs?'

'No, Lady. That's just it. I was the only one who saw them; and Galka—my friend who is a dwarf

from Khazad-dum—who I was with in the caves—he said I must have been dreaming. And I hadn't eaten in a long time, and we had been climbing the stairs for many hours, and I was not myself. So I thought he might be right. But then I saw the balrog in the canyon, and I knew that I was not delirious in the caves. He was the same type of creature. I had never imagined a balrog, or dreamed of one before I left Farbanks, so why would I dream of one in the caves?'

'Where were these balrogs?'

'Deep down in the caves. We were lost, so I don't know exactly how deep. At the end of a very long stair, and then through a great hall. There was a weird fire and smoke, like in the canyon. And in the wall there was a fire. It was like the wall was fire, if you know what I mean, Lady. And the fire did not emit light, but ate it. And in the wall of fire were a sort of tombs—or like when statues are cut into in a wall. And in these vertical tombs were creatures, like the creature in the canyon. But they were asleep. Some were larger than others. Some had wings and others did not. But they were all very large. It was the most frightening thing I have ever seen.'

'Oh, Tomilo, that is not the news I would hear, now,' said Nerien, looking quite pale. 'I feel faint. Let us sit for a moment. We must consider what to do.' Nerien dropped heavily down onto a small stool that happened to grace the

hallway. Tomilo sat at her feet.

Finally she spoke. Her face was very white, and her voice trembled. Tomilo was disturbed beyond words to see her in such extremity. 'Call the Lord Celeborn to me,' she said at last. 'Tell him I will meet him in the Hall of Fire in a few moments. Tell him it is very urgent.'

Immediately Tomilo rose and ran off to find Celeborn. He found the guard Gasan first, and the elf took him to the chambers of Celeborn. Some quarter of an hour later they met Nerien in the Hall of Fire—at the northernmost point of the Last Homely House. They found her sitting on the floor in her shift, without cloak or other wrapping, gazing into the fire.

'You desired speech with me, Lady?' said Celeborn, looking upon her with concern.

'Yes,' she answered distractedly, not looking up from the fire. 'Tomilo, tell Celeborn what you have told me.'

When the hobbit had again related the strange story, Celeborn joined Nerien on the floor. He too had gone pale. After several minutes of silence, he spoke to her.

'Do you think Morgoth is here already? Is that why the balrog on the bridge was awake? And will these Valaraukar in Khazad-dum also awaken? Or are they already awakening, even now?'

'I do fear it,' she answered. 'We must send word to Moria at once. The dwarves are in great

danger. What birds have we here? We might send a hawk over the mountains to the Carrock, and an eagle could go quickly from there. He would be in Moria in a day or two. Or a thrush might be sent directly, without crossing the Hithaeglin.'

'Yes, and I think an elf—or more than one—should be sent on swift horses, in case the birds are shot down or intercepted by an enemy. It appears that war may have begun before any could have predicted. We would be wise to take every precaution. I will see to the birds and the riders now. But Lady, you should rest, regardless of this. And here, take this mantle. I fear you will take cold. Let me call for water. . . There is no more we can do today. And we must all take care to refresh ourselves. Our purest strength will be needed in the days ahead, and it would be foolish to languish now.'

'I say the same to you, Lord Celeborn. You have ridden long without rest and in great care. The finest herbmasters of Imladris are attending Glorfindel. It would be well for you to allow yourself to be tended also. You have wounds that have still not been dressed.'

'I give you my word, Lady, if you give me yours.'

'I do.'

With that, Celeborn swept from the room and saw to the messages. He gave the riders letters to Mithi, but did not tell the elves of their contents. He did not want to alarm Imladris further. The birds also were entrusted to secrecy. Celeborn then retired

once again to his rooms.

But the Lady remained on the floor. She lay down and stared again into the fire. The hobbit touched her arm.

'Lady, will you go to bed? I think you are not well.'

'No, Tomilo, I think I will rest here. Call my ladies. I will make a bed of cushions by the fire.'

The hobbit brought her attendants to her and instructed them to feed the Lady Nerien and to bathe her forehead and limbs and not to leave her. Once she began to take food, he excused himself and went to his own room. He slept long and deeply. And no balrogs disturbed his dreams within the walls of Rivendell.

The company returning from the council recuperated for many days. They mourned those lost on the mountain and tended the wounded. Glorfindel remained in a swoon and did not awaken, but he was well tended and all hope had not gone. Celeborn led the elves of the valley in his absence, and he had ordered an increased presence on the borders and more archers in the trees. Nerien and Galdor had decided to remain at Imladris for the time being. The Lady's healing powers were needed there, and Galdor desired to stay with his daughter. A messenger was sent on the Havens to inform Cirdan of the news from the council, as well as of the events at the bridge.

Tomilo also prepared to continue on west. He could not travel with the elves going in that direction, since they would be riding in haste and with all speed. He and Drabdrab would have to ride alone again. The hobbit had little fears of travelling on the Great East Road, however. It carried heavy traffic, especially beyond Bree, and Weathertop had been re-fortified by the Kingdom of Arnor. There were settlements of Men in the South Downs and the Weather Hills, and no evil thing had been seen beyond the Hoarwell since the fall of Sauron. Tomilo and Drabdrab might ride quickly past the Trollshares, but even that wood was near enough to the influence of Rivendell to pose small threat.

The hobbit was out in the stables, talking to Drabdrab about the road ahead and making sure his trough was properly stocked with treats. The pony liked a bit of green to go with his hay and oats, and Tomilo was in the habit of sneaking him some of the last salad shoots of the season, usually kept in the kitchens and strictly for the elves and their two-legged guests. There were even some wrinkled apples left from the cellars: most were going to make cider, but ponies with accomplices inside also found themselves with a nibble or two.

Suddenly Tomilo heard a great flapping and a loud call from the sky. He went out of the stable and looked up just in time to see an eagle arriving from the East. He wondered if a message had already

come back from Moria. Giving Drabbie a final stroke on the nose, he ran back into the house to find out what had happened.

No word was given to the house at large for several hours. The Lord Celeborn was in council with the eagle, and it was said that Nerien and Galdor had joined him. It was not until well after sundown that a meeting was called in the Council Room. Celeborn addressed the assembly with a stern face.

'Elves of Imladris and the Havens! (he forgot Tomilo for the moment). We have suffered great loss in the past fortnight. Some of us have lost our kinsmen, and all of us feel deeply the fall of our Lord Glorfindel. Only the Valar can say when he will rise again among us. But know now that our grief is not unshared. Know that our tragedy is not the only tragedy. We have news from Erebor. The Lonely Mountain has been attacked by dragons. Two of them came from the north, we are told, and fell upon the city of the dwarves before any were aware of it. Many of the people of Durin have perished. Erebor is not sacked, however. The dragons were on an errand, it is said, and did not stay once they had achieved their fell purpose. The tomb of Thorin Oakenshield has been broken and opened. The Arkenstone of Thrain taken. The rest of the mountain survived untouched. But many of the dwarves have fled to the Iron Hills, nonetheless. The rest are fortifying and preparing

for war. They have sent word to their people in the south to send reinforcements. It is not now known what may be done. These are the tidings brought by Laymir, Lord of the Eagles.

'Many of you may be asking, with whom have the dwarves gone to war? Who is the enemy? Whence the dragons? And I have heard other questions asked in these halls before today. Questions put in hushed voices. Whence the balrog? And whither? At whose call? And why now? I am here to answer these questions, in part. The attack on Erebor allows me to hold the information from a more general knowledge no longer. The Council at Rhosgobel, from which we were returning when we found it necessary to travel over the Bridge of the Mitheithel, was called at the instigation of Cirdan the Shipwright, who had news from the West. The news is that Morgoth has returned.'

At this, a hush fell over the room. Then several elves cried out in grief, calling out to Elbereth to protect them. But Celeborn continued, 'Yea, we may need not only the goodwill of the Valar, but even their power, for this is an enemy beyond any of our reckoning. Morgoth has given up his physical form in order to escape from beyond the Walls of the World. He is now a wraith. We do not yet know for certain that he has arrived here in Middle Earth, or begun setting up an abode in any place. But the attacks of the balrog and of the dragons certainly suggest in the strongest possible way that he is here,

somewhere, probably in the far north. The dragons fled in that direction. It is hoped that the balrog has also left the Misty Mountains and returned to his master. Or, what would be better, that it has perished of the cuts of Glamdring and Celebast, and the hand of Glorfindel.'

At this, Tomilo turned to Lasan beside him to ask a question in a whisper. 'What did the Lord Celeborn mean, "the cuts of Glamdring." I thought Glamdring was the sword of Gandalf—that he found in the troll's cave.'

'It was. But Mithrandir passed Glamdring on to the Lady, before he set sail into the West. Galadriel had been a friend of Nerien, and I believe it was she who told the wizard of Nerien's need for a weapon. The Lady has borne it eversince.'

Several more days passed in worry and grief. Though Rivendell was in great turmoil, Tomilo prepared to leave. He felt there was nothing he could do to help, and he only seemed to be in the way. So early on the morning of the 29th of Blotmath, after retrieving Drabdrab from the stables, he said a few distracted good-byes to Nerien and Galdor and Celeborn. The Lady Nerien's face was dark, and circles had appeared under her shining eyes. Celeborn also looked worn and unsettled. Galdor's hands were still wrapped in bandages, and his face was scarred red by the recent burns. They waved as Tomilo and Drabdrab rode

out of the valley of the Last Homely House, but few words of hope or encouragement had been spoken. Even the elves in the trees were silent. The hobbit heard not one note of song as he passed the long line of white stones out of the foothills.

When he and Drabdrab came to the Bruinen Bridge, they found it just thrown down, and they had to cross by wading. The bridge had been put up as a convenience two hundred years earlier; but the news from the north and east had returned the elves to their old isolation, and the bridge was no more.

Tomilo was travelling alone, but despite the Lady Nerien's other troubles and duties, she had not forgotten to make arrangements for his safe conduct through the wilds. She still felt that she had not taken proper care of him in the mad rush down from the Mitheithil. Already a company of elves had passed along the Great East Road, travelling back to Mithlond. They had scouted out all the lands between the Bruinen and Weathertop. They had reported back to Nerien that no sign of the enemy was to be seen anywhere. And even as the hobbit departed, other bands had been sent out by Celeborn, especially to the north, to patrol the eastern reaches of Rhudaur. The elves of Rivendell wanted to be certain that no more bands of orcs had come down from the mountains.

Nonetheless, the road was a long and weary one: no amount of scouting or scouring could change that. It was rather lonely and miserable, though the

hobbit saw no more snowfall. It remained unseasonably cold, but the sky was clear, for the most part. Some week-old snow carpeted the forest floor under the Trollshades, but the bright sun had cleared all the unshaded lands about them.

On the fourth day from Rivendell they reached the Last Bridge. Unlike the other bridges of Eriador, it had fallen into disrepair. It was not used by the men of Arnor, since they had no reason to travel east beyond it. And the elves had not been upon the road in great numbers in recent years. Few of them had fled to the Havens in the fair years since Sauron's fall, and those that had did not care what state the bridges they left behind them were in. Besides, elves were content to wade streams and travel in the wilds, off the roads of men. They had never been bridge builders or maintainers of straight paths.

Tomilo and Drabdrab saw nothing of interest until they reached Weathertop many days later. Here they looked up at the new fortress with white flags waving in the breeze. Amon Sul had been rebuilt, and it now housed a strong garrison. The walls rose in a circle to a crenelated walkway, then continued up to a sharp point hundreds of feet above the road. Finally the hobbit felt completely safe again. He waved to the guards on the battlements, and they smiled down upon him. Had they known of the information he carried, they would have met him on the road and taken them to their

captains. But they assumed he was only a hobbit on some errand of trade, and let him pass on. News would be reaching them soon from Fornost, anyway, concerning recent events; and the Weather Hills would swell with new soldiers in the coming months.

There were other changes on the Great Road beyond the outlying towers of Arnor, and Tomilo now began to reach these as well. On the far side of the Midgewater Marshes the hobbit and his pony passed a tavern and then an inn, both there to serve the off-duty warriors of Arnor as well as the new settlements of men on the South Downs. At the turn to Archet was another inn, this one frequented by hobbits. But still Tomilo did not stop. He planned to spend that night at *The Prancing Pony*.

At last the road turned gently northwards in a long arc and he came to the dike and the hedge of Bree. No guard stopped him: the South Gate was no more. The guard station had been removed as well. An ironwork arch had been installed in its place, spanning from hedge to hedge, and announcing in fancy letters 'Welcome to Bree!' The road passed beneath without obstruction or impediment.

Tomilo looked from side to side in amazement. Bree had grown since he had been there last. Indeed, it had grown steadily since the Fall of Sauron. The stone houses of the Big People, up on the hill, now numbered almost two hundred. And

the Little People had swelled in like proportion. The town had outgrown the hedge, even; and beyond the dike were many houses of both peoples (although more of the Big People, since the hobbits did not often build houses—especially on such flat ground). Tomilo had passed a few coming up to the South Gate. And on the other side of the West Gate were many more, reaching all the way down to the Fornost Road.

The Prancing Pony had also changed, although not greatly. Blin Butterbur, of the original Butterbur family, had added a third wing to accommodate guests from Arnor, about a century ago now, it was. And his grandson Efim presently had his name on the sign out front: THE PRANCING PONY, *by Efim Butterbur*. But one thing had certainly not changed: the inn was still a constant bustle, and the innkeeper as well. Even from the road the hobbit could hear loud clapping and laughing, and could see the shadows of rushing bodies crisscrossing in the yellow light from within.

He left Drabdrab at the bottom of the steps and approached the great doors, open a crack even in the chilly weather—the better to draught the three fireplaces, and to ventilate the pipesmoke. The old curtains in the front windows still gamely tried to block the light from leaking out into the street; and, by the look of it, the decades of smoke and dust they had accumulated were helpful in this regard. Tomilo couldn't help but think that these might be the very

curtains that had hung there in the time of Old Barliman himself. Some of Strider's smoke might be mingled in the ancient smell of that now-colourless fabric.

At last the hobbit drew himself up and entered the poorly lit room, moving sideways across the great threshold in order to squeeze between the heavy doors. No sooner had he set foot in the room, though, than a young girl in an untied apron ran directly into him with an *umph* and an Oh My!, and he found himself with several mugs of beer down his shirtfront. There was a roar from the tables, and a small squat man with a large head of grey hair and half-spectacles ran into the room from the kitchen with a comical look on his face.

'Loi!' he cried, and the girl looked abashedly at her feet—also drenched in the Pony's finest. 'If you'd manage to spill a drop or two down the customers' throats occasionally, perhaps they wouldn't mind a'paying for it. As 'tis, I've got some difficulty making back my investment in hops, don't you see? We've give away more today in "on the house" replacements and in laundry tokens than any man could ever hope to sell by the usual inducements.'

The room roared again, and one man from a nearby table called to Loi to spill some more on him—he could use another 'on the house', being out of money himself (he said with a wink).

Loi ran into the kitchen in the height of confusion, and the grey-haired man led Tomilo to a

table. 'Here you be, Sir,' he said, still dabbing the hobbit with a damp white towel. 'I'll have Essa over here in a minute with a beer. *And* a mug,' he added with a smile. 'Don't you worry, Essa's a bit more level-like with the trays than Loi. But Loi's a sweet thing, as you saw. And she 'as to learn sometime. Though I do hope she learns a bit quicker, as I will admit. Otherwise I'll go broke from sheer loss of liquid. Now, Sir, here's a token. You take it next door to the lady and she'll have that shirt laundered in a jiffy. And she'll give you a dry smock to don for the nonce, I'll warrant.'

Tomilo was quite amused by the whole proceeding, and thought a wet shirt a small price to pay for such a show. He suspected that a good portion of the room felt likewise, for they had not stopped listening since he came in.

The man continued, 'I am Efim Butterbur, what name is on the sign outside, although I can't take credit for the painting—which is by the hand of my nephew Fedot. If you'd like to see more of his work—which most *do*—I recommend the baker's, where you can see a sign painted this very month, of some of the prettiest loaves you ever laid eyes upon. Not to speak of the sign near the West Gate, what announces the turn to Fornost Erain. And if some has said that the Prince's head is too big, I can only say they should go there—Fornost, I mean—and measure it themselves, and then they will see.' He said this last looking around at the room

over his spectacles, and the company roared again. But Mr. Butterbur did not seem offended by this final outburst, and he retired to the kitchen also.

As soon as he had gone, a hobbit leaned over from a nearby table and addressed Tomilo. 'Loi and Essa be his own girls. So we all make a game of it. Honestly, it will be quite a shock to our changepurses when the girls do learn to carry a tray of mugs. We've drunk a river of free beer, as there's no denying.'

Tomilo had a bit of supper, and gave orders for the care of Drabdrab before retiring to his room. He would have liked to have stayed up late and traded stories with the hobbits of Bree, as the stories appeared to be numerous and rich. But he knew he must leave early in the morning, and the fun at The Prancing Pony would have to wait for another time.

But he did have one more bit of colour before quitting that fine establishment. The next day he awoke at 6am and sauntered groggily into the common room to find Loi serving him his breakfast. The room was now almost empty, it being too early for the revellers of the night before. Apparently Master Butterbur was still abed as well. Without so many eyes upon her, Loi was calmly attentive, and nothing was spilled or burnt or otherwise spoilt. But she was such a pretty lass, being perhaps fourteen or so; and she had such a bright eye, that Tomilo found himself looking at her instead of his pot of tea. And before he knew it, the

whole thing, cup and saucer and pot and all were swimming on the floor, with his toast floating on the top. He jumped up and apologized for the mess, feeling that somehow justice had been done—but he couldn't say exactly how. But Loi only laughed and said, 'Well, Sir, it is easy to do, you see!'



Chapter 12



Oakvain the Old

Drabdrab had been privy to no such minor adventures, and he was ready to be off. So that fine morning he trotted gaily up the road and through the Western arch and under the hedge and over the dike, bumping Tomilo up and down and up again. A few hundred yards past the dike, the East Road crossed the Fornost Road (that had been the Greenway). Even at this early hour much traffic was upon it, going both north and south. The carts moving north were the more numerous however, since many of them were making their way from the settlements of men on the South Downs to the capital of Arnor at Fornost Erain. Much of the

foodstuffs of Arnor was grown in the vicinity of the South Downs, or upon the pastures just to the south of the settlements. Large vans of provision also came up from Gondor, especially in the winter months when little would grow in the north. The farms of Gondor often had greenstuff well into early winter, and what they couldn't grow they might trade for from even farther south. The deserts of Harondor had been made to yield corn and barley again, as well as other crops. And since the fall of Sauron, trade had recommenced with Umbar and Harad as well. Fruits and spices and teas arrived in Minas Mallor from the south in great wains—replacing the wains that had carried warriors and weapons in former times. And tall ships with brightly coloured sails were oared by strong men with sunburnt skin up the Anduin from ports far to the south, in regions unknown and unnamed to any in Eriador. In Osgiliath they unlade their cargoes of oranges and grapes and olives and cinnamon and cardamom, while taking on the products of the north—potatoes and apples and oats and lumber and great wealth of minerals.

Some of the carts and vans on the road by Bree that morning were carrying oranges to Fornost that had been on trees in Umbar only three weeks earlier. Even fresher fruit (by a few days) might be had from the Grey Havens, where it arrived directly from the south in sleek ships, avoiding the delays of the overland route. In fact, for the Prince's table, the

freshest food was shipped right up the River Lune and thence to the River Even, less than twenty leagues from Annuminas. It was said that such fruit arrived with the dew still on it, although those wits in the court of Arthedain were wont to add that the dew, on closer inspection, tasted of salt.

But Tomilo did not stop to purchase spices, or any other delicacy, that day. Nor did he take Efim Butterbur's advice to go to Fornost—to see the Prince's head (but if the man's head was as large as the portrait on the sign, thought Tomilo, it would merit a long line of sightseers). No, he was anxious to return to the Shire, and now that he was within a few days' journey, his impatience began to grow. There was one last detour, however, before he might reach his own lands: he must return the pony to Bombadil.

After such a long time, it would not have made much difference, perhaps, if he had kept Drabdrab another fortnight, to carry him to Tuckborough and then back to Farbanks. But the hobbit felt he had already quite overdrawn on Bombadil's kindness, and he wished to return the pony with all speed. For this reason they left the East Road some few miles from the crossroads—where it made a great bend to the north—and continued due west across the downs to the Old Forest.

This land was still bleak and mostly treeless, but it was no longer deserted. The spirits of the

barrowwights had been released of their vassalage to Sauron upon the destruction of the One Ring, and they had gone wherever it is that the spirits of men go, for good or for ill. Their barrows had been emptied and the contents scattered, and nothing but a few tumuli and strangely scored stones were left to show that men had once lived there. For this was now a land farmed by hobbits

On the east side of the Greenway the farms belonged to men of Arnor. The South Downs had no hobbit settlements, or mixed settlements of the Bree sort. But on the west side of the Great South Road, the farms and small towns were all inhabited by hobbits. This segregation of the Big People and the Little People had not come about by any plan or passage of law; it had simply happened. There was some trade between the two sides; but like the towns round about Lake Nenuial, the two peoples preferred to keep to themselves. They had their own histories, their own calendars, their own customs, their own speech. It was simply easier, and more comfortable, to be among their own kind.

So as Tomilo rode through the farmlands of the Barrow-downs (the inhabitants had kept the name—as a colourful reminder of a time they knew little of) he already began to feel that he was home. He waved to an old hobbit in a worn hat, checking his field of winter rye. In the spring he would plow it under as fertilizer for his main crop—tobacco, of course.

Farther on he came to the hills themselves. Here is where the scattered towns had sprung up, since the soil on the downs tended to be chalky and unsuitable for farming. Tomilo stopped for a pint at the Gorthad Inn* in Shaly (pop. 18) and decided to stay the night. The weather had turned beastly cold during the afternoon, and the hobbit had had more than enough of it by sundown. He ordered a meal that the proprietor called the 'hobbit special'—meaning everything the kitchen had on hand or could borrow from next door. After filling in all the corners of his waistcoat, he took his apple cores and a lump of sugar to Drabdrab before turning in for the night.

The next day, the hobbit and his pony arrived at the eaves of the forest. They entered the woods near the source of the Withywindle. Drabdrab knew the area like the top of his front hooves, and Tomilo had long since given up the reins. Truth be told, there hadn't been five times that the hobbit had signalled the pony since Rivendell. The reins had hung slack for most of the journey. Drabdrab didn't really need the bridle at all, and he might have gone like the elf horses if Tomilo had thought about it. But he had been given the pony with bit and bridle and he would return the pony with bit and bridle. Improvisation was never a longsuit of the little people, for better or for worse.

*The owners of this inn had taken its name from

'Tyryn Gorthad'—meaning 'the dreaded hills' {Sindarin}. They themselves did not know the meaning of the words: they had simply liked the word 'gorthad,' which somehow seemed a fat and happy word by hobbit reckoning.

Tom Bombadil and Goldberry no longer lived in their house on the edge of the forest. The hobbit settlements on the Downs had driven them further into the trees, several miles down the Withywindle. Their new house was, in fact, more than a third of the way to Haysend, buried deep in the middle of the Old Forest, beyond the curiosity of hobbit children. Besides, any hobbits wandering into the woods from the east would have been caught in the traps of Old Man Willow long before inconveniencing Tom and Goldberry. But this had not been a danger (for either side) for centuries. The hobbits already told stories to their young about the Old Forest, and not even the bravest hobbitchild from the Downs ever risked all the guaranteed horrors promised to the overcurious by their parents. The bedtime tales of goblins and witches that had been invented and prospered on the west side of the woods, in the Shire, had leapt the Brandywine and transplanted themselves in the cradles and small beds of the Downs. There was even talk in Shaly of building a wall to keep the terrible forest creatures from creeping into their homes at night. They knew of the High Hay of

Buckland (the hedge-wall); and perhaps the only thing that kept such a project from being attempted was lack of stones, or of the proper bushes.

Tom and Goldberry's old house at the source of the Withywindle was now abandoned. The hobbits could see it from the downs, but none went there. It was rumoured to be a house of sprites (as indeed it had been): but sprites could either be good or evil, and none wanted to risk making the wrong guess about which it was in this case. There were indeed spells set about it that would keep any from entering it or appropriating it. Not dangerous spells, but efficacious ones nonetheless.

Tomilo and Drabdrab passed on up the river valley. They skirted Old Man Willow without incident. The hobbit got dreadfully sleepy, but the pony ignored the whispered songs of the great tree and moved on down the path before his rider could fall off and come to grief.

The forest was already full of snow. It weighed down the branches and fell into the stream from the laden trees with intermittent splashes, surprising the hobbit and bringing him out of his soporific thoughts. As first he thought fish were rising, but then he remembered it was the middle of winter. The fish wouldn't be flopping about, nor beavers neither. No, the woods were mostly quiet. A few winter birds fluttered by occasionally and the wind swirled a bit of snow into the air, making the hobbit sniffle. But Drabdrab's soft clip-

clap, muffled by the carpet of white, was the only constant noise. Once or twice a deer, startled by their approach, looked at them with anxious eyes before bounding away. And a couple of times an hour they might scare up a pair of rabbits, digging for shoots in the snow along the path's edge. Otherwise, they were alone under the dim sun and the even dimmer shadows to right and left.

After many hours they came to a place where the path had been cleared. The snow was piled high on each side in great mounds, as if a giant had walked through with a foot-plough, and this his wake. Drabdrab raised his ears and sniffed the air. Suddenly he broke into a trot, bouncing Tomilo up and down in the saddle and waking him fully from his afternoon reverie. The hobbit stared hard at the end of the path, expecting something—or someone—to appear. But they jogged on for another mile, at least, before the trees began to recede and they found themselves in a narrow clearing. At the end of the clearing was a yellow house with a flagstone chimney and white windows. A fragrant wood-smoke from a fire on the hearth could be smelled drifting down the valley. As they got closer, Tomilo could see that the front door was blue, with a shiny bell-pull in the very middle. He wondered at this: the inhabitants of the house couldn't get many visitors in this location!

Well-tended gardens led up to the house on either side of the path, although these were not presently at

their most showy, of course. But even now, in early winter, holly bushes and other finely trimmed evergreens were surrounded by a myriad of clever little paths and the occasional seat of stone. And on the south end of the house stood an orchard of nut and fruit trees—all bare and lovely in their nakedness. Two silver birches, slender and tall, rose out of fragrant earth on each side of the front steps. Their beautiful white bark was dotted with black spots, like eyes. The windows of the house were covered with winter shutters, and on the shutters were carved marvellous designs: trout and salmon, otters and muskrats, herons and kingfishers swam and romped and dove among river grasses and reeds and winding weeds. And a little ditch of running water burbled right along the front of the house, directly underneath the windows—and even making a short tunnel beneath the steps before rushing away to meet the Withywindle.

As there was no gate, Drabdrab took Tomilo to the front of the garden and gave a loud snort. The hobbit was too intent in looking at all the ornaments on the house to remember to dismount and ring the bell, but the pony was in some hurry to call Master Bombadil, and then to see his pony friends in the stables.

Immediately after Drabdrab called, Tom Bombadil himself leapt out upon the porch and bumped down the stairs, making a huge commotion

and talking at the top of his lungs. His boots were of a colour to match the house, as we all know, and his jacket was the exact colour of the door. They might have been dyed in the same pot. He had a huge white napkin still tied about his neck, which he took no notice of, except to wipe his hands upon it as he stomped down the path.

The hobbit heard nothing of Bombadil's first comments—he was too interested in the man's boots. He had thought Galka's boots to be large, but these would have swallowed Galka's whole. . . might have swallowed Galka whole. They bordered on the ludicrous. Were they overshoes, perhaps? Or could anyone's feet possibly be that large? Hobbits had rather large feet themselves (and were proud of it); but this was perhaps taking the whole thing too far.

At any rate, Tomilo had no more time to consider it, as Bombadil arrived and slapped him on the back and shook his hand and asked him so many questions in such a short time that he couldn't remember what the first question was. So he just sat and nodded.

'And there's my pony! Back from his trip circumnavigating Middle Earth and the outer reaches of mapmaking!' began Tom again, walking circles around Drabdrab and patting him on head and withers and haunch—checking his tail for burrs and his ears for mites. 'And the hobbit has rode back with him! You're a bit out of your way: from Farbanks, I believe Radagast said. You didn't need

to bring him back personally, although Goldberry will be glad to meet you and shake your hand for it. She's been wanting company this fortnight, with the snows and all, and here you are, come riding up all merry and red-cheeked and stout as a summer goose in a field of caterpillars! Hop down here my hearty! And Tom lifted the hobbit like a bundle of straw, plopping him down on the garden path with an 'oomph' and a chuckle.

'*That's* health! And here's to ye!' continued Bombadil, slapping the surprised hobbit on the back again and directing him into the house. 'Take yourself up those stairs, Lad, over the bubbling brooklet and into the water kingdom of Tom and Goldberry. Whistle a pretty tune when you get inside and the Lady will like it all the better! I've got to take my favourite pony to see his mates, and to give him a merry bite and a proper song. But I'll be along presently. Don't start without me, if there's mushrooms!'

With that, Tom began scampering about Drabdrab, dancing a mostly rhythmless dance in his yellow boots and almost pulling the pony along, like a dance partner. As the hobbit walked up the stone steps, he could hear Tom's song begin.

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*The pony trotted a trotted along  
a clippy a cloppy a neighing a song.  
His rider bopped on his back a bump bump*

*a bouncing along on his rumpity rump!  
The rider he opened his mouth to keep time  
but he couldn't a follow the clever horse rhyme.  
His words and his bumps wouldn't quite come together  
~like thunder and lightning in inclement weather.  
First a word, like a flash of scary white light!  
then a bump like a thump of noise in the night!  
Word bump a bump word a bumpity word  
like the broken wing of a wumpity bird.  
And the rider he fell in the muddy mud puddle  
His tongue and his rump, all in a muddle.*

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From the threshold Tomilo watched Bombadil disappear round the corner of the house, still whistling and singing, with a *Merry dol* and a *Derry dol* to fill the pauses between made-up songs. After he had gone, the hobbit turned to look into the house. As his eyes became used to the fading light of evening, he saw a large room filled with yellow candles and carpeted with rushes. Great bowls of clear water were set about the room, and the light shone through them. No lilies floated upon the waters in this season, only a few lovely dead leaves of yellow and red.

A fire also there was: it threw a red glow across the room from the left and mixed with the light of the candles. Large stoneware jugs were standing along one wall; and terracotta pots as well, fancifully painted with the same characters as were on the

shutters outside. Near the fire a kettle was on the hob, and a lady lifted it and began pouring some steaming liquid into three sturdy cups of fired clay. Then she turned to the hobbit and spoke.

'Come, Tomilo, and drink! I am Goldberry, daughter of the river.'

'Um. . . Good evening, Goldberry,' stammered the hobbit. 'I have never seen a house like this. So. . . watery. Or riverish, if you know what I mean, Lady. But these rushes are soft on my feet, even though they are no longer green!'

'Yes. It is here as it is in the riverbed. All is gentle and flowing.'

'Oh, I see,' answered the hobbit, still rather confused. 'And you say the river is your father? I wonder, what does that mean, exactly?'

'I was born of the river. I am the river daughter.'

'Oh. Who is your mother, then?'

'The earth is my mother. The river is the seed and the earth is the womb, and I am the child.'

'Oh. But you are a person. Can the Witherwindle also be a person if he wants to?'

'My! Tomilo, you are inquisitive, are you not? You desire to know everything, I suppose. About my sisters, and where they live and who they are married to and if we have children and how they are born and what sort of clothes we swaddle them in.'

'Yes, all that. For a start. And then we can talk about Tom Bombadil and his parents.'

Goldberry laughed. 'We are not mortals, Tomilo. So we do not have parents in the same way you have parents.'

'But elves are not mortals, and they have parents.'

'We are not elves, either.'

'Is Tom Bombadil the son of the river? Or maybe of another river?'

'No. Tom is the Master. His only sire is Middle Earth herself. He was always here. And always will be.'

'He will never sail away over the sea?'

'No. He did not come from there. Nor is he called there. This is his place. You might say, he *is* this place.'

'I do not understand you. What place? This house, you mean? Or this forest?'

'No. Middle Earth is Tom's place. Today we are here. Tom is here because Goldberry is the daughter of this river. But tomorrow he may be someplace else.'

'And will you go with him?'

'No, this is my place. Not all of Middle Earth, but only this river valley. Tom goes, and Tom returns. Remember Tomilo, we do not measure years as you do.'

Just then Tom Bombadil himself returned to the house. He still wore his white napkin about his neck. 'Hoy there! My Lady and my stout friend! Did you save any dinner for Tom? I can't eat

raw oats and barley!'

'The dinner is keeping warm,' replied Goldberry. 'And I have been kept busy answering many questions. Our guest is a curious one.'

'Is he, then? Well, I am curious, too. I am curious to know how curious a stout hobbit must be to forget to eat? My pretty Lady is very fascinating, Mr. Fairbairn, is she not? I myself have forgotten to eat for years, just looking at my lovely Goldberry. And even then I did not get hungry. However, let us eat and look upon her at the same time, then we shall be doubly satisfied—and we won't lose any weight for our love, either, hey! Hah, hah.'

Goldberry smiled at the hobbit, as if to say she was used to such outlandish compliments from the Master. Then she and Tom whisked the hobbit into a chair at an already set table, and placed hot food upon it.

'You will have to forgive us, Tomilo,' said Bombadil. 'We had already begun eating when you arrived. We had thought you would be here hours ago. But apparently you have been dawdling—looking at the rabbits and deer and the snow in the woods. Drabdrab tells me if he hadn't snorted occasionally you would have fallen off altogether, and still been asleep in a snowdrift under Old Man Willow. But don't worry, we have enough and to spare. You eat potatoes, I dare say?'

Tomilo *did* eat potatoes, and much of them. In

fact he had much of everything, and much of seconds after that. Between them, he and Bombadil dispatched several hot loaves, three puddings, and a mountain of potatoes. Goldberry ate a small trout and a single potato. Also some berries and cream. They all had cup after cup of hot drink, that Tomilo thought tasted of apples, or perhaps pears. But there were hints of other fruits and sweet herbs that Tomilo was unfamiliar with. It reminded him somewhat of the drink of the elves, but this was more earthy. It was richer and cloudier. It smelled of rain in the grass and on the rocks, rather than of dew on the upper leaves of the trees.

After dinner the three sat by the fire, and Tomilo asked many more questions of both of them. Finally he asked the question he had been wanting to ask ever since he had first seen Drabdrab. Could Bombadil tell him more of the saddle?

'Yes, well,' began the Master, finally noticing the napkin around his neck and having Goldberry help him untie it. 'You see Radagast couldn't be expected to know much of that saddle. He could tell you what it said, maybe; but he had not yet arrived at the Havens—with the other wizards, you know—when that saddle came to me. Arethule was the son of Meodlin and the grandson of Meomir, Tomilo. You met Meonas at the council. Meonas is the younger brother of Meodlin, you see. At first, Meodlin stayed in Harlindon when Celebrimbor and Meonas left to found Hollin. He and Meonas had never been close,

the elder brother being more fiery and less temperate than the younger, as is often the case. Meodlin had the capricious will of his father and grandfather. He also had their form: very tall and very dark, with an arch brow and a long fine nose. Meonas was always less in strength and beauty than his brother. But he had perhaps the better mind. His powers of concentration were certainly superior.

'At any rate, Meodlin did not come to Hollin until war broke out there. Once Sauron unmasked himself and began preparing to march on the city of Ost-in-Edhil, Meodlin and many other elves rode to its defense from the west. Elrond also came, sent by Gil-galad. But they were overwhelmed by the forces from Mordor, and forced to retreat in disarray. Elrond escaped to the north, and founded the city of Imladris with some of the refugees from Eregion. But Meodlin and many others had fallen in battle and would not return to the forests of the coasts.

'One of the stories of this battle, Tomilo—one that is remembered by few, now that Elrond and Galadriel and Gildor and so many others have sailed—is the story of Arethule. Now Arethule was but a boy when his father went to war in Eregion, so he was left with his mother in the forests of Harlindon*. After a few months his father sent a present to him from Hollin. The great battle was still weeks away, and no one foresaw the complete disaster it would be. The elves had fortified the city,

with much help from the dwarves, and they felt safe in their strength of numbers. So Meodlin had instructed one of the artisans of Hollin to make a saddle for his small son, who was just then learning to ride. He sent this saddle with a pony and messages to his wife. It was the last they were to hear of him.

'Arethule, however, being like to all the first sons of his line, was headstrong and surpassing willful. The day after he received the saddle he left Harlindon and rode alone to the east, seeking his father, though he was less than four hundred years old (seven or eight, by your reckoning, Tomilo, I think). He became lost on the journey, arriving at the mouths of the Greyflood—some sixty leagues too far south. By the time he reached Eregion, the war was over. The elves had fled to the north, and Arethule was caught in front of the returning armies of Mordor. He hid himself along the banks of the Glanduin, it is told, and so escaped detection. Once Sauron and his armies had passed, Arethule continued on to the city of Ost-in-Edhil. It was naught but smoking ruins when he came upon it. A single dwarf was scouring the rubble, looking for survivors (or trinkets) when the elfchild came riding by. He told Arethule that Elrond and the other elves had fled to the north, toward the Bruinen. The child asked the dwarf if Meodlin—a great Prince of the Noldor—was with them. But the dwarf could not say. The name was unknown to him. He knew of a

Lord Meonas—a similar name—but Meonas had gone over the mountains long ago.

*The elves of Nimbrethil had moved to Harlindon sometime before the destruction of Doriath. It is not known how the inhabitants of Doriath knew to leave, anticipating the flooding of the entire region in the War of Wrath. But it is assumed that they were warned, perhaps by Osse, or by Ulmo himself.

'With nothing else to do, Arethule followed the trail of the fleeing elves. But he was soon pursued by orcs and wargs and other fell creatures, and he became lost once more. For some reason he crossed the Hoarwell below its meeting with the Bruinen, and so never came to Imladris. It is said he wandered in Eriador for many months or years, searching for the elves. Finally he perished in the wild, whether from hunger or at the hand of one of the enemy, no one knows. It may be he died of grief, believing his father and all the elves to have been destroyed by Sauron.

'I found this saddle in one of the hoards of the Barrow-downs. Perhaps it had been discovered by one of the wights countless years ago, and kept as part of his terrible treasure. Many strange things have I reclaimed from those tombs, objects of beauty and craftsmanship from the hand of man and elf. And there is no one now left to claim them—none who know the story even as a legend.'

'But Meonas might!' interrupted the hobbit. 'If I understand you, this Arethule was his nephew.'

'Meonas never met Arethule, or knew of him but by distant songs. He has never asked me for this saddle, regardless.'

'How did anyone know to sing songs of Arethule? How do you know this story, Master?'

'I pieced it together over many centuries. Some of it is conjecture, but it is correct as a whole, if not in detail. It is known he came to Hollin, and it is known he came late, for the dwarf reported it. And it is known he became lost in Eriador, since he never came to Imladris, and since his saddle is now here. As for the songs, I told Elrond of the saddle and asked him if he wanted it. I also asked if any of the House of Feanor were in Imladris, and if they might be interested in this saddle. But there were always few Noldor in Imladris, and none of the First House. Nor did any of the other houses wish to have an heirloom of Feanor's house. There is still much enmity toward the sons of Feanor and all their descendants, even three ages hence. So I have kept it. It is both useful and beautiful, is it not? At any rate, the story of Arethule became known there, and the elf minstrels are always keen to find a subject for a song. No doubt they have done much more with it than I have here tonight.'

'Do the elves in Imladris still sing songs of Arethule? I was just there, but I did not think to ask anyone of such a thing.'

'I do not know. I have had no contact with Imladris since Elrond passed through the Old Forest with Gandalf and Galadriel and Gildor a few hundred years ago. We talked long of many things, but this saddle—and the songs of Imladris—was not one of them. The song of Arethule is but a short song of woe in a time long past.'

Bombadil sat looking into the fire for many minutes. Finally Goldberry spoke to him.

'Let us show our guest to his room, now. He must be tired from his long ride today. And that was a proper bedtime story, even for the most inquisitive. There will be time for more stories and more questions tomorrow.'

'You are right, my pretty Lady. We have a soft bed all ready for our friend, cozier than any snowbank—even without the soothing songs of Old Man Willow to sing you to sleep! Follow me Mr. Baggins. . . I mean Fairbairn. I'm forgetting which story *I'm* in, now. It seems just yesterday your four friends from the Shire dropped in to ask me about rings and Black Riders and other nonsense. At least I won't have to come rescue you from the barrowwights, will I? You're going the other way. And the wights are all gone now, anyway. But we still have beanpoles out the back window, although there are no beans on them this time of year. Sleep well, my stout little friend. No balrogs will come here! Not unless they want a song of mine

to freeze their fiery bones down to ice! But if you have a bad dream, just sing *Old Tom Bombadil is a merry fellow. And young Tomilo is a merry lad, too!* Bad dreams don't like to hear that, you know. Hah, hah!"

The next morning Tomilo began asking questions again at breakfast. He had lain awake half the night thinking of Arethule and Frodo and Radagast and Elrond and on and on. He had not been able to sleep for many hours. So even before the toast had been set upon the table, the hobbit was posing a string of questions to Bombadil. How did he make the ring disappear? How is it he could see Frodo? Who was older, Bombadil or Treebeard? Why weren't there any ents in the Old Forest? Why did wizards look old? What was the creature in this forest that Radagast had spoken of? Was it Old Man Willow? What was the difference between a sprite and an elf? Were there sprites that were men—that is to say, male? Could a balrog be a woman? If not, why not?

Finally Bombadil raised his hands and sang a stanza at the top of his lungs:

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*Oi hey a lalla hey a bomba domba dillo  
stuff your mouth with toast and jam  
or I'll do it with a pillow!  
I'll tie you up in a big brown sack  
and feed you to Old Man Willow!*



Not that Bombadil sounded very serious, but Tomilo decided to keep quiet for a little bit and finish his bacon.

At last, Tom and Goldberry cleared the table in a blinking, and the hobbit was informed that they would all go for a walk. The Lady was going for a swim and the Master and Tomilo would accompany her down to the river. On the way, Bombadil answered a few of the hobbit's many questions.

'I do not know what Radagast told you about the Old Forest. Or what creature he was talking about. I do not think he would call me or Goldberry a "creature." Though we certainly *are* creatures, as Radagast is himself. He probably meant Oakvain the Old. Although if you meet Oakvain, I do not recommend you call him a creature, either. I do not think he would like it at all, especially from such a small young creature as yourself, Mr. Fairbairn.'

'Oakvain? What. . . I mean who is he?'

'He is the answer to your other question. He is the ent of Taur Iaur.'

'Where is "Tower Yower"?'

'Taur Iaur is the Old Forest. "Old Forest" is simply a Westron translation of the Sindarin name. "Iaur" means old, and the wood-elves call me Iarwain Ben-adar: Oldest Father-less.'

'Can I meet him?' asked Tomilo excitedly. He had always been thrilled by the description of

Treebeard in *The Red Book*.

'I suppose you may. But you must not bother him with a lot of questions. He does not much like company. He has not talked to a hobbit in ages. But I think it might do him good to meet you. Even the hermit must be reminded of the world outside occasionally. If he does not like you, we will go away. He can ask no more than that. But first let us bathe with our pretty Lady.'

They had arrived at the banks of the Witherwindle, and Tom and Goldberry undressed and dove in, like otters playing in the snow. Tom had decided to have a swim as well. The hobbit did not follow them. 'It is too cold for me!' he said.

'Don't be silly!' cried Goldberry. 'There isn't even a crust of ice today. The river runs without the least freezing. If you don't swim now you will just have to come back later, and then it may be really cold!'

'No, Goldberry. We hobbits sometimes go an entire lifetime without swimming. I think I can skip a day without any harm done. Thank you, though.'

'A day without swimming! I would not have thought it possible!' Goldberry answered, shooting past Bombadil like a salmon and splashing him.

'Oh, yes. And when we swim, we wear bathing attire,' added the hobbit.

'Do you mean clothing?'

'Yes, Lady.'

'How odd,' interrupted Bombadil, blowing great sprays of water from his mouth. 'That would be like

flying with armour on. Or running with large boxes on your feet. Or singing with your mouth full of apples'

'I suppose,' said the hobbit. 'I never really thought of it that way.'

After the swim, they returned to the house. Bombadil and Goldberry dried themselves in front of the fire and Tomilo had some more toast. Then Bombadil and the hobbit went out to the stable to prepare Drabdrab for a short day's ride. First they would go in search of Oakvain. Then they would ride to Haysend. There Tomilo would have to bid Drabdrab farewell.

'What about Goldberry? Must I say good-bye to her now?'

'No. She will meet us at Haysend. It is on the Withywindle. The path will take her straight there. It must. After all, it is *her* path.'

Bombadil would ride, too, and he brushed up a large fat pony for himself. She was a descendant of Fatty Lumpkin, and looked it. Her name was Bag-of-Oats, and she was plenty sturdy—from her eponymous diet—to carry the equally sturdy Master.

Tomilo thought Bombadil needed a name from the hobbits, since he lived next to them—and since he already had names from all the other peoples of Middle Earth. *Forn* by the dwarves, *Iarwain* by the elves, *Orald* by the Northmen. As the hobbit watched him climb up on Bag-of-Oats, he thought of

several that might be fitting. *Greatgirth* was the first that came to mind. Or *Proudbelly* might be more to the point. Or *Bristlebeard*. Or *Loudboots*. Or *Songbear*. Yes, that was the best so far. Old Songbear.

The day was bitter cold, but the sky was clear and the sun was out above the forest canopy. The occasional patch of sun was blindingly bright, reflecting from the white snow, and warming on the face. As they passed deeper into the woods, though, these patches of light came less and less often, until they were lost altogether. A late morning gloom settled around them, and it grew dark and close.

The two riders were travelling almost due south now. They had crossed the Withywindle by a short stone bridge about half a mile west of the house. So they were now in that great southern arm of the Old Forest that ran all the way down to the Baranduin. This part of the forest was even larger than the northern part, and was even less known to the outside world. It bordered no 'High Hay.' It contained no Bonfire Glades or other intrusions of the Shire. Not even the Brandybucks or Maggots had ever ventured into these areas. Tomilo may have been the first hobbit to ever walk, or ride, in the southern half of the Old Forest, beyond the outlying trees. Deep in these woods were places untouched and unseen since Orome rode through on Nahar before the First Age, and shook the trees with the calls of his horn Valaroma. Not even Bombadil had

trod all the paths of this ancient place.

One who had, though, Oakvain the Old, lived in a deep valley in its very midst, at the source of a tiny rivulet that fed the Withywindle. He was the last ent in Taur Iaur, as he had been the first. All the other ents had long since left—to Fangorn or Mirkwood or Ospellos.\* Or they had become 'sleepy,' putting down roots at last.

\*Ospellos was the forest girdling the southern range of the Ered Luin. The name signified the poplar trees that were common there, with their trembling leaves, and the snow that was heavy on the arms of the mountains in winter. There was no translation of this in the Common Tongue, since none came there but elves; but a good rendering in Westron might have been Snowwood.

Oakvain himself, however, was not sleepy in the least. He was ancient beyond even his own guesses, but yet spry as a young sapling. Daily he toured the confines of his wood, breathing the crisp air, tasting the delicious soil, drinking the clear water. And at night, under the cloak of utter darkness, he walked abroad, unbeknownst to hobbit or man. He came then to the Woody End or to the Chetwood or to the Woods of Mellith on the shores of Nenuial. In fact, Oakvain still counted most of Eriador as his acreage, as it were. He had charges—trees, that is—that he looked in on occasionally as far away as the

Bay of Forochel and the Trollshares. But he never passed the Misty Mountains anymore.

Bombadil and Tomilo found him home, clearing snow from his 'walk.' A path had been beaten from the direction of the Withywindle, along the rivulet and up to its spring. Most of the trees in this area were oaks, of course, with a few scattered evergreens and two or three large willows with their feet in the water. The ground here was flat, for the most part, although the water course had cut a shallow channel among the small rocks and turf-covered meadows. Snow still clung to the bushes and winter shrubs overhanging the stream; it lay several feet deep in a number of low depressions dotting the near landscape.

Oakvain's 'hall' consisted of little more than a shelf of rock six or eight feet high, from the bottom of which the spring bubbled forth with a soothing sound and much splashing and foaming. Two elderberry trees stood, one on each side of the spring, round and full. Oak trees on top of the ledge had run their roots down the face of the shelf, in order to reach the spring; and woodbine also hung down the short drop, winding from the trunks above. Mosses grew upon the rocks, here and there, and lichen clung to the roots, mottling the scene with white. All in all it was a very interesting backdrop for a room, and Tomilo thought to himself that it must be truly lovely in the spring, when the elderberry trees were in bloom and the moss a bright green.

As they rode up, Oakvain had just kicked a huge pile of snow out of his drawing room into the stream, where it sent up a shower of mist and melted away into the valley. He stamped his feet and shook the snow from them with his long leafy fingers. Snow hung from his beard and salted his dark shadowy hair. This hair looked more like moss, or mistletoe, and the snow found it very easy to stick to. His broad back was also clothed in snow, and it worked deep into the crevices of his barky skin.

He looked nothing like Tomilo had pictured Treebeard looking. Tomilo had thought of Treebeard like the old stump of a beech tree. But Oakvain was a hale, if aged, oak. Beeches and oaks were not so very different, supposed the hobbit, but there was nothing 'stumpy' about Oakvain. He was very tall, 16 to 18 feet probably, and stooped hardly at all. His limbs were wrinkled beyond belief, but were not crooked or deformed with infirmity. His face was very knobby. His nose was more like a gourd than a nose. And his ears were like swirls of bark where a branch had broken off. His mouth was lipless: just a cave where birds might nest or squirrels might store a nut. From this distance, the hobbit could not even see his eyes, so deeply set were they. With a blink they disappeared altogether, and the face was no longer a face—just pattern in the woodgrain and an assembly of strange growths.

Bombadil called to Oakvain over the noise of the spring, and the old ent turned and strode over to

them. He seemed to move very slowly, but he was upon them in a flash: a long ent stride or two and he was towering over them, studying them from under his broad overhung brow.

'Hm, ho. Iarwain is it? And a little mole, dressed in green cloth. Very strange. The very beginning of oddness it is. How are you Iarwain? Where is your Lady? She never wades up the Glassinglade {his little stream} anymore. I remember when she was a tiny little sprite-lass. She could swim right up to the spring without touching her belly on the stream bed, though it couldn't have been as deep as my toe. I had to hold her legs to keep her from swimming right down into the spring and being sucked into the Well of the World. She was that small.'

'Yes, well Oakvain, we have come a visiting,' answered Bombadil, laughing at the ent's story. 'This is Mr. Tomilo Fairbairn, a hobbit from Farbanks. Is that part of the Shire, Tomilo? Or not? I haven't kept up, I'm afraid.'

'No, no. The Shire is just the four farthings. We are outskirters.'

'And are hobbits related to moles?' added Oakvain. 'Or are they closer to beavers?'

Tomilo just smiled and said nothing. He was clever enough to see that the ent was testing him.

'Tomilo was asking me about Fangorn at breakfast this morning,' said Bombadil, to change the subject, 'so I thought I would bring him here and let you tell him. You know more about Fangorn and his

history than I do. Than anyone but Fangorn, I guess, eh?'

'I should think. What did you want to know?'

'Oh, I just asked Mr. Bombadil—I mean Master Bombadil, begging your pardon—who was older, him or Fangorn. In *The Red Book* Gandalf says Fangorn is the oldest living thing in Middle Earth. But Tom Bombadil is called "Eldest." So I was just wondering who really was older.'

'Fangorn, old? Why Fangorn is still green between the toes. He still hasn't finished sprouting. Gandalf doesn't know what he's talking about. Never did. Fangorn is a sapling of the freshest sort. I was older than the mountains before Fangorn was even dropped as an acorn.'

'Really,' said Tomilo incredulously.

'My boy, I have blights that are older than Fangorn. I trim my beard by a calendar of the comings and goings of the likes of Fangorn. Fangorn! Don't tell me Fangorn.'

'What about Master Bombadil? Are you older than him, too?'

'Tom? Well, that's another story. No one's older than Tom here. That's like saying you are older than age. That's would be like claiming you predated your own Dad. Next to Tom I'm a minnow, a cub. Tom's forgot more about Middle Earth than I'll ever know, my little rodent, and that's saying a mouthful. From here to the Sea of Rhun is but a trip over a root for me, a stumble and a catch. I've

walked around Mirkwood to calm the hiccoughs, strolled to Far Harad as a cure for indigestion. But Tom watches bantings such as me come and go like leaves falling from a tree. Everytime Tom blinks an eye, an Oakvain goes from nut to deadwood.'

'I had no idea,' answered the hobbit.

'That's right. Think of the fly that buzzes around your head. That fly is to you what I am to Tom. And the mote in that fly's eye is what you are to me.'

Tomilo was still trying to make sense of that (and find some way not to be insulted) when the ent went on.

'Fangorn, eh? Treebeard himself, you say. If Fangorn is such a wise old bird, why are there no entings in that forest of his? Did you ever ask yourself that, my little bunny?' Oakvain asked, with a wink to Bombadil. 'This forest is as healthy as the day I came here, in the first minutes after the sun came up. Eriador is simply brimming with entings, though you and Fangorn wouldn't know it, nor anyone else either—except Iarwain here. Do you think that can be said of Fangorn's forest, or of Mirkwood? Of course not. They blunder about, singing songs of the past (I beg your pardon, Iarwain—I know you like a song now and again) while their woods go bad and everybody falls asleep. The trees there have to wake up and become Huorns, just to be sure that anything gets done. Here we do things properly.'

'What do you mean? I thought there weren't anymore entings. I thought the entwives had been lost.'

'Some have lost 'em, some haven't. Wisdom is knowing where to look.'

'Then the entwives are here?'

'I didn't say that. The entwives *aren't* here. The entwives are where the entwives want to be. They don't stay where I put 'em, anymore than they stay where Fangorn puts 'em. But some of us looked for 'em properly and some of us didn't. Some of us has eyes that see. That's all I'm saying.'

'If you know where they are, you should tell the other ents! You can't keep the entwives all to yourself!'

'Buzz, buzz, my little fly! Mote in my entish eye! I don't see any other ents here to tell, my little baggage. They left long ago for bigger and better places. But I did not force them to leave. I am not keeping them from their searches. I am not giving anyone wrong directions. Still, I must say that I do not see them walking about, crying for the entwives, calling "Where oh where are they! We cannot live without the entwives!" Besides, if the entwives are satisfied with my company, why should I complain? Why should I call for assistance where none is needed?'

Tomilo didn't say anything else, but he was quite upset. He got down from Drabdrab and led him

over to the spring. Oakvain and Bombadil continued to converse about things of no concern to the hobbit.

'It's not right, Drabbie! The entwives oughtn't to be kept a secret, just for the pleasure of Old Oakvain. If I was an entwife I wouldn't have nothing to do with that old ent. I'd go searching for some ents that were nicer!'

Drabdrab snorted and nodded his head in agreement. But he was perhaps thinking to himself that it was not in the nature of entwives to go searching for ents.

'When I get back to Farbanks I'm going to go looking for those entwives. They must be around here somewhere. And when I find them, I'm going to send word to Fangorn and the other ents. Then we'll see how wise Old Oakvain feels, when a little mole digs up the truth! I'll be the mote in his eye all right!'

Ents have very sharp ears, and the hobbit would have surely been overheard, but for the bubbling of the spring. As it was, Oakvain knew nothing of the small enemy he had made. But even had he known, he would not likely have been concerned. Secrets told to hobbits were like secrets told to treehoppers or crickets, in his estimation. If Oakvain had known as much about hobbits as he claimed to know about the wide world as a whole, he perhaps would have not let his tongue wag so freely that winter afternoon.



# C

Chapter 13

## *The Thain*

Tomilo and Bombadil left Oakvain and returned to the valley of the Witherwindle. As they rode, the hobbit asked Bombadil about the entwives.

'Do you think old Oakvain really knows where the entwives are? Or is he just boasting? He seems rather prone to exaggeration. Think of what he said of Fangorn, for instance.'

'Yes, what he said about Fangorn I would take with a grain of salt, Tomilo. He may be older than that ent, but he cannot be vastly older. All that about acorns was just his way of speaking. He likes to keep the talk lively. But I have no doubt that he knows something of the entwives. That is what has

kept him so spry after all these centuries, by my way of looking at it. No one but a new father could lift his legs so high—especially when he can't bend at the waist!

'Well, if that's true, he should not be allowed to keep it a secret. Why haven't you sent word to Fangorn, if you believe it?'

'It is none of my business, Tomilo. The domestic troubles of the ents and entwives are their own affair, and not for me to meddle in. Even were I a Vala—which I'm not—I would have no excuse for getting involved. When the entwives want to be found, they will be.'

'But they *have* been found. By Oakvain, at least.'

'Oakvain always exaggerates, remember. I don't know how much real "finding" he has done. There may be a few entings in Eriador, but I don't think we are in any danger of overpopulation. And I will say it again: it is up to the entwives to decide how and how much they want to be found. Also remember this, Tomilo: the lives of the ents and entwives are not measured in your years. An entire age can pass and seem like only a little while to the ents. In their minds, this may be no more than a temporary misunderstanding. Like a hot word or a frying pan thrown by a hobbitwife.'

'But what if they forget about each other, and give up, and never get back together?'

'*Never* is a very long word, Tomilo. Particularly for an ent. The tale is very far from being finished,

no matter what happens in the current crisis. 'There is always time. Remember that. There is always time.'

'I still think we should send a message to Fangorn.'

'What would we say? We would write, "Entwives found." They would write back, "where?" Then we would reply, "We don't know." That would not be a great amount of news, would it?'

'It would be something.'

'It would be a nuisance to them, probably. The ents might get their hopes up, and they might begin another long search, wasting many years. Or they might come here and battle with Oakvain, and one or the other would die. But until the entwives send up a signal, I say let it be. If the entwives don't want to be found, and the ents find them, they will just run away again. What will we solve by that, Tomilo?'

'Maybe you are right, Master Bombadil. But I think the ents and the entwives maybe need help finding eachother. It sounds to me like the entwives have been cross long enough. I mean, whatever the argument was to start with. . . I mean, I just hate to see it at this sorry pass. If the entwives heard that song that Fangorn was singing for them, I think maybe they wouldn't be so cruel. Maybe they would be lonely again. I don't know.'

'You have a kind heart, Tomilo. I hope you are right. If Goldberry stayed in her stream and wouldn't come out, I wouldn't mind if someone

helped me coax her out. Of course, no one can sing as prettily as I can!

"That goes without saying, Master. . . Look, there's your Lady now!"

As they peered ahead they could just see a figure in the line of trees along the Withywindle, on the far side. It raised its hand to them and a clear song drifted down the wind to their ears. Goldberry was singing a song of her father to them—a song of the winding river. Her voice floated high and soft in the forest air, like water running through the branches.

There was another stone bridge here near the end of the forest, about half a mile from where the Withywindle joined the Brandywine. The two riders crossed on their fine ponies, watching the Lady all the while. She wore a dress of green and silver and pale blue, and a long coat of blue-grey fastened at the neck with a clasp in the shape of fish. The coat had a tall pointed hood, folded over toward the back. The front of the hood was encircled by a decorative band of short fur, embroidered fancifully with swimming otters. At her waist was a girdle of golden leaves, and her hair was entwined with bright yellow poplar leaves. Her slender boots were silver, and they shone like fishes' mail—like the rainbow belly of a slippery trout. Goldberry was yet singing to them, and her cheeks were red from the winter air—a red only surpassed by the red of her lips.

Tom Bombadil leapt from his pony and kissed his pretty Lady, saying, 'Here is the fairest daughter in

the forest! The fairest daughter in *any* forest, Eh? Don't you be a'getting like the entwives, Goldberry, and tiring of your Tom. I would wear my legs out looking for you!

'You wouldn't look far, Master. The valley of my father is short, and I run nowhere else.'

'That's the spirit! Although notice she doesn't say she doesn't run, Tomilo! Hah, hah!'

Now it was time to say good-bye to Drabdrab. The hobbit's heart sank as he took his packs off the pony and led him over to Bombadil.

'I'm going to miss you, Drabbie. We saw some things, didn't we? For good and bad. Well, if you ever feel like visiting Farbanks again, you'll sure be welcome. And maybe someday we can say *yes* to Phloriel's invitation and go to Lothlorien! I know we're both glad to be getting home, and you probably don't want to think about going that far again anytime soon. But after we've both had a good long rest! Then we can talk about it.' Drabdrab just swished his tail and gave a single plaintive snort.

'Take good care of him, Master Bombadil. I know you will, but I just had to say it, if you know what I mean,' added the hobbit, blushing. 'Good-bye, Tom. Good-bye, Goldberry. Thank you. I will always remember your house and your valley. May they always ring with your voices. Good-bye!'

Bombadil had loaned Tomilo a rucksack, and the

hobbit slung it on his shoulders and made off down the last stretch of the path with his few belongings. Where the Withywindle emptied into the Brandywine, the High Hay also came to an end. The hobbit skirted this hedge and entered the southern reach of Buckland. To his left lay the hamlets of Briar Hill and Standelf, but he passed on, following the hedge northward toward Brandy Hall.

It would have been a much shorter trip to have gone due west from Bombadil's house, but there was no gate in the hedge in this vicinity. The Withywindle flowed almost in the same direction as the Brandywine as they met, so that Buckland diminished to a narrow point at its southernmost end. Tomilo therefore had to backtrack a fair way to finally pass the Hay.

Tomilo had thought of crossing the river at Haysend and so coming directly to Deephallow, but two considerations kept him from this. One, there was no ferry at Haysend. There was a landing stage across the river, at the *Mithe*—where the Shirebourn met the Brandywine; but this was used as a dock for boats embarking upsteam, toward Buck Hill. No one had any business crossing the river, for there was nothing at Haysend but the Grindwall, a small hythe protected by a fence. He would have had to swim, or find someone further upstream with a boat. Swimming was difficult enough in fair weather, especially for a hobbit. With snow on the ground and ice in the water, it was out of the question. Two,

the road from Deephallow ended at Willowbottom. A hobbit well-versed in the ways of the Shire might make his way by intermittent paths over the Thistle Brook and the Shirebourn, so passing the Woody End to the south and coming to Tuckborough over the Green Hills. But, again, the beginnings of winter made this tricky, if not foolhardy. So Tomilo had decided to borrow a pony at Brandy Hall—or in Stock, at the latest—and take the Stock-Tuckborough road directly to his meeting with the Thain.

He reached Bucklebury and Brandy Hall well after sundown. He had been walking for about six hours, but his legs were only a little tired and he decided to continue on to Stock. It was too dark to find a pony here in the town, anyway. Everyone was indoors, having supper and getting ready for bed. The hobbits turned in early in the winter. It was only a little after eight, but Tomilo saw that some of the houses on Buck Hill had already extinguished their lamps. These were probably farmers or field workers who would be up with the sun in the morning.

No, the best thing would be to walk on to *The Golden Perch* in Stock, where he could get supper and a bed and a pony all at the same place. It was another couple of hours to Stock—if he could get a ferry immediately at the river—but that would put him in bed by ten or eleven. That was not so very late. Besides, it felt good to be out under the stars alone, with nothing to intrude on his thoughts. The

moon was a fat gibbous, only four or five days from full, and was already well above the horizon. It was changing even now from a harvest orange to a pale yellow as it rode higher in the heavens. He would not have to worry about tripping over roots or missing his step out of the ferry.

As luck would have it, the ferry was on the east bank, and Tomilo simply poled himself across. During the day there was commonly a driver, paid to transport the young and the old, or any unsure how to handle the pole. But at night, a hobbit was on his own. This gave Tomilo no pause, however. He knew how to use a pole. There was a smaller river that ran through Farbanks, and he had been over it many times—albeit with a shorter pole.

The road to Stock gave the hobbit time to think. He had been thinking all day, on his long walk, but something about the dark made it easier to concentrate. There was nothing to see: no beautiful birch trees standing naked and white in the cold like a beautiful maiden—or like Goldberry climbing from the river like a young goddess being birthed from the foam. No hobbit lads or lasses sweeping leaves from the walk or playing in the snow. No farmers chopping wood or throwing ashes on the garden. No peddlers selling trinkets or offering to sharpen your knives.

This made Tomilo think of his axe—the only object in his pack of any real weight (or worth). He pulled it out and turned it in his hands. The blade

twinkled in the moonlight. Suddenly he remembered the orcs, attacking from all sides. This axe had killed an orc. Tomilo had killed an orc. He shuddered and returned the axe to his pack.

What would happen, he wondered, now that the long peace was ending? How bad would it get? Would the Shire be in danger? The high passes of the mountains were always dangerous; or so it seemed to the hobbit. But could the Shire, so remote, so idyllic, ever really be threatened? What would balrogs, or Morgoth, want with the Shire? What did they want with anyplace? Why was all this happening? Why did the balrog attack Glorfindel? Why were there balrogs at all? Who allowed them to be? Why would Vorun\* make balrogs? He wished he had asked Bombadil some of these questions. If anyone could explain it, Bombadil could. But Master Bombadil didn't seem to like questions. Especially questions like that. Next time, he would ask one question at a time, so as not to be a bother. And never at breakfast. Maybe then Bombadil would answer, if you didn't press him too much.

\*Vorun is the hobbits' name for Eru Iluvatar, maker of all things.

Tomilo did not know the answer to any of these questions, though, and thinking about them got him nowhere. They only made his head hurt. All he

could come up with was that evil things were evil and good things were good. Evil things fought good things because they were good and good things fought evil things because they were evil. It was not very satisfactory, but it stated the case, anyway.

But then he remembered the council. Morgoth was coming to Middle Earth to enslave everyone. He wanted dominion, at any cost. Those were the words of Ivulaine.

The King in Minas Mallor was a ruler. And Mithi was a ruler. And Meonas, too. But they were leaders. And their peoples loved them, in their ways. But Tomilo did not think that balrogs loved Morgoth, or that orcs had loved Sauron. No, they hated him and feared him, as much or more than elves or men or hobbits feared him.

Yes, that was the difference. It had to do with fear.

Tomilo stopped thinking about Why? and started thinking about What? What should he do? What should the hobbits do? Was there anything they *could* do? As Glorfindel had told the council, the hobbits were not skilled in warfare. And there was no ring this time, to be taken to the fire, or anything like that. Nothing that it would help to be small and quiet.

What about burgling? Bilbo had been a good burglar. Or fairly good, until he got caught and almost got fried. But was there anything to burgle now? Not that Tomilo knew of.

Just as the hobbit ran out of things to think of, he came to Stock. It was very late. *The Golden Perch* had the only lanterns still lit in town. One on each side of the threshold welcomed travellers to the 'finest Inn in the Eastfarthing.' This was writ on a large placard over the door, on which was also painted a great yellow fish leaping directly into a frying pan. Tomilo had been to the *Perch* before, and he had always thought this depiction mighty convenient: it saved the fisherman all the nuisance of actually fishing. Apparently all one need do in the East Farthing is hold out a frying pan over the nearest stream, and plop! there's your dinner!

The hobbit climbed several broad steps and entered a large room filled with red light and much smoke. It was rather late, but the common room of the *Perch* was still lively. All the tables were full and noisy with talk and song. Almost every hobbit had a pipe to his lips or at arm's length waiting for a draw while he talked. Mugs were also plentiful, as the *Perch* served up its famous beer—still among the best in the Shire. Those in the Marish would tell you (especially after a couple of mugs) that it *was* the finest, period; and that anyone who would say otherwise was a fool and a twice-fool and needed his nose tweaked.

Finally a small hobbit, barely more than a boy, greeted Tomilo and asked his pleasure.

'I need a room for the night, and supper before

that. And I need a pony for the morning.'

'Well, Master, the first two we have. But we don't sell ponies.'

'No, I'm sorry, I didn't make myself clear. I am very tired. I just walked from Haysend today, and I'm lightheaded from hunger—not to say footsore and backsore. What I mean is, I am a messenger for the Thain. I am travelling to Tuckborough tomorrow with very important information from the east. In the last month I have been in Moria and Rhosgobel and Rivendell. But I had to return my pony in the Old Forest. I simply need to borrow one of yours to ride to Tuckborough. I will send it back in a couple of days.'

'You returned your pony to the Old Forest? I did not know the Old Forest was lending ponies. What kind of rate does the Old Forest offer for ponies—I mean per day? Was it at all affordable?'

Tomilo stared at the young hobbit. He was starting to get rather irked, and he was about to say something unkind, when that little person spoke up again. 'Begging your pardon, Master, I was just having a little fun. But luckily for you, my brother works at the Bridge. You see there was word sent from the Thain that a rider would be arriving from Bree, and that he should be given all assistance in reaching Tuckborough promptly. But you are being looked for on the East Road, not on the Stock Road. If you had asked Old Lomota (the Innkeeper) he would not have known who you were. He would

have asked a large deposit—a couple of silver pennies—to loan any of his ponies. But I will send my brother, who is right over there, to talk to him. I don't think he'll need a deposit when it concerns The Took.'

Tomilo breathed a sigh of relief. He was really too tired to haggle over the loaning of a pony. Old Lomota soon came bustling over (after hearing the whole story) and welcomed Tomilo. He showed the hobbit into a private room, where he was quickly served beer and ripe cheese and a large loaf. That was soon followed by a plate of roasted meats. Afterwards he was shown to a room: a nice large one with its own fire, and at a proper distance from the common room. Tomilo could hear nothing of the continued festivities there. He was asleep almost before his head hit the pillow.

The next morning at sunrise he was awoken by the same young hobbit. After breakfast they went out to the stables, where Old Lomota was brushing out the tail of a very healthy pony with a shining black coat and white stockings. He was giving the hobbit his best pony, and seeing to it himself. The good graces of The Took were important to an innkeeper of the Shire, and Lomota knew it. A tavern lived on word of mouth, and the most important word (and most important mouth) was that of the Thain. Therefore Lomota took every effort to see that Tomilo was properly taken care of.

Tomilo thanked him for his hospitality and

complimented him on his rooms and his beer. Then he promised to send the pony back directly.

'Oh, it was nothing, Mr. Fairbairn. And keep him as long as you need. Anything we can do for the good of the Shire. Now you be sure and tell The Took to come back and have a mug himself. We haven't seen him here in months! Oh, and the pony's name is Snowwade. Because the black washed off in the snow, you know. Good-bye!'

'I'll tell him, not to worry. Maybe he'll come back with Snowwade himself. Thanks again!'

The ride to Tuckborough was uneventful. Snowwade was slow but comfortable. His legs were much shorter than Drabdrab's, but this put the hobbit closer to the ground. Also, the stirrups fit him perfectly. It was nice to have one's legs secure, after all.\*

Much of the Shire was already covered in snow. The early storms that smote the Misty Mountains weeks earlier had also dumped their snows in Eriador. And the weather had remained cold enough that the snow had not melted. Tomilo had found it very shallow in his walk through the open areas of Buckland, but beyond Stock it became deeper again—even deeper than in the Old Forest. It seemed that the further he advanced away from the Brandywine, the deeper it got. There was a single track in the midst of the road that had been worn by travellers. Only at wide intervals did it bulge

out into two temporary tracks, as ponies or carts meeting from east and west veered to pass each other and then rejoined the already beaten track. On either side of the road, the snow lay many feet deep. Great boulders lay almost unseen, and bushes were like humps in the white flatness. On the black pony, Tomilo felt like a fly in the milk.

Two days later the hobbit reached the Great Smials. They lay at the center of Tuckborough, much like Brandy Hall lay at the center of Bucklebury. But while Brandy Hall was delved out of a single large hill, the Great Smials were instead burrowed into a line of banks almost like a low cliff. There was a fault in the land at this point in the West Farthing, and the

\*Snowwade was equipped with hobbit stirrups, which were actually toe stirrups, of course. The toe stirrup gives the rider a very firm hold, as anyone who has ever used one will tell you. Much preferable, in fact, to boot and boot-stirrup.

Green Hills were split by it for the distance of a league or two. At its highest point it was perhaps eight yards tall, and here the Took family had begun cleaving their holes many years ago. The largest and most commodious were in the middle, with smaller holes adjoining in both directions. The main holes of the Took family proper were in three levels,

running about a hundred yards northeast to southwest. More distant branches of the family were further out from the center, with your rank determined by your position on the cliff. Younger members of the family who had married 'unwisely,' or who had married not at all, often found themselves off the cliff altogether. Low hobbit houses had been built some distance from the Smials, some facing the cliff, some facing away. The families facing the cliff had some hope of living there again in future. The families facing away had little. And the families least in favour of the current Took and his nearest relations lived 'behind.' That is, they inhabited the hobbit houses on top of the fault—where the wind blew and the gardens were bare and the water had to be carried up with great effort. The view was nice, but hobbits didn't care much for view. It made them feel dizzy.

The three-story Smials of the Tookes were a rarity in the Shire. In general, hobbits didn't care for upper stories, especially in houses or inns. But these upper stories had earth above, behind, and below, so that they did not really count as upper stories in the minds of the dwellers. Besides, the third stories were usually left to the children, who found the view exciting. And the nuisance of stairs was avoided by long earthen ramps that climbed slowly to the proper height, with all the requisite railings and other precautions. Internal burrows were also used, and the hobbits of Tookbank scurried like rabbits up

sloping halls that linked one level to another.

It was now past mid-Foreyule as Tomilo rode up to the Great Smials. He dismounted and knocked at the main door, a great round green door with a brass bell-pull in the very center. Windows dotted the cliff above him, most shuttered up for the winter. Some had white shutters and others were painted blue. The ones at the very top were nailed as well as shuttered—to keep the hobbit children from mischief, supposed Tomilo. The doors and windows of the Smials were interspersed with other less comely ornamentation: the cliffs were shared with other denizens of the Green Hills, including swallows and sparrows and maybe even a rat or two. The hobbits made every effort to drive out vermin, but the messy nests hanging from the cliff (and not all of them made by birds) attested to their incomplete success in this.

Finally the door was answered by a pretty hobbit lass, about sixteen years in age, who, upon being given Tomilo's name, ran back into the hole and shouted, 'He's here!' at the top of her lungs. Undoubtedly, he was expected. After a long slow few moments, the hobbit heard someone else padding up the hall, leaning on a cane, or perhaps a staff.

Tomilo didn't know what to expect from the Thain. He had only heard of this important personage. He had been surrounded by wizards and

Kings and Elf Princes and Princesses over the past month, but he found himself more nervous now, awaiting his own 'Lord,' as it were.

The Thain arrived at the door. He was leaning on a decorative ironwood cane, in the shape of a narrow ess. The handle was ivory, carved like a fox's head. The twelve buttons on the Thain's waistcoat were also of ivory. The waistcoat itself was wine-red. The old hobbit had a lot of starched white linen for a collar, standing up to his ears; and a forest green tie bunched up above the waistcoat. It being almost winter, he also wore a housecoat, unbuttoned. This was likewise very showy by hobbit standards, being calf-length and lined with dark-green velveteen. A silk handkerchief was in one breastpocket; his pipe in the other.

The Thain shook hands with Tomilo heartily and invited him in. 'Come in, come in! It is no day to be standing on the threshold with ones hands in ones pockets. The Lossoth may like it, but I can't say that I do, eh? Lewa should have shown you into the parlour. She is a little over-excited today, Mr. Fairbairn; you must excuse her. We are not used to visitors from Rivendell. Not even hobbits, I mean. Well, you know what I mean, Mr. Fairbairn. And all this news from all over, making everyone tittery. They don't know much, Mr. Fairbairn,' said the Thain in a whisper, leaning into him with a sideways glance, 'but what they know is enough. The rumours are all over, and not even I

can control 'em.'

The Took led Tomilo into a private study, or library, and shut the doors. 'Have a seat Mr. Fairbairn. Will you smoke? I have the best leaf in the Shire at hand. I highly recommend it!'

'Yes, thank you. Thank you very much. My, you do have a lot of books and documents about! I have never seen anything like it.'

'Well, I like to read. I won't try to hide it: I like books. I like to read them. I like to look at the illustrations. I like to smell them. I think I would eat them if I could! Hah, hah!'

'I think I know what you mean, Sir,' said Tomilo, almost laughing to himself at the picture of the old man sitting alone in his study, eating a shelf of books.

'Call me Bogubud, my boy. I can't stand ceremony. No Sir or Thain or "the Took" or any of that nonsense. Makes me feel like a statue or a skelington already. I won't have it. Now here's a smoke, hobbit to hobbit!

'Yessir, by boy,' Bogubud continued, blowing great draughts of smoke from his nose and mouth, 'we have the greatest collection of manuscripts anywhere—Westmarch included. I have pages here that have gone back and forth from Gondor and Fornost and Erebor. I have writing from the hand of Peregrin the Great himself! Notes from Gandalf. Copies of Royal Orders from King Elessar. Which reminds me, if you have any letters

or notes from Radagast or Cirdan or from the elves of Rivendell—any of potential historical importance—we would love to have them here. This would be the natural place for them, you know.'

'I don't think I have anything. The only letter I have is from my friend Galka. And it is not very important.'

'Galka. Who is he? Some elf prince, no doubt?'

'No, no. Galka is a dwarf of Khazad-dum. A lieutenant. He got promoted for rescuing me from the cell.'

'Really. A lieutenant. From the cell, you say. Fascinating. But nothing from King Mithi? Or Cirdan.'

'No, Sir. I mean, no Bogubud, Sir. Nothing like that.'

'Oh, well, I guess we better get on with it then. Tell me what you know. I have heard some things from the birds, but you are the first two-legged creature I have talked to who knew anything, my boy. I guess birds have two legs also, but you know what I mean.'

'Let's see. What first. Erebor has been attacked by dragons.'

'Yes, I knew that. Thrushes.'

'Glorfindel has been attacked by a balrog at the Mitheithil Bridge. He is convalescing in Rivendell.'

'Knew that, too. Raven.'

'Morgoth has escaped from the Outer

Darkness. He may be in Middle Earth already.'

'Rumours of that. Although no confirmation. Eagles.'

'Khazad-dum is threatened by balrogs in the depths, who may soon awaken.'

'They already have.'

'What?!' cried Tomilo, dropping his pipe and leaping to his feet.

'Calm down, calm down,' said Bogubud. 'Have a seat. Everything is all right. Thanks to you. Your warning from Nerien to Mithi arrived just in time. The dwarves had just cleared the caves, rushing out in their mincarts, as I hear, when the balrogs awoke. A half-dozen fled the mountains and escaped to the north. If the dwarves had been in the caves, there might have been a terrible battle. As it was, the demons apparently only wanted to flee.'

'There were seven, not six,' said Tomilo, as if to himself.

'Well, that is some news, anyway. Seven.'

'The dwarves all got out? I mean, all? No one left behind, no one lost?'

'None that have been reported. Most of the dwarves have gone to the Glittering Caves or to Krath-zabar. A few warriors have gone to swell the armies of the Iron Hills.'

'I hope Galka went south.'

'I hope so, too, Mr. Fairbairn. But I have no knowledge of any individual dwarves. Now, tell me about the council at Rhosgobel.'

Tomilo told the Thain of all the attendees, including Ivulaine and Gervain. Bogubud found it very interesting that all of the 'Five' had finally been accounted for. He was especially interested in their colours. He wrote it down as Tomilo told it, with many an expression of amazement. 'Green, was it? Gervain the Green. All right and proper. Gervain the Blue wouldn't do, now would it? It wouldn't have worked at all. And Ivulaine a woman? Astonishing. I never thought of that; did you, Mr. Fairbairn? But why not? I mean why shouldn't she?'

He was also very impressed by the description of Nerien. The Thain betrayed somewhat of a romantic streak, as he hurriedly scribbled the description of the elf maiden, smiling to himself and nodding. 'Aha, Mr. Fairbairn, a maiden on a white horse! Who will she marry at the end of the tale, do you think? I do wish you had a note or something of hers. Nothing at all? A lock of hair, a lost scarf. Nothing? Well, you will have to write it all down someday, in your own words, when it is all over and there is a proper ending. My scribe will put it in beautiful letters and we will bind it in leather. Then we will have something.'

Tomilo began to think the Thain a bit odd. But the old hobbit saw him staring, and interrupted his thoughts. 'I can see that you think I am a fool, Mr. Fairbairn. But it is the prerogative of the very old and very rich—to say foolish things, I mean. Do not

worry. I appreciate the immensity of all this, never fear. In fact, I have a Shiremoot called for next Saturday. I just wanted to get all my ducks in a row first. I needed to hear from you, for one thing. And you have taken your time getting here. There will be no muster, yet, I think. I don't want to worry everyone too much, until we are sure what we have. But the smithies are already busy making weapons, and the artisans have all been turned to fashioning arrows. We will not all be caught with our head in a book, not to worry, My Boy. We hope for a happy ending, but we are busy, too. We do not leave tomorrow all to itself!

'But now, let us take some refreshment. Tomorrow will come soon enough. All too soon, I begin to fear. We will have more talk then. I will want a full account of the happenings at the Bridge, for one thing. I still do not have a clear picture of these balrog creatures. I am not sure that I want to, to tell you the truth. But we must still eat and sleep, regardless, come what may. And so, let us to the tables. Also, before I forget, Lewa has made me promise to introduce you to her and the other Took children: they have all sorts of things to show you in the Smials, I gather. But your patience for that should be better after we have feasted, Mr. Fairbairn. The tables of the Great Smials would calm any nerves!'

After the meal, Lewa and several other young Took

came running into the dining room almost as soon as Tomilo had put his fork down. The Thain just smiled and raised his hands, as if to say, what could he do against such numbers. Lewa took Tomilo's arm and led him down a passageway and into a sort of music room, or ladies room. There were several instruments here: a lyre, a lute, a recorder, and a brumma-dum.\*

\*A drum, or drums, peculiar to the hobbits. Most often they were played as a set of six, from bass to alto (or piccolo). The scale used by the hobbits was neither occidental nor oriental, but contained tonal intervals that were much smaller than any modern ones. They grouped their notes in sestaves, rather than octaves, with one sestave covering less than two of our harmonic notes. Six sestaves composed a 'full', which was the hobbit term for a note and its halve (what we would call an octave). A full was therefore 34 notes, plus 2 'occasionals'. The hobbits were very keen of hearing, and could recognize tonal changes that would be mostly beneath our notice. What for us would be a slightly flat note, would be for them a completely new note—one perhaps with a place on their staff. For this reason they had to keep their instruments in perfect tune, and they would commonly tune each one daily—or each time it was played. Since there were so many notes to their scale, this might take quite some time. The 88 notes on our piano keyboard would translate to 238 hobbit notes,

for example—although the hobbit grand harp had a bit less than seven octaves while our pianoforte has a bit more than seven.

The drums had a very limited range, of course; but an instrument like a lute might have as many as 24 strings (twelve doubled) as well as a large number of frets. Rich families like the Tooks might have a full-time tuner, whose only job was seeing that all the instruments were kept in proper repair and tune. {Cf. note on Elvish musical scales and modes, Book 2, Chapter 12.} [LT]

Lewa picked out a flute and asked Tomilo what he would play. He told her the lyre and she handed him a beautiful instrument with 36 strings, already in perfect tune. The remaining hobbit children took their places at the other instruments, or stood by to sing. Tomilo was amused to see a hobbit boy of perhaps only eight on the *brumma-dum*, his curly hair sticking straight up on top of his head. He sat on the floor in the midst of the drums, the largest drum being almost above eye level. The child had to reach up and over to get a proper hit on the bass.

Nonetheless, Lewa nodded her head and they all began playing at once. The song was a staple to the hobbit ear. It was always the first song played at any gathering. It was useful as a final check for tuning, which was perhaps the cause of its invention. But it had long since taken on a sort of patriotic air: it was *the* hobbit song, sort of like a national anthem and

'Happy Birthday' and 'Barbara Allen' all rolled into one. It was happy and nostalgic at the same time, simple but earthy. Its tune cannot be translated, or even suggested, to the modern ear. But these are the lyrics they sang that day:

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*There is a land
green and brown
Above the sea
below the down.*

*O buttercup bindweed
currant hop
bittersweet milkweed
and light snowdrop*

*Does it rain?
Comes pouring.
Does it shine?
Come morning.*

*Hartstongue and moonwort
stonewort and wrack
bracken and lady fern
holly and hack*

*Trees are there
to break the sky
Soil is loose
made to fly*

*O cowslip cornel lilac phlox
wolfbane and viola
orchid hollyhock hazel pink
heather and begonia*

*Shall we sing
or shall we play?
Yea, each to each
and day to day.*

*O aster bluet fuchsia vetch
lavender and trillium
larkspur daisy foxglove and flax
privet and sweet william*

~~~~~

The song, though a standard, was variable. There were an almost infinite number of stanzas, all equally simple, and each with a set of flowers or ferns or shrubs or trees as adjoining stanzas. The first sixteen stanzas were commonly sung without much variation, but a solo singer might begin creating new rhymes and combinations after that. Usually the fauna became more outlandish—and more difficult to sing—as the song went on. But since Tomilo had never played with these young musicians, everyone kept to form.

The second song was a sort of jig, or branle, and the children not playing instruments joined hands in

the middle of the room and performed a charming dance. They ran round and round the room on their little furry feet a-singing and a-heying. At one point they all met in the middle, touching their fingertips together like a roof. Then the smallest child, a little goldenhaired hobbit-girl of about six, leapt up and broke through the 'ceiling,' everyone congratulating her on her cleverness.

After the music, the children showed Tomilo their drawings and their maps and their geneologies, all done with proper hobbit precision in pen and ink and watercolours. A hobbitlad named Isambard (that the other children called 'Is') had made a very pretty map of the Bindbole Wood, indicating the nearby hamlet of Needlehole with a feathered arrow pointing to the west. He had written inside the wood, surrounded by a circle, this message: 'Here be ents!'

Tomilo asked him if he had really seen any ents in the Bindbole Wood. Isambard answered, 'Yes! Many times!' But Lewa interrupted, 'Have not! He always says he sees ents everywhere, but no one else sees 'em. They always seem to walk away very fast whenever anyone else looks.'

Isambard shouted, 'I *did* see 'em. Also Treskin saw 'em, too, and he told me about it.'

'Hah! Treskin,' replied Lewa. 'That's not much to go on.'

Isambard put out his lower lip and began a sulk. He did not say anything else that day, not even

when Tomilo pinched his arm and made a face like an orc.

Finally the other children got tired of entertaining the visitor, and Tomilo was left to Lewa. She took his arm and pulled him down the hall. As they passed Bogubud's study, she looked in and asked, 'Grandpapa, may I take Mr. Fairbairn to see the really old stuff? He has been asking about it all afternoon.'

Tomilo had not been asking about it, in fact, but he said nothing. After all, he wouldn't mind looking, whatever it was.

The Thain answered that she might, but they were to be very careful with the candle. 'If you drop wax on anything, I'll know it! Don't think I won't!' he called.

Lewa led Tomilo down a long tunnel. At the bottom she took another candle from a sconce and lit it and handed it to the hobbit. Then they went inside. It was not dusty at all, nor moldy nor damp. Lewa went round to light the torches on the walls, each one with a great silver bobèche beneath—to protect the manuscripts and other things from falling sparks. Even with the torches, Tomilo was glad to have his candle. The light flickered, and strange shadows were cast in these deep windowless rooms.

All the walls were covered with tall bookshelves, stuffed to brimming. In the middle of the room were long oaken tables, also piled with papers and

leather-bound volumes and other treasures. Lewa showed him some old toys from Dale, probably leftovers from Bilbo's birthday party. And here was a sign that said 'No Smoking,' torn down by Pippin himself. And over here was a pair of shoes once worn by the Old Took. He had them made when he was 128, to wear to bed. He said his feet got so cold he couldn't sleep. As long as he was up walking around, they stayed warm. But as soon as he put them up, they turned to ice, he said.

Tomilo began browsing the bookshelves, and Lewa left him to himself for a while. Many of the books were nothing more than volumes of recipes, or diaries. A whole shelf was devoted to pipeweed: its discovery, its cultivation, its drying, its medicinal uses, and on and on. A whole wall was geneologies: every old family in the Shire had a volume or two on file here. A few learned histories there were also: *The Founding of Buckland*, *the Mayors at Michel Delving*, and *The Stoors Past and Present*. Finally Tomilo happened upon a large folio volume in a red leather binding with gold letters. It was Peregrin Took's own copy of *The Red Book of Westmarch*, with appendices by Peregrin the Great and his sons and daughters. Tomilo began carefully thumbing through it, starting at the back.\* The pages were yellow and brittle, and he had to turn each one with two fingers, to keep it from crumbling or tearing. He read a few of Pippin's entries, such as paragraphs about kingsfoil and the palantiri, and a brief

description of the wedding of Eowyn and Faramir. He had flipped all the way back to near the beginning and was about to close the book, when his eye came to rest on a line on page 28, near to the top:

~~~~~

'All right,' said Sam, laughing with the rest. 'But what about these Tree-men, these giants, as you might call them? They do say one bigger than a tree was seen up away beyond the North Moors not long back.'

~~~~~

Tomilo stopped. He read the paragraph again. The North Moors. They started just above the Bindbole Wood. The wood where Isambard had written in ink 'Here be ents.' Very strange. It was all a very strange coincidence. Or maybe not. Maybe these 'giants' in the North Farthing were not ents: maybe they were *entwives!*

\*Tomilo was left-handed. This was not at all uncommon for a hobbit. The percentage of left-handers among hobbits was about 50%, and most were ambidextrous to some degree.

Just then Lewa come up behind him and touched him on his sleeve. 'Sorry, Mr. Fairbairn, but I think we should be getting back to Grandpapa. He will be worrying that we have burned the whole room down,

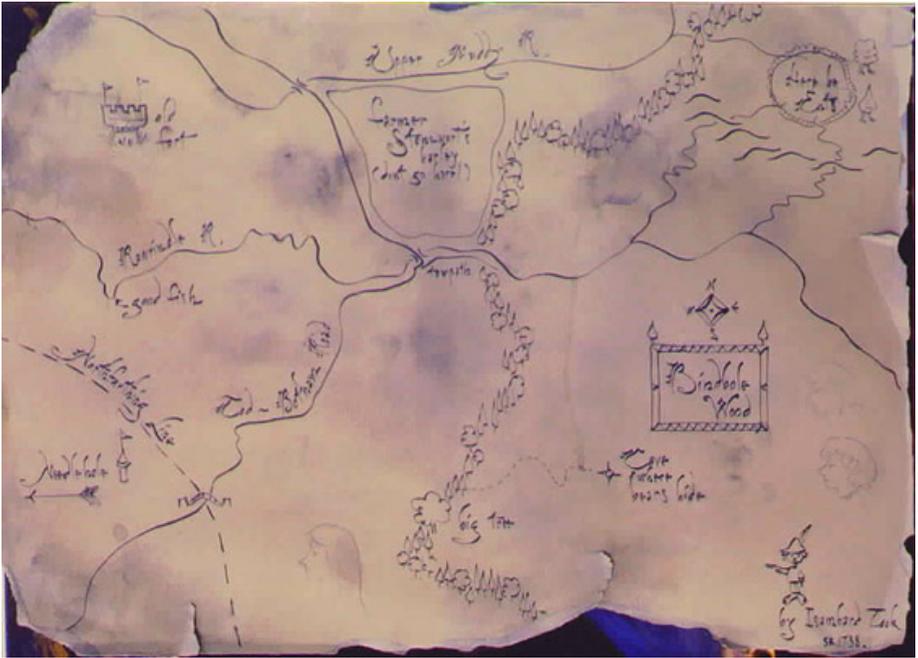
and he doesn't like to walk down the tunnel if he doesn't have to. I think we'd best run up and give him his tea.'

'All right, Dear. I'm coming. Let's be sure the torches are out. And don't forget your candle. We both had one, remember!'

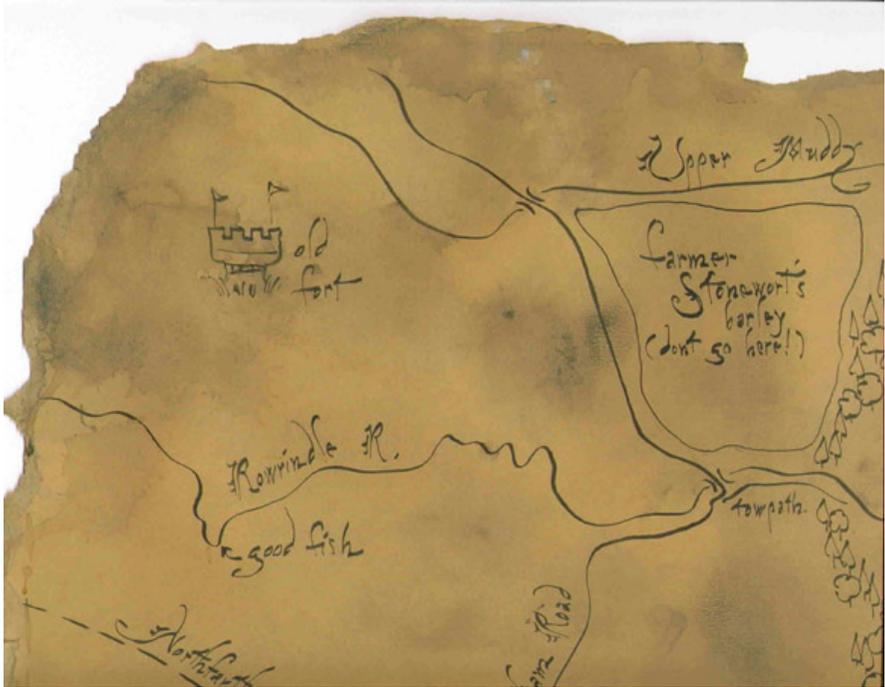
Lewa frowned at Tomilo and pursed her lips, as if to say that she was too old to be reminded of those things. She was no child. She led him out of the room, not looking back.

That evening, after the children had gone to bed and the Thain had retired as well, Tomilo snuck back to the music room. He wanted another look at Isambard's map of the Bindbole Wood. Fortunately the child had left it lying in clear view, on the desk. Tomilo sat down and began making a copy of it. There was paper and ink at hand, and he worked very quickly, labelling everything just as Isambard had—even including the child's signature and date, as well as a little drawing that Tomilo took to be a self-portrait.\*

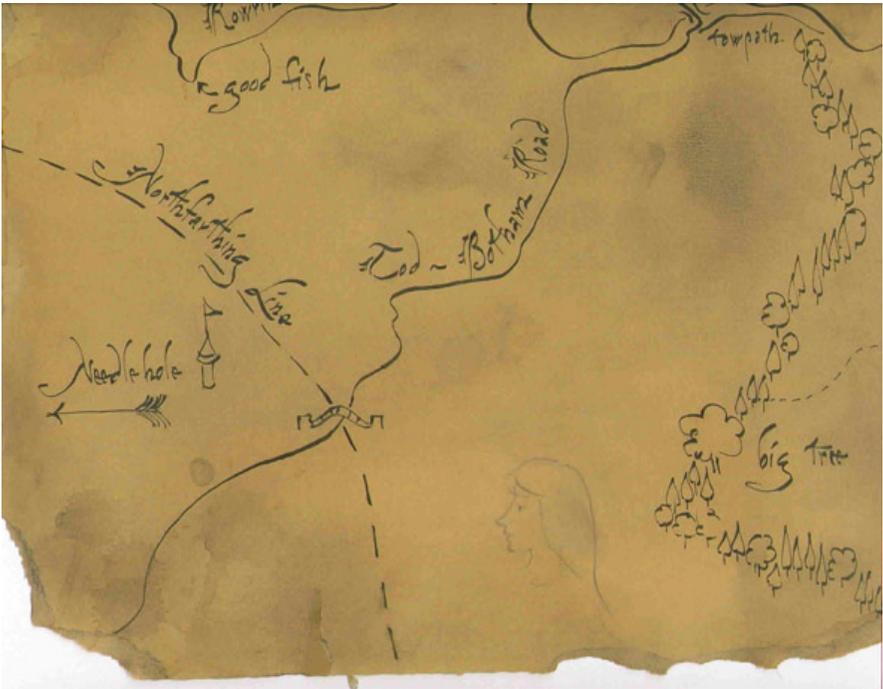
When he had done, the hobbit folded his new map once and put it in his pocket. He felt one step nearer to finding the entwines, and proving old Oakvain wrong.



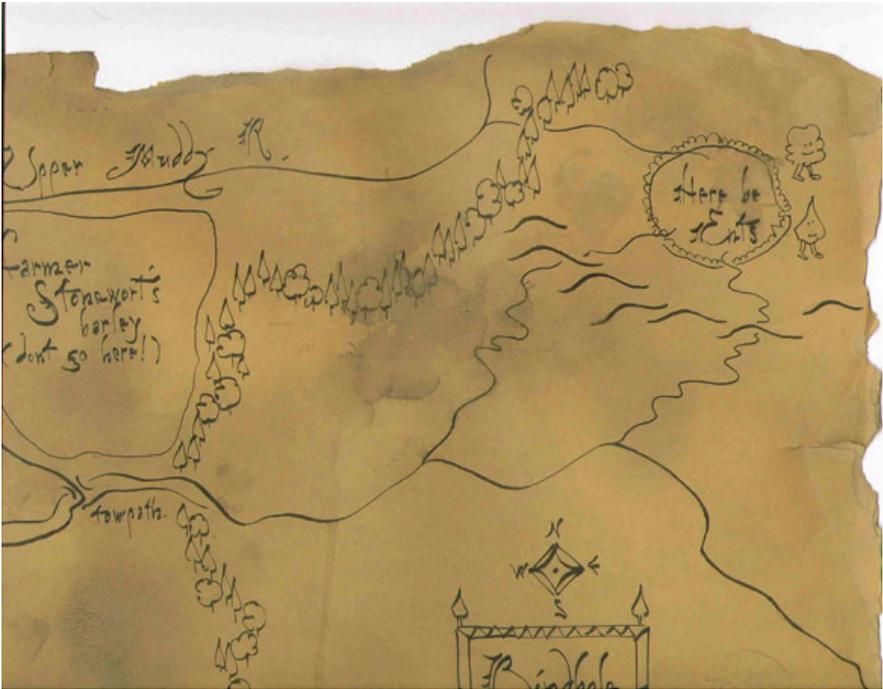
1)top left



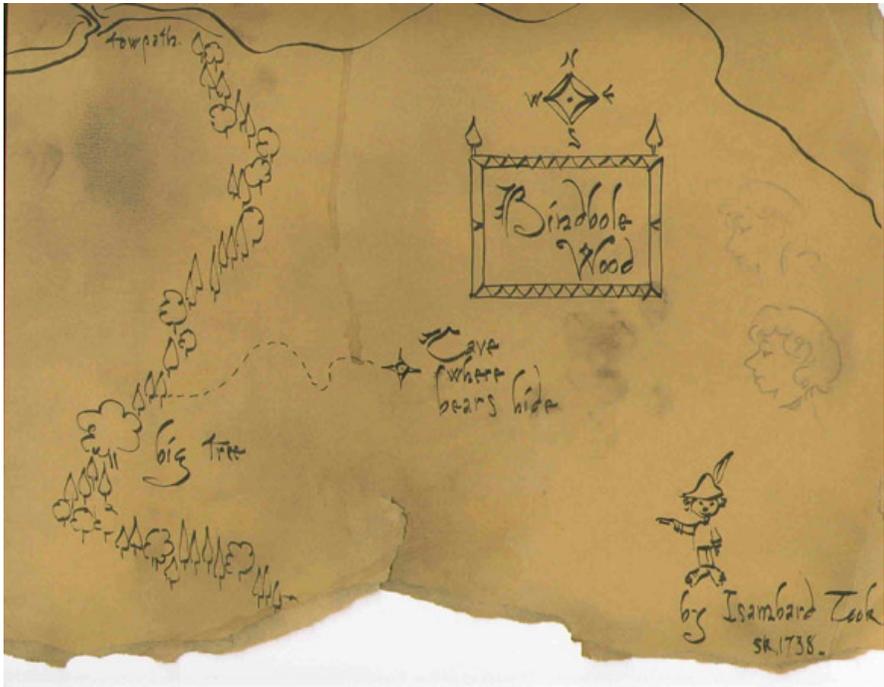
2) bottom left



3)top right



4)bottom right



\*The map here is Tomilo's map, which he gave to Great Smials Museum many years later. It is this original which eventually found a place in The Farbanks Folios. The copy of the child's portrait in the corner is not in fact a self-portrait by Isambard; it is a portrait of Treskin—as the cap shows. The fainter images (the profiles) are assumed to be by Tomilo. Probably they were added later: they appear to have nothing to do with the map, unless the two to the right are sketches from memory of Isambard and Lewa. The other image (at the bottom) may be Nerien.

Using modern technology, I have replaced the Westron words with their English equivalents, keeping as much as possible the style of lettering. I have considered this to be preferable to an attached translation. [LT]



## Chapter 14



### *Unexpected Guests*

That Saturday (the 21st) Tomilo and Bogubud rode to Michel Delving for the Shiremoot. Michel Delving had been chosen as the site not only because it was still the seat of the Mayor, but also because it was at approximately the center of many of the largest towns. It was at the midpoint of the way from Hobbiton/Bywater and the Westmarch, and also nearly equidistant from Oatbarton and Farbanks. This did not take Buckland into account, but representatives from across the river had to travel a long way wherever the moot was held. Besides, Buckland was not officially a part of the Shire, and need not be taken into calculations of convenience. Nevertheless, Old Fekla Brandybuck had been invited, and was to attend; as were the mayors of Chalkbank (of the Barrow-downs) and Staddle (Bree).

The moot had been called for noon, to give those who were travelling in for the day time to

arrive. The Thain and Tomilo left just as the sun came up; and those coming from Hobbiton would have already been riding for an hour in the dark of morning. There was no road from Tuckborough to Waymoot and the East Road—only a path through the dwindling hills and an ancient rut across the fields of the West Farthing. The two hobbits travelled alone. The Thain required no escort or entourage. They were bundled up heavily against the frost. The beautiful stillness of early morning was all about them; but it remained unseasonably cold, and they little enjoyed the fresh air. Snowwade and Canterling (the Thain's fat pony) held their heads down, their breathing visible and noisy in the dim light. Each step crunched loudly in the icy dew, the frozen turf being permanently marked behind them, showing their progression across the wintry farmlands.

A couple of hours after dawn they reached Waymoot. There was a fine inn at the crossroads here: *The Magpie and Bower*. Tomilo hoped they would stop for a moment to drink something hot, but they passed on, the Thain not even looking up.

Finally at about ten the sun began to thaw the world. The birds came out of their hiding places and began to skitter about and the sky turned a deep blue, here and there dotted with a lonely white cloud. The Thain humpfhed a couple of times, and seemed to awaken as from a semi-slumber.

'Looks like we may make a day of yet, eh, My

Boy?' he said.

'Yessir. I should think. It's really rather lovely, if you don't mind cold feet.'

'Well, I do mind 'em. I mind them a lot. I haven't been able to think of anything else for two hours. But that doesn't keep what you say from being true, I suppose. Better fair weather for a moot than another snow storm, at any rate. But all this cold weather so early in the season has got me out of my reckoning. I can't remember a Foreyule with this much snow since. . . well, ever. And that's a mouthful, when you're as old as I am. I hope it don't portend worse to come.'

Tomilo made no answer. He had been thinking the same thing, but couldn't find anything cheery to reply. No doubt it did portend worse to come. But they were not riding to Shiremoot to discuss bad weather.

They arrived in Michel Delving just before noon. Most of the other representatives were already there. Tomilo saw Mayor Roundhead from Farbanks at the far end of the table as they entered the chamber. The Thain took his place at the head of the table and Tomilo had a special seat at his right hand. The Thain wanted him nearby, for his testimony would be crucial at this council. Fekla Brandybuck was directly across the table from Tomilo, and next to him was Festo Proudfoot, the Mayor of Michel Delving—still accounted the Mayor

of the Shire as a whole. Several important looking hobbits were yet arriving.

A few minutes later the Thain called the meeting to order. One of the first points of business was a statement of the facts. After a short speech, he called upon Tomilo to tell his story. This he did, in full and at length, in proper hobbit fashion. He omitted nothing up to his stay in Shaly, on the Barrow-downs. But he did not mention Bombadil or Goldberry or Oakvain. Nor did he tell of his suspicions regarding the entwives.

Afterwards there were many questions. But as nothing was discussed that has not been told already, I will not repeat the minutes of the council here. Only one question had not been posed before, and this question was asked by Fekla.

'Why would dragons descend upon Erebor?' he said, standing up and nodding his old head at the assembly. 'Why would they do it, I say, and take a single stone from a tomb merely, leaving all the other hoard of the dwarves untouched? It seems an odd occurrence, surely, you must all agree. Is it not contrary to what we know of dragons historically? Did not Smaug take all he could plunder, with no consideration of the quality of workmanship? From what I remember of the story, this Arkenstone lay undiscovered by that dragon among the hoard, though it lay there blinking under his fiery eye for centuries. Dragons are not known for their connoisseurship, my friends.'

'Yes, Master Brandybuck,' answered the Thain, 'it seems a thing requiring more explanation. But what that explanation may be, we do not know. Mr. Fairbairn and I have discussed it already, but we can make nothing of it. No doubt the minds of the Wizards and other worthies of Middle Earth are even now considering it. Perhaps we only need wait to find out the truth. It is such a singular thing, it cannot have happened for no reason.'

At this time, the council broke for a midday meal. No gathering of hobbits, no matter how important or urgent, went on for long without an attention to eating and drinking.

The raising of hens had become the dominant market of this area of the West Farthing, and the Moot attendees were fed that afternoon with a variety of egg dishes, the hobbit favourite of which was a seasoned mash of eggs and potatoes, usually served on a bed of cabbage. It being winter, the hobbits made due with a bed of crisp toast. Hot soup was also served, as well as chicken sausages and pate. Beer also, although the imbibing of this was strictly limited to one mug. The councillors must keep a clear head for the evening.

When the Moot resumed, most of the talk was of arming, and of preparing for a muster. Each region of Eriador was given a specific task. Staddle, being on the edge of the Chetwood, was given a heavy load of arrow-making, for instance. The existing

ironworks at Frogmorton were to be turned over almost completely to the making of blades and helms and shields, as were the local blacksmiths of Tookbank and Little Delving. Plans for the fortification of the Brandywine Bridge, the Hobbiton Bridge and the Budge Ford Bridge were made. The authorities at Bree would need to cooperate with Fornost in increasing a watch on the crossroads. Special Shirriffs would be appointed to the North and East, for the purpose of quickly relaying news if the Shire were attacked. The number of shirriffs would be tripled, with a fair number of those stationed at the Brandywine Bridge and on the Oatbarton-Annuminas Road. Farbanks was to outfit a small band to patrol Sarn Ford.

Almost every pony in the Shire would be given over to the shirriffs, at least until spring—when they would be needed on the farms. Even then, many farms should anticipate being without plow-ponies, unless the news should change. Hobbit power would have to make up for the loss of horse power in these instances, and a general alert would soon be going out to the effect that every able-bodied hobbit in the Shire should be prepared to lend a hand with the tobacco crop, when it came in next year. The Shire now depended heavily on that crop, especially in trade with Arnor for foodstuffs; and its failure would be well nigh as disastrous as a defeat in battle.

The final order of business was to create a chain of command, in the event of a muster. The Shire

had gone so long without concerning itself with such hierarchies, that it was now unclear who was in charge, and in what order. Although the Mayor at Michel Delving was the head official in the administration of the daily goings-on of the Shire, the Thain was still recognized (simply from historical precedence) as the Chief Shirriff and the leader in wartime. A vote was taken, making the Master of Buckland second in command—a sort of captain of the forces east of the river. And he was also Thain pro-tem, to take charge if the Thain should die or be killed. After that came the Warden of the Westmarch, the Mayor of Michel Delving, and the Mayor of Oatbarton.

Before the meeting ended, The Thain stood up and asked Tomilo to rise also. Then the old hobbit reached into his waistcoat pocket and pulled from it a shiny medallion, hung from a gold chain. He held it up and addressed the company. Tomilo was caught completely off-guard by this. The Thain had said nothing of it to him.

'My fellow hobbits, in appreciation of the efforts of Mr. Tomillimir Fairbairn, of Farbanks: in riding to Moria on a moment's notice, in continuing on to Rhosgobel at my request, in representing the Shire at the Great Council, in surviving the Battle of the Bridge, I now present to him this token.' The Thain motioned Tomilo to lean forward, and he placed the medal about this neck and hugged him warmly.

'And this,' he continued, reaching under the table

and bringing up a rust-red hat with a long pheasant feather in its brown band. 'Mr. Fairbairn, by my authority you are now a Captain of the Shirriffs. Congratulations!'

The assembly applauded, and several came up and shook the hobbit's hand. Among them was Mayor Roundhead. He smiled broadly and then laughed.

'So, Mr. Fairbairn, you did dawdle,' he said. 'Yes, Tomilo, Bob told me the story of Radagast and all. But we appreciate your fortitude, you can be sure; and we are only sorry that it took so long. Some of us were quite worried about you, especially when we heard that Moria had been evacuated. Primrose Burdoc was beside herself for a few days, until word of your arrival in Tuckborough came to us. And Bob Blackfoot, too. He felt responsible, since it was his idea to introduce you to Radagast.'

'Yes, Sir,' answered Tomilo. 'It was touch and go several times, as I will admit. In the cell in Khazad-dum, first, when I thought I was done for. And then with the orcs—on the road down from the mountains, you know. I am very glad to be home. And I will be even gladder to get back to Farbanks, and to my hole.'

'Don't worry about that, Mr. Fairbairn. Miss Burdoc has looked in on your kitchen and your garden several times. Nothing was far amiss when I left two days ago. Neither one taken over by rabbits or rats. . . not yet.'

The Moot having ended, the hobbits were now spilling out onto the road in front of the Town Hall of Michel Delving. This Hall faced the East Road, looking southeast toward Mallorn Green. The sun was setting to their right, and its golden beams were slanting down, reflecting from the snowy yellow leaves of the town's mallorn tree, standing majestically in the fading light. Suddenly the hobbits' attention was drawn to the left, up the road toward the east end of town. A ringing of bells could be heard, and the sound of many horses. As the assembly watched, a great concourse of elves, travelling upon the road during the day, advanced through the middle of town! Windows were thrown open and heads thrust out in amazement. Hobbit children ran into the street to watch. More than two hundred elves there were. All riding. But none were singing.

As they got closer, Tomilo recognized Nerien and Galdor in the vanguard. Then he noticed that they were all wearing white. In the midst of the procession was a draped bier, also in white. The hobbit ran up to Nerien and took her hand.

'Yes, Tomilo. It is Glorfindel. He is gone to Mandos. These elves sail with him across the sea.'

'And you, too, Lady Nerien?' asked the hobbit, with tears in his eyes.

'No, father and I will stay in Mithlond for a while. It is not our time, even now.'

Tomilo bowed his head. But Nerien continued, 'We cannot stop. The troubles of Middle Earth no longer concern this company. In the morning they will sail. There are many here, from Eryn Lasgalen and Lothlorien as well as Imladris. Others have gone south to seek the Blue Havens. Others will follow. Say only this to your companions: not all will sail. This is not the end. Have good hope! I will return when I may, or send for you, Tomilo. Farewell for now, Elf-friend!'

With that the procession continued, silently passing through the streets of Michel Delving and onward to the sea. It is said that those living in Undertowers, in Westmarch, watched a white company of ghosts pass in the middle of the night, directly down the East Road and so away to the Gulf. But none spoke to them, or asked them their sorrow.

*End Book One*

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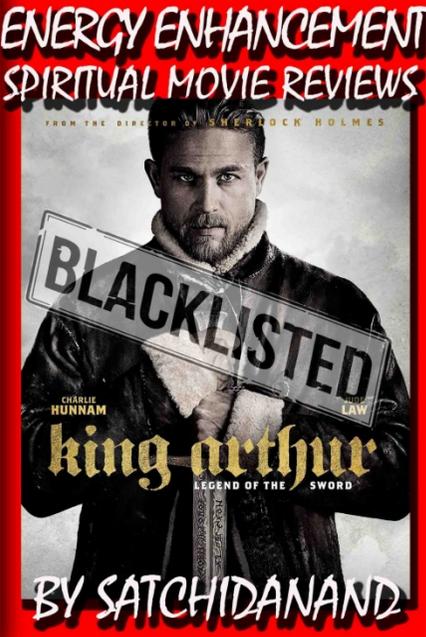
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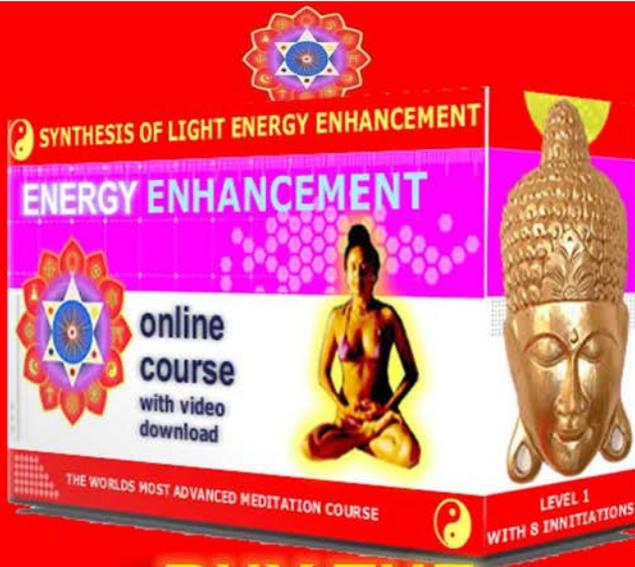
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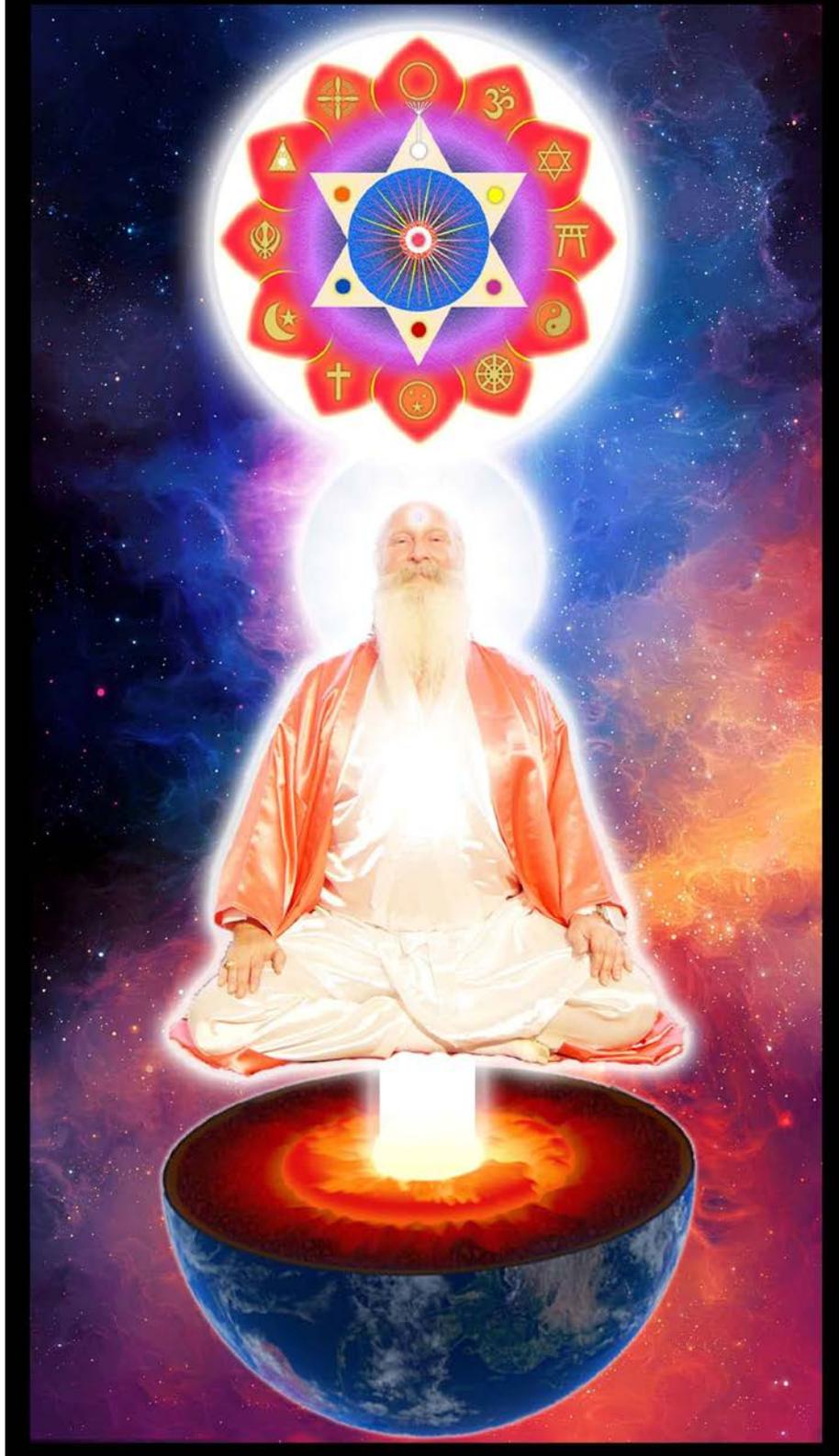
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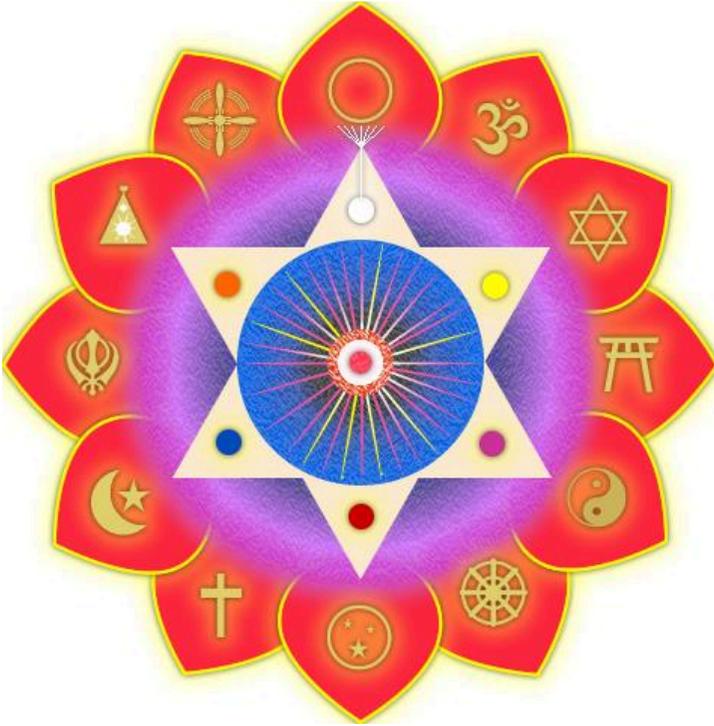
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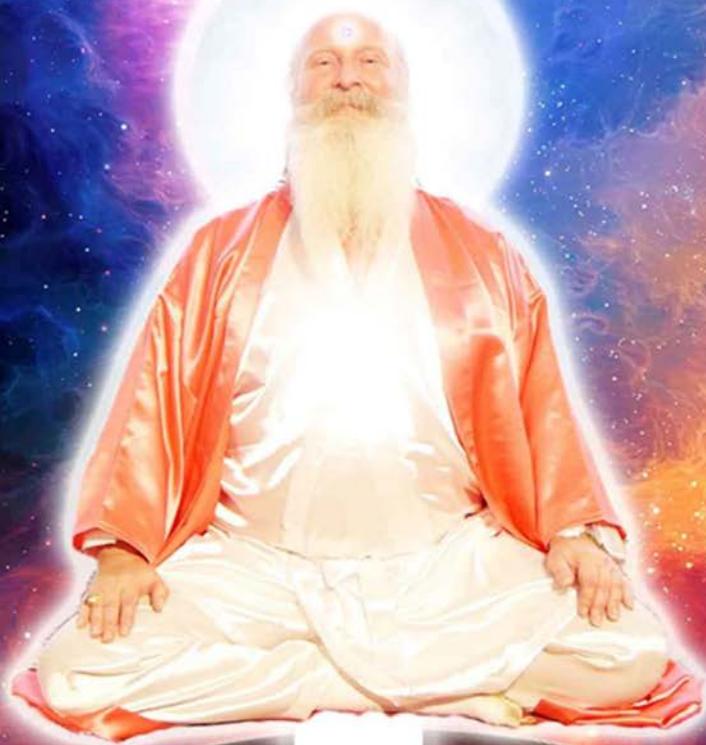
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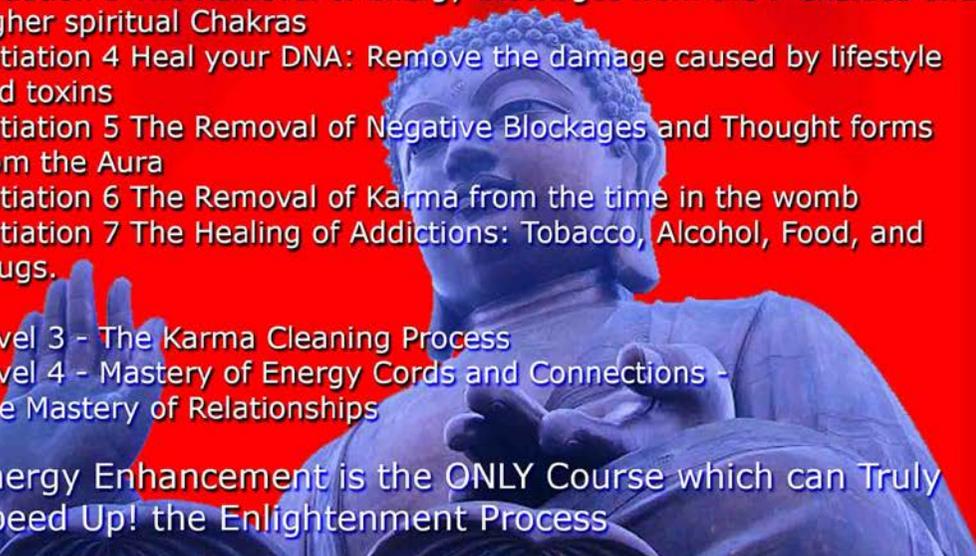
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Why has this Energy Blockage predator taken over in the fashion that you're describing, Don Juan?" I asked. "There must be a logical explanation."

"There is an explanation," don Juan replied, "which is the simplest explanation in the world. They took over because we are food for them, and they squeeze us mercilessly because we are their sustenance. Just as we rear chickens in chicken coops, gallineros, the predators rear us in human coops, humaneros. Therefore, their food is always available to them."

Don Juan had a broad smile on his face. He was as pleased as punch. He explained that sorcerers see infant human beings as strange, luminous balls of energy covered from the top to the bottom with a glowing coat something like a plastic cover that is adjusted tightly over their cocoon of energy. He said that that glowing coat of awareness was what the predators consumed, and that when a human being reached adulthood, all that was left of that glowing coat of awareness was a narrow fringe that went from the ground to the top of the toes.

If we consider a human being as containing seven parallel chakra processors within the body and an infinity of parallel chakra processors above the head and below the base, connecting us to the Universe, then the more of these parallel chakra processors we can access, the more intelligence we have - What stops the access to these parallel chakra processors is Energy Blockages.

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"Traditional forms of meditation are designed to fail!!"

Remove Deep Energy Blockage Forces - The Matrix And Antahkarana Hyperdimensional Predators are just some of the Energy Blockages completely vampirising your energy, blocking your intellect, sabotaging your life and indeed your health.

YES, WITH ENERGY ENHANCEMENT, LEARN HOW TO REMOVE ALL YOUR ENERGY BLOCKAGE KARMA!!

REMOVE ALL YOUR BAD LUCK AND TROUBLE

REMOVE ALL YOUR INNER SABOTAGE, ATTITUDES, HABITS WHICH PREVENT SUCCESS IN LIFE

YES, EACH ENERGY BLOCKAGE IS THIS LIFE AND PAST LIFE KARMA. ONCE KARMA IS REMOVED THEN IT IS EASY TO FIND YOUR DHARMA, YOUR SOUL PATH, "THE PATH WITH HEART" - REMOVE KARMA, FOLLOW DHARMA.

THE KARMA CLEARING PROCESS - REMOVING EVEN DEEPER BLOCKAGES

"Waste no more time arguing what a good person should be.. Be One" - Marcus Aurelius

KARMA CLEANING PROCESS, CLEAN THE KARMA FROM PAST LIVES, CLEAN THE KARMA FROM YOUR FUTURE LIFE, CLEAN THE KARMA FROM YOUR FUTURE LIFETIMES, SOUL FRAGMENTATION INTEGRATION AND RETRIEVAL.

HOW TO STOP PSYCHOPATHIC ENERGY VAMPIRES, INTEGRATE INNER CHILDREN, HEAL AND INTEGRATE SELFISH EGO SUB PERSONALITIES, LIFE DESTROYING STRATEGIES, THE ALOOF, THE INTERROGATOR, THE VIOLATOR, THE SELFISH COMPETITIVE STAR, THE VAMP OR DON JUAN, THE PLEASER, THE BLAMER, THE CRITIC, THE KING, THE SELF DESTRUCTOR, REMOVE ALL THE DESTRUCTIVE VOWS FROM THIS AND PAST LIFETIMES, THE CREATION OF SELF LOVE, LOVE AND SERVICE.

"REMOVING ALL YOUR ENERGY BLOCKAGES IS A REALLY GOOD THING TO DO" - SATCHIDANAND

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT IS THE NEWEST AND MOST HIGH SPIRITUAL IMPULSE ON THIS PLANET

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# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

LEVEL 4



# MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

# LEVEL 4 MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

MASTER THE PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTION BETWEEN YOU AND ALL PEOPLE, CREATE INCREDIBLE RELATIONSHIPS - THE KARMA CLEARING PROCESS WITH ALL YOUR RELATIONSHIPS, FRIENDS, FAMILY, MOTHER AND FATHER, REMOVE BLOCKAGES FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY, HEAL BEREAVEMENT, IMPOTENCE, CLEAN THE TIES WHICH BIND, THE HIGHEST HEART, THE MASTERY OF ADDICTIONS - DRUGS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, SEX, FOOD, POWER, MONEY, BUDDHIST NON - ATTACHMENT, THE MASTERY OF ATTACHMENT - DEPENDENT ATTACHMENT, PARASITIC VAMPIRE ATTACHMENT, SYMBIOTIC ATTACHMENT, ENLIGHTENED ATTACHMENT, THE SOUL CONNECTION, HEAL THE WORLD. BECOME A MASTER, A MERLIN, A JEDI KNIGHT, A WHITE MAGICIAN.

WE ARE AFFECTED BY ENERGY BLOCKAGES IN THE PEOPLE WHO CONNECT TO US - LEARN HOW TO REMOVE ENERGY BLOCKAGES AT THE OTHER END OF YOUR ENERGY CONNECTIONS IN OTHER PEOPLE. LEARN HOW TO AUGMENT YOUR PSYCHIC TALENT BODY WITH ALCHEMICAL GOLD - THE NEW METHOD OF ENERGY ENHANCEMENT EVOLUTION!

-Energy Enhancement, - An Advanced Meditation Course which gives the MOST benefits of any course of Meditational Self-Development available anywhere in the World today. If you want to Master Meditation Energy, to get more Energy and to handle it better, this course is for You! If you want to Speed Up the Meditative Process, rather than sitting with no result. Energy Enhancement Advanced Meditative Techniques including the Kundalini Kriyas and the Five Taoist Elemental Pathways of the Chi, is for You!!!! Whether you are a Management Corporate Executive, any sort of Alternative Practitioner, Meditator, Yogi or anyone who wants to Evolve, - Have Massive Energy Gains, become Better, Smarter, more Evolved, more Empathic, more Soul Infused, Gain the Real Secrets of Success; This course will Enable Direct Experience of Superior Life Performance. Energy Enhancement Meditation Techniques are the quickest and easiest methods of evolution available, leading to Ultimate HaPPness. Energy Enhancement, The Most Advanced Techniques of Meditation Available, NOW!! Developing Meditation psychic powers to Get in touch with your Life Path, Ground negative Energies, Access Infinite Levels of Universal Energy, Raise Your Kundalini, Integrate the Separated Selves, and Master Relationships and Mediation.

"Enlightenment is attained by Meditation And Non-Attachment" - Yoga Sutras of Patanjali - RAJA YOGA Buddhist Non-Attachment, "ATTACHMENT LEADS TO PAIN" - GAUTAMA BUDDHA ATTACHMENT AND THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS LEVEL 4 OF ENERGY ENHANCEMENT - INITIATIONS FOR THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS AND ATTACHMENT . THE-SOLUTION-TO-PROBLEMS-OF-ATTACHMENT-AND-THE-MASTERY-OF-RELATIONSHIPS-AND-ENERGY-CONNECTION-ATTACHMENT THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS ATTACHMENT DEPENDENT PARASITIC SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP ATTACHMENT THE MASTERY OF PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS AND THE connector strategy. The Mastery of Relationships, Psychic Sex Connections, Energy Vampires Implants and the Initiations of Energy Enhancement Meditation. Mastery of Relationships, Energy Connections, Implants

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT TANTRA AND ENLIGHTENMENT

THE MASTERY OF VAMPIRE ENERGY CONNECTIONS - ENERGY CORDS

THE REMOVAL OF EVEN THE DEEPEST ENERGY BLOCKAGES

"Traditional forms of meditation are designed to fail!!"

"WE PUT BACK WHAT THE OTHERS TOOK OUT!!"

THE MASTERY OF ENERGY CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE

THE REMOVAL OF ENERGY CONNECTIONS TO BAD PEOPLE WHO POISON AND SUCK YOUR ENERGIES - THE ABILITY TO CUT BAD ENERGY CONNECTIONS TO, "TO SEAL THE DOOR WHERE EVIL DWELLS"

THE ATTAINMENT OF BUDDHIST "NON-ATTACHMENT"  
ENERGY ENHANCEMENT IS THE ONLY SOLUTION

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**ENERGY  
ENHANCEMENT  
OPENING  
THE THIRD EYE**



**AWAKEN YOUR THIRD EYE  
IMPROVING PSYCHIC SIGHT**

# OPENING THE THIRD EYE

The conscious rocking backwards and forwards at the Start of your EE practice is to get your spine into alignment with the Kundalini energy from the center of the earth out into the center of the Universe..

to power your Psychic Vision, to Open your Third Eye...

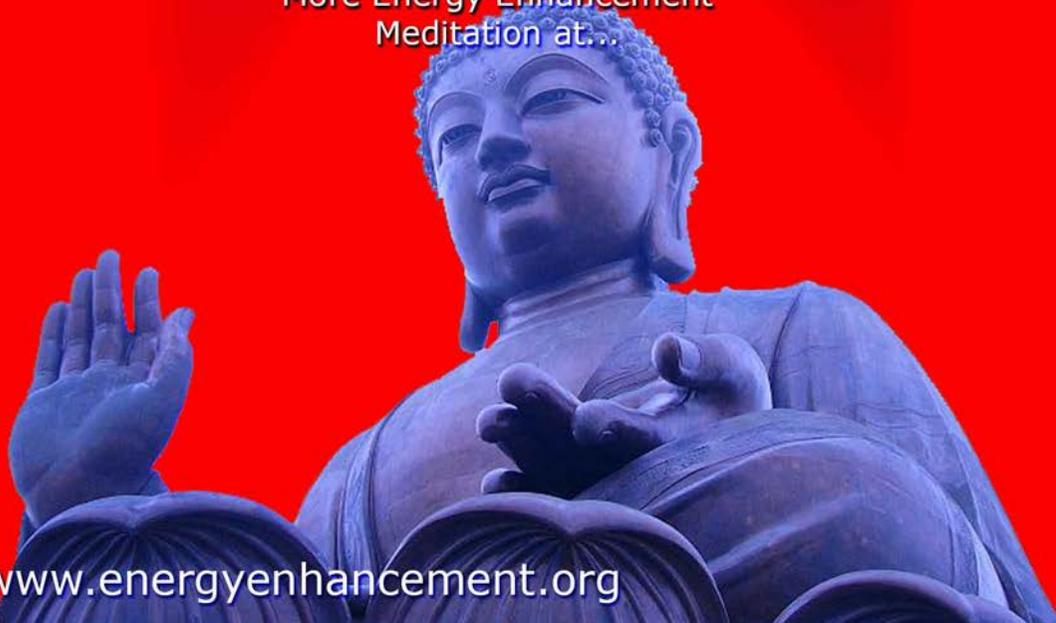
Antaeus was killed (the process of Illumination requires the ability to get out of the body into the higher chakras, the same path we take when we die, but without the advantage of being able to come back along the Silver Chord) Antaeus was killed by suspending him in a tree - SEE THE MYTH OF ODIN IN AXIS MUNDI where Odin spent 9 nights suspended in the Axis Mundi Tree above the Crown Chakra in order to become Illuminated and gain psychic vision - make all his sight one in the third eye.



We eventually get into a state of energy transfer. We both feel it as white light flowing from one to the other in an incredibly intense way which lasts for two hours. At the end of that time I perceive an initiation which is taking place on the astral plane. Surrounded by a group of ascended masters I introduce him to the chief initiator who uses the rod of initiation to touch his third eye with the intense energies of initiation so that his energies can never again drop into that state we call normal waking consciousness.

The Antahkarana Also refers to the Unicorn - So, by removing the Blockages of Ajna Chakra the Psychic Powers of the Third Eye and of the Rainbow Bridge, a Horn emanating from the Crown Chakra leading to Wisdom, Psychic Vision and the Actualisation of all our Dreams, Our Soul Path which we teach in Energy Enhancement Initiation 4.

More Energy Enhancement  
Meditation at...



# YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI



"COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONS ON  
ENLIGHTENMENT" - THE  
ENERGY ENHANCEMENT WAY BY-  
SATCHIDANAND

"Now!! Here Are Complete Instructions on Enlightenment" After you have tried all the bad things and found they do not work - Here are complete instructions on how to attain your Infinite Peace. Yoga comes from Yoke. This Yoking or Union with the Higher self and the chakras above the head is Enlightenment.

By the loosening of the cause (of the bondage of mind to body) and by knowledge of the procedure of the mind-stuff's functioning, entering another's body is accomplished.

THE WHOLE WORLD IS CONTROLLED BY MEDITATION..

He who, due to his perfect discrimination - dis-crime-ination or sanskrit, Viveka, is the ability to transmute energy blockages and as they transmute and ground, so they go through the symptoms of the Gunas from Tamas, to Rajas, to Sattvic as the Negative Karmic Mass is grounded - The sword of discrimination is the ANTAHKARANA - the energy connection between all the chakras above the head through the body and below the base chakra to below the Center of the Earth, which feeds energy from higher to lower levels of the hierarchy - this discriminative energy blockage transmuting flow of energy if maintained is called Dharma Mega Samadhi.

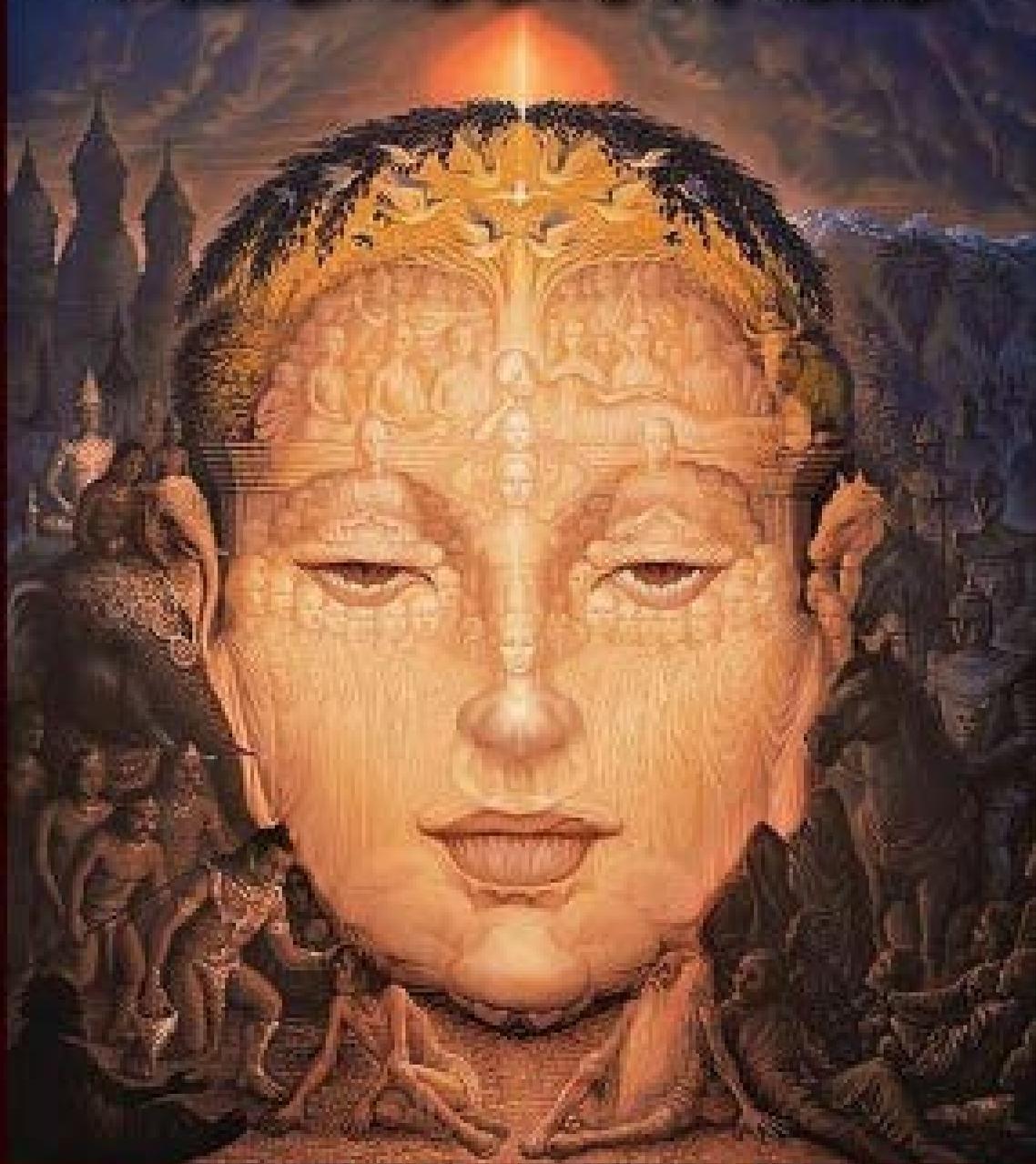
The meaning of dharma includes goodness - next to Godness - virtue, justice, law, duty, morality, religion, religious merit, and steadfast decree - all symptoms of being Soul Infused.

Dharma is the energy of the Soul!!

GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER..

"WHEN ALL ENERGY BLOCKAGES ARE GONE, ENLIGHTENMENT IS SURE TO FOLLOW" - Satchidanand

# VIMALAKIRTI SUTRA -THE BUDDHA FIELD



SATCHIDANAND

# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

## Vimalakirti Sutra - The Buddhafield

Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Aryasravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas conquering demons, natural spiritual benefactors of all living beings, free from impurities, expert in knowing the spiritual faculties of all living beings, high resolve as hard as diamond, unbreakable in their faith in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, they showered forth the rain of ambrosia that is released by the light rays of the jewel of the Dharma, which shines everywhere.

The Purification - the Removal of Energy Blockages - And the Augmentation of Psychic Powers - Caused by the Buddhafield

Inconceivable Skill in Enlightenment Liberative Technique, Dharma, Connection with the Infinite Chakras above the Head - Gnosis, conquered all demons, transcendence of wisdom, tolerance and self-control, respected by Indra, Brahma, and all the Lokapalas

Thereby, thirty-two thousand living beings purified their immaculate, undistorted Dharma-eye in regard to all things.

The eight thousand bhikshus were liberated from their mental defilements, attaining the state of non-grasping.

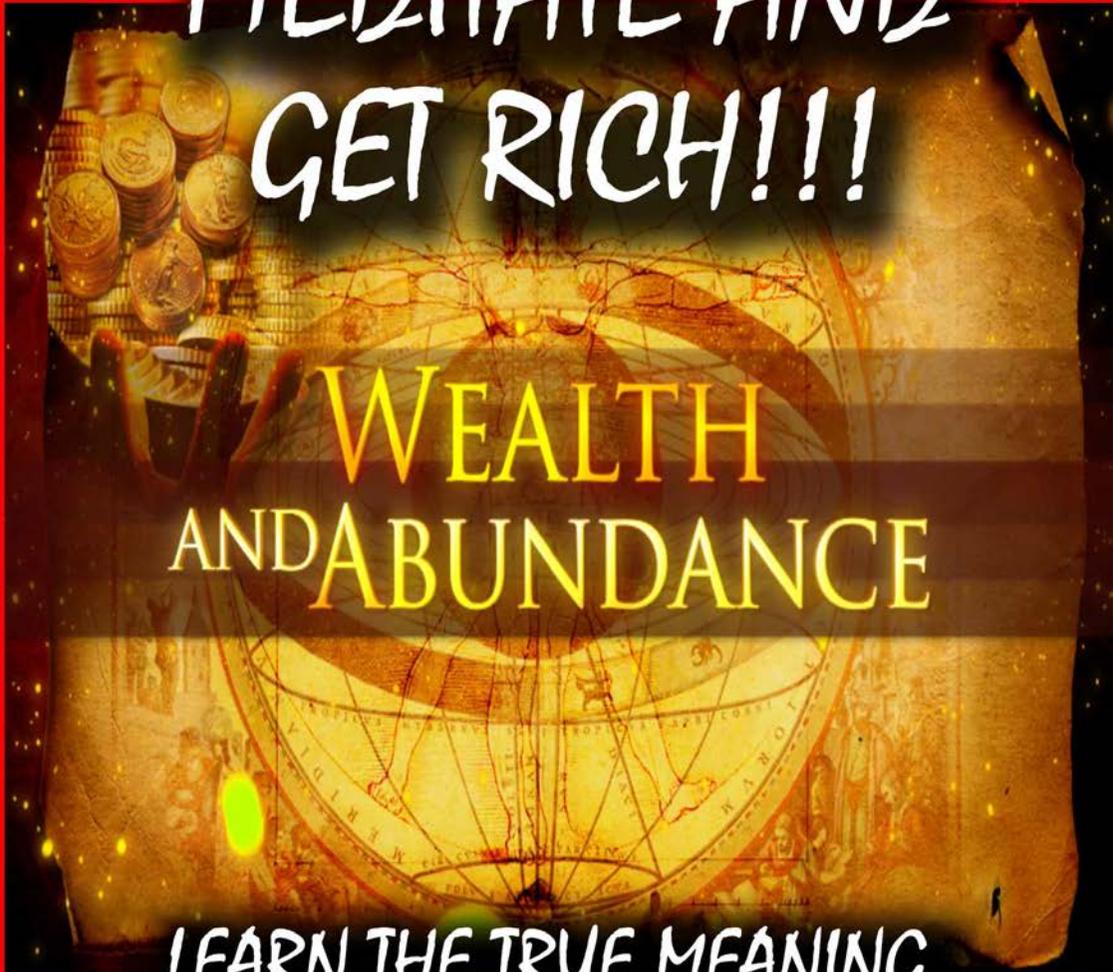
And the eighty-four thousand living beings who were devoted to the grandeur of the buddhafield, having understood that all things are by nature but magical creations, all conceived in their own minds the spirit of unexcelled, totally perfect enlightenment.

A Zen Master saw a child with a broken arm sitting miserably by the side of the road. This guy was so miserable that the Zen Master just knew he was impervious to being cheered up, To accepting good advice, to being told that, "Everything changes". So he took an iron bar and with it he broke his own arm. Sitting down by the young child he said, "Now we can talk!!"

"The Dharma - The Path of the Soul Chakra - The First Chakra above the Head - permeates evenly all things, because all are included in the ultimate realm. It conforms to reality by means of the process of nonconformity. It abides at the reality-limit, for it is utterly without fluctuation. It is immovable, because it is independent of the six objects of sense. It is without coming and going, for it never stands still. It is comprised by voidness, emptiness, a vibration so high that it is not gross like matter, or emotion, or mind, it is remarkable through signlessness, and is free of presumption and repudiation, because of wishlessness. It is without establishment and rejection, without birth or destruction. It is without any fundamental consciousness, transcending the range of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and thought. It is without highness and lowness. It abides without movement or activity.

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**ENERGY  
ENHANCEMENT  
MEDITATE AND  
GET RICH!!!**



**WEALTH  
AND ABUNDANCE**

**LEARN THE TRUE MEANING  
OF THE LAW OF ATTRACTION,  
ABUNDANCE, RICHNESS AND WEALTH**

# MEDITATE AND GET RICH!!!

The Human Right to Life surely includes a Rich, Wealthy life. Health, Housing, Air Conditioning, Education, Transport, Entertainment, Books, Pure Food, Water, Environment.  
So that we can choose what to work at. So that we can choose to work at The Right Hand Path of Meditation leading to Enlightenment.

Simple, Easy Effective Techniques, Vouchsafed from a Mystical Past lie at the Heart of Alchemical Transmutation of Internal Dragons to Man Up!! and Release the Wellsprings of Energy, Wealth and Internal and External Gold!!

We have all seen "The Secret"

We have all read Napoleon Hill's, "Think and Grow Rich".

But one of the Forgotten Secrets of Wealth and Richness has Traditionally been the Transmutation of Lead into Gold.

The Ancient Secrets of Alchemy!!

And what we need now is the Modern Upgrade of the Secrets of Alchemy brought into the Modern Age.

As Jung has brought Alchemy and Archetypes into Psychology, so Energy Enhancement has brought Alchemy and Archetypes into Wealth and Self Actualisation.

Get the Gold!!

Understand the Ancient Formulas of Alchemy to release Sources of Internal and External Wealth!!

Get the Gold!!

Get the Philosophers Stone which Transmutes All Base Metal into Pure Alchemical Gold!!

There are Powers inside you that once Released, Paradigms Transmuted, Blockages Removed, will enable you to Access your true Potential.

These Ancient Techniques called Alchemy will Truly Release your Beast and Allow Incredible Success in Any Field of Life.

The Secret of Alchemy lies in the Transmutation of Trauma which lies at the Base of all Blocks and Bad Habits.

Trauma creates the Dragon of Fear which in all Ancient Mythical Stories is Killed by the Hero in Order to Rescue and Release the Princess..... and Get the Gold...

After reading this, in lieu of its recommendations which may take a little while to percolate through the Archetypal Mind of humanity, my recommendation is to teach Energy Enhancement Advanced Meditation Techniques..

To achieve True Wealth.. the Ultimate Truth, and Freedom... Enlightenment!!

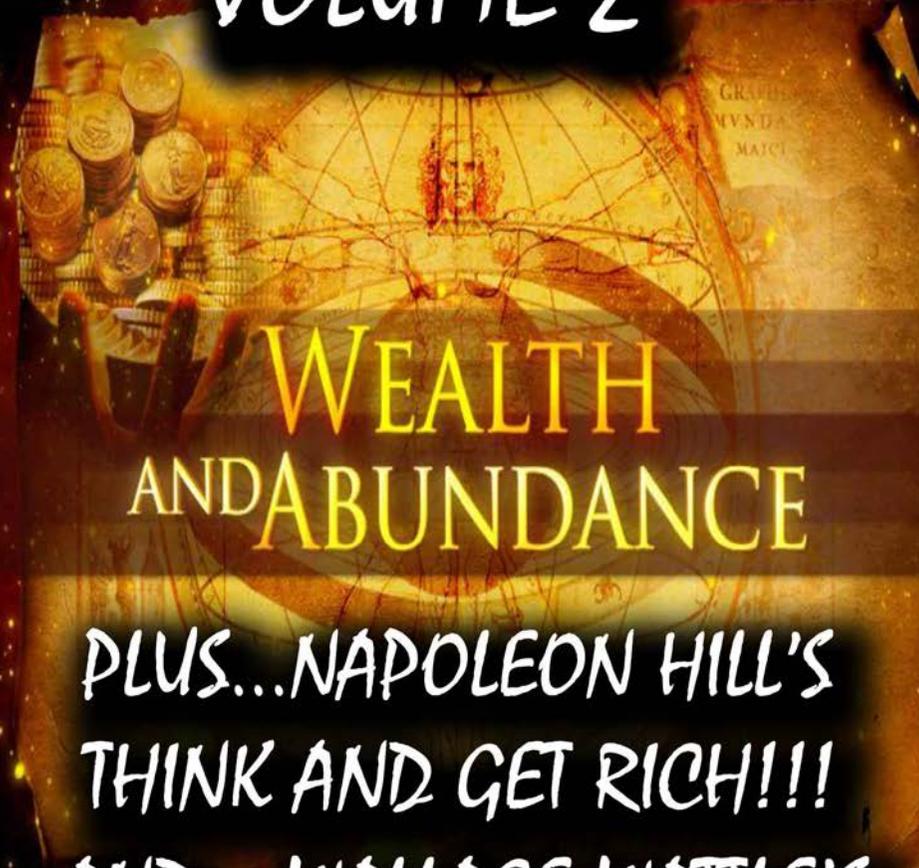
ENLIGHTENMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE

INCREASING WEALTH WILL SPEED UP THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION AND ENLIGHTENMENT FOR ALL

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# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATE AND GET RICH VOLUME 2



## WEALTH AND ABUNDANCE

PLUS... NAPOLEON HILL'S  
THINK AND GET RICH!!!  
AND... WALLACE WATTLE'S  
THE SCIENCE OF GETTING RICH  
BY SATCHIDANAND

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# MEDITATE AND GET RICH VOL.2

YOUR RICHNESS SEED IS A THOUGHTFORM!!

With regard to becoming rich, becoming strong, any mortal thing you want to be – All these things and more are thoughtforms.

They are thoughtform seeds.

And Napoleon Hill talks about growing these thoughtform seeds, actualising these thoughtform seeds, so that they grown like Acorns to become the great Oak trees they were destined to become - and he gives the formula for this Richness tree to come to fruition.

That you actually become rich!

And Napoleon Hill gives in this book these methods – which suit the natural competents, but require everything from those not naturally competent, including a lot of time..

FAITH, AUTO SUGGESTION, IMAGINATION, DESIRE, DECISION, PERSISTANCE, SEX, THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND, THE BRAIN, THE SIXTH SENSE, HOW TO OUTWIT THE SIX GHOSTS OF FEAR

NOW, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GROW YOUR PSYCHIC OAK TREE IN DOUBLE QUICK TIME?

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS?

The thing about these Thoughtform Seeds is that they are psychic seeds.

These Thoughtform Seeds do not need real Earth, Water, Sunlight and Carbon Dioxide to grow.

No!

These Thoughtform Seeds need Psychic Energy to Grow.

Most Richness and Wealth Courses teach very beginners techniques.

We are taught the Ancient Buddhist Technique of Metta Bhavana – Gratitude - to Open the Heart.

We are taught the Ancient Yogic Technique of Repetition – of Mantra and Visualisation to Life Stream what we want in the Present tense as though we already have it

So we write down what we want on sheets of paper, read them out into audio files, listen to the files constantly, so that we live in our Matrix, not truly alive so as to enter the prayers into our conscious minds so that with years of repetition the thoughtform seeds might grow, clothe themselves in psychic matter and enter in to the Universal Sub-conscious mind and we might actually become rich and everything work out just as we wish.

So, why does it take so much effort by Mantra to become Rich?

The answer is Energy Blockages which stop our connection with the infinite energies of the Earth and the Central Spiritual Sun and which block our little richness thoughtform from the energies that would make it grow Superfast!

As I said, Mantra is a very beginners technique. There are Ancient Techniques of the Sidars which quickly develop the Psychic Powers to get what you want quickly and easily.

Everyone who takes the Energy Enhancement Course gets these psychic powers.

The power to connect with the fountain of kundalini energy from the Earth.

The power to connect with Infinite Spiritual Energy which descends from the Central Spiritual Sun.

The most powerful Technique is that of Meditation developing quickly with Energy Enhancement Initiations into Samadhi and Samyama, talked about in the Ancient – 5000 years old - Yoga Book, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

Everyone knows that Meditation is the best, most ancient, fastest and efficient technique to gain Psychic Powers,

There is a whole chapter in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali on the use of Samyama to gain all the Psychic Powers – gain immense riches, remove all our vows of poverty from our past lifetimes as monks, remove all bad luck and karma, remove everything holding you back, and attain Enlightenment the goal of All our Past Lifetimes.

The Energy Enhancement Video Meditation Course in Four Levels, and twenty eight Initiations

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# SUPER ENERGY

*and*

# SACRED SYMBOLS



*for Perfect Wisdom  
Enlightenment*

# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT

Ancient Sacred Symbols are Guided Meditations indicating How to get into Alignment with a Stream of Energy from Kundalini Chakra in the Earth's Center To the Central Spiritual Sun "Brighter than 10,000 Suns" in the Center of the Universe.

Learn Secrets of the Kundalini Kriyas...

- \* The Yin Yang
- \* Om or Amen
- \* Antahkarana
- \* Squaring the Circle
- \* The Holy Grail
- \* The DNA Spiral
- \* Caduceus
- \* The Pyramid
- \* The Ankh
- \* Whirling Dervishes
- \* The Light of the Soul
- \* Sphinx or Centaur
- \* Zen Circle
- \* Alchemy
- \* VITRIOL
- \* Omphallus
- \* The Antahkarana Axis Mundi
- \* The Myth of King Arthur
- \* The Chakras
- \* Kundalini Energy
- \* Tantra and Sex
- \* Philosophers Stone

Human Evolution and the Chakras

Sexual Abuse and Rape

The Heart Chakra and Society

Crown Chakra Connections

Then There is Anger

Jealous People are called Monkeys

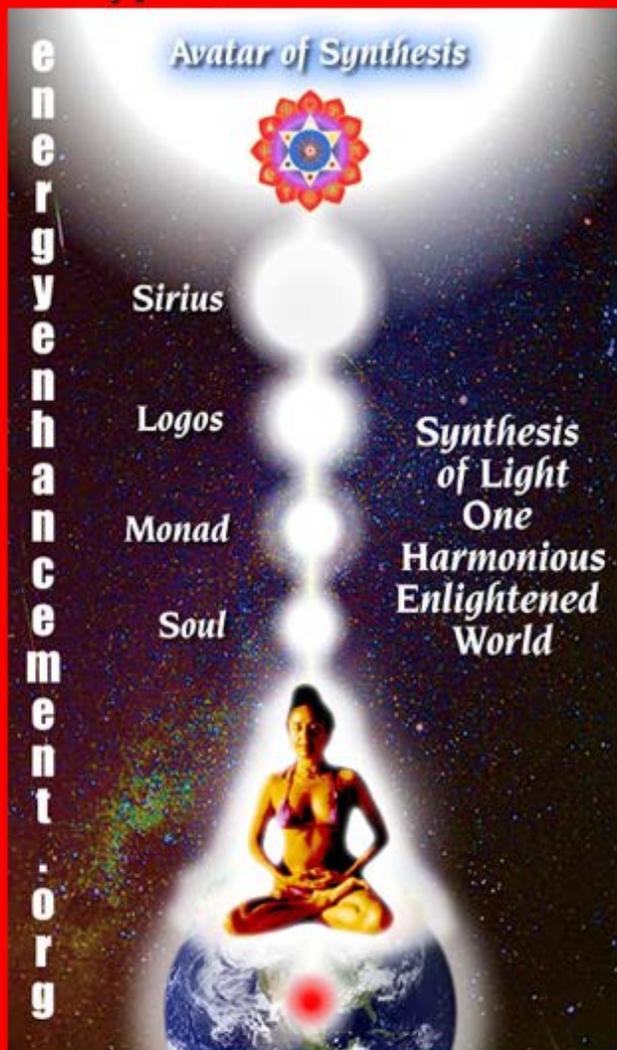
What are the Strategies of the Energy Vampire?

Swami Satchidanand has taught many Students Ancient yet Powerful methods to Access More Wisdom, More Kundalini, More Clarity, More Intelligence, More Energy using Energy Enhancement Techniques available Live or On Video together with many Talks, Books, Videos.

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# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT



LINK INTO INFINITE CHAKRA ENERGY  
AND ELIMINATE ENERGY BLOCKAGES

# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT ONE

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT GUIDED MEDITATIONS TEACH HOW TO GET INTO ALIGNMENT WITH A COLUMN OF ENERGY FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN, FROM KUNDALINI CHAKRA IN THE CENTER OF THE EARTH TO THE CHAKRA IN THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE, THE SOUL CHAKRA.

NOW, ENERGY ENHANCEMENT TO ELIMINATE THE ENERGY BLOCKAGES WHICH STOP THE FLOW OF ENERGY.

ACCESS THE CHAKRAS ABOVE THE HEAD WITH MONADIC INFUSION AND CONNECTION WITH THE AVATAR OF SYNTHESIS.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND ANCIENT MYTH AND THE HERCULES LABOUR OF THE AUGEAN STABLES.

ENERGY CIRCULATION AND THE GROUNDING OF NEGATIVE ENERGIES.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION AND THE KUNDALINI KRIYAS OF KRIYA YOGA.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND VITRIOL - THE FIRST FORMULA OF ALCHEMY AND THE REMOVAL OF FEAR.

THE SECRET OF THE PHILOSOPHERS STONE WHICH TRANSMUTES BASE METAL - ENERGY BLOCKAGE IMPLANTS - INTO PURE GOLDEN SPIRITUAL ENERGY AND ILLUMINATION.

THE REMOVAL OF BLOCKAGES FROM THE ANTAHKARANA, THE CHAKRAS IN THE BODY. FROM CHAKRAS BELOW THE BASE CHAKRA AND ABOVE THE HEAD CHAKRAS. THE REMOVAL OF BLOCKAGES FROM PARTS OF THE BODY. THE REMOVAL OF BLOCKAGES FROM THE TIMELINE BY THE ENERGY ENHANCEMENT SEVEN STEP PROCESS.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND THE ZEN STORY OF HYAKUJO, A ZEN STORY OF THE ANTAHKARANA AND THE HIGHER SELF.

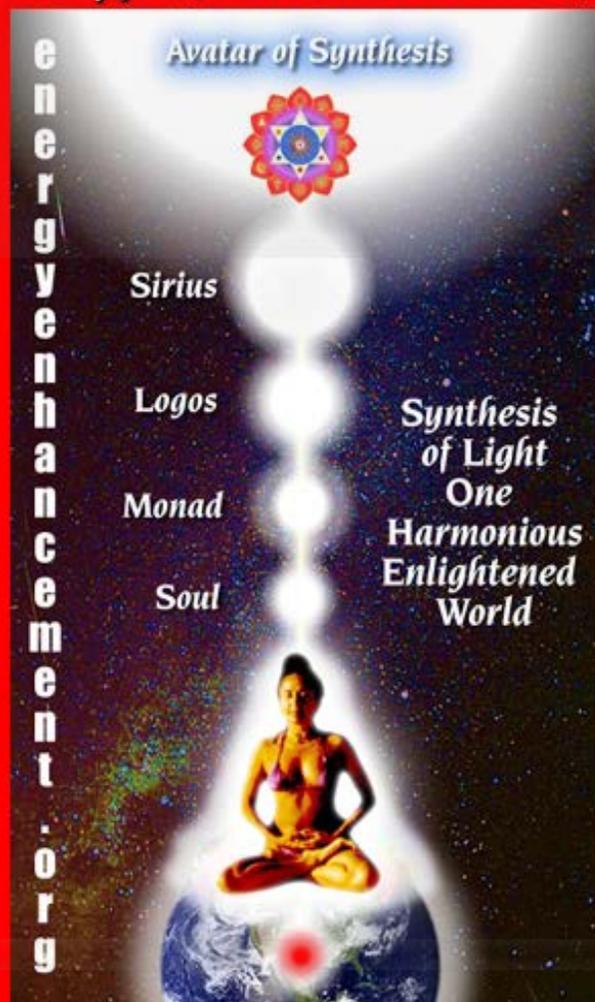
MASLOW, GURDJIEFF, DAME ALEXANDER-NEEL, PARACELCUS AND BUDDHA. THE ANTAHKARANA, BRIDGE, TOWER OF BABEL OR BABBLE, CHAKRAS, MEDITATION, GURDJIEFF, SHAKESPEARE, GURU.

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# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT



REMOVAL OF ENERGY BLOCKAGES,  
MANAGING ENERGY CONNECTIONS  
AND MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT TWO

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT GUIDED MEDITATIONS TEACH HOW TO GET INTO ALIGNMENT WITH A COLUMN OF ENERGY FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN, HOW TO ELIMINATE THE ENERGY BLOCKAGES WHICH STOP THE FLOW.

NOW, HOW TO MANAGE PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS TO ENERGY VAMPIRES TO REMOVE THEIR BLOCKAGES WHICH STEAL YOUR ENERGY AND STOP THE FLOW, WHICH IS ALL PART OF THE ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS.

LEONARDO DA VINCI WAS A GREAT MASTER OF WISDOM. MASTER OF THE PRIORY OF SION - INTEGRATION - HEART, INTELLIGENCE, EMOTIONAL IQ, PSYCHOLOGY, CREATIVITY AND EE MEDITATION



MANAGING PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION ELIMINATING THE EGO STRATEGIES OF THE ENERGY VAMPIRE, THE PLEASER, BLAMER, VAMP, TYRANT, SELF DESTRUCTOR, MANIC DEPRESSION, ALOOF AND THE POOR ME, VIOLATOR, INTERROGATOR, AND THE STAR

EE MEDITATION AND THE SHAMAN AN INTEGRATED SOUL PERSONALITY GROUNDING AND ELIMINATING FRAGMENTATION, MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES, MPD + DID, FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS

EE MEDITATION AND EXISTENTIALISM AND KUBRICK'S PSYCHOPATHS IN THE FILMS OF STANLEY KUBRICK, GEORGE LUCAS, STAR WARS, THE REVENGE OF THE SITH, AND PSYCHOPATHS

THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS, PSYCHIC ENERGY CONNECTIONS, IMPLANTS, ENERGY VAMPIRES, THE INITIATIONS OF ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION AND THE MASTERY OF RELATIONSHIPS

BLOCKAGES IN CHAKRAS ABOVE THE HEAD CREATE PSYCHOPATHY.

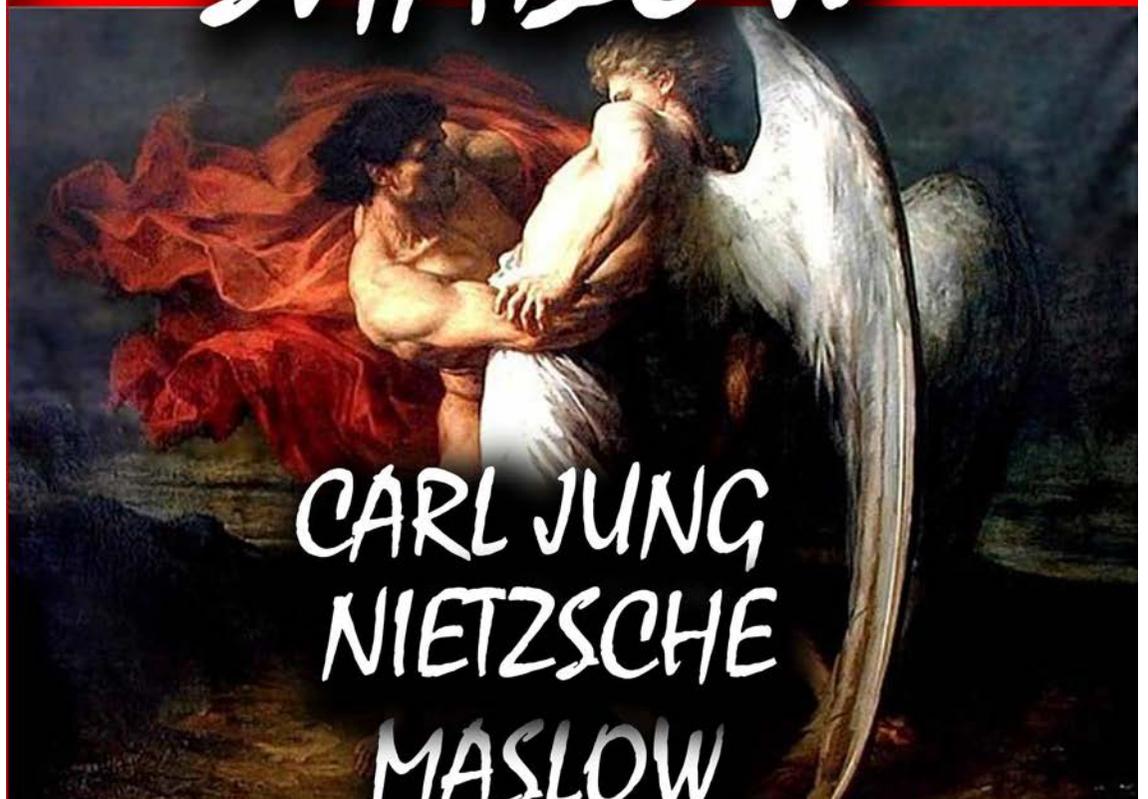
75% ARE PSYCHOPATHS, SCHIZOPHRENIC, AND MANIC DEPRESSIVE.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT AND TRAUMA, RELATIONSHIPS, DIVORCE, SEX, SEX ADDICTION, TANTRA, GAMBLING, HOMOSEXUALITY, LESBIANISM, DRUGS AND ADDICTION, BAD BACKS, HEART DISEASE, AND CANCER.

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# ELIMINATING THE SHADOW



CARL JUNG  
NIETZSCHE  
MASLOW

JORDAN PETERSON  
SATCHIDANAND

[www.energyenhancement.org](http://www.energyenhancement.org)

# ELIMINATING THE SHADOW

In this book, Satchidanand trashes the greatest most intellectual investigators and descriptors of the Shadow and the Shadow Subpersonalities. Great People - The Highest of All Humanity - Jordan Peterson, Carl Jung, Nietzsche, and every Psychotherapy, Psychological therapist who can describe the problem of the Shadow, talk about the problem of the shadow but have no Practical solution to the Shadow. All of those guys Failed to Solve the Problem of the Shadow. None of these guys have Any practical solution for the Shadow.. And it is the Shadow Subpersonalities which is the Source, The Fount, of All Evil on this Planet... And the Source of All Evil within You!!

Carl Jung says.. "There is no generally effective technique for assimilating the shadow. It is more like diplomacy or statesmanship and it is always an individual matter. First one has to accept and take seriously the existence of the shadow. Second, one has to become aware of its qualities and intentions. This happens through conscientious attention to moods, fantasies and impulses. Third, a long process of negotiation is unavoidable." (Carl Jung)

As Jung notes in the passage above, he thought there is no general technique to integrate the shadow, even though the Buddha and Jesus Christ exemplified the Meditation Technology. For thousands of years great souls have come to earth to demonstrate otherwise, that enlightenment is, "Tat tvam asi" Thou art that!! You are a part of the Universe and have nothing else to seek.

Energy Enhancement Meditation – Spiritual Insight – combined with psychological knowledge is THE complete way of processing and integrating your Shadow Side into wholeness.

Because Energy Enhancement Meditation has actual ancient time-tested meditative techniques that you can use and apply to your Shadow work to Heal All your trauma formed Subpersonalities and Integrate them into the Soul. As long as we have a Shadow Side we have Trauma formed Negative Karmic Mass – pain, frustration, pessimism, depression, anxiety, grief, bitterness, spitefulness, jealousy, anger, greed, lust, addiction, escapism, nihilism. These all need to be addressed and healed – transmuted and integrated.

Energy Enhancement Meditation uses the Psychic Spiritual Center – Third Eye as primary gateway into healing yourself. If we just use psychological analysis then we are limited. If we just use creative therapies, dream exploration, trance-work etc then we are also limited still. This is because we need it all, both sides.

ENERGY ENHANCEMENT MEDITATION – DEEPER THAN THE INTELLECT, MORE PROFOUND THAN THE MIND!

Alchemical VITRIOL is an Ancient Meditation designed to remove Trauma from Memories!! VITRIOL IS A LATIN ACRONYM - VITRIOL. – Visita Interiore Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultem Lapidem, THE GROUNDING AND TRANSMUTATION OF ENERGY BLOCKAGES – The unification of the conscious and the unconscious., night and day, hot and cold, masculine and feminine. In the center is the Ajna Chakra – Third Eye. The kundalini Serpent has risen from the Muladhara – Base Chakra to the Third Eye Center. The symbolic meaning of its risen state is a raised consciousness that has dissolved duality. A state of Wholeness – Integration – Enlightenment.

"Come together, right now, over me" Singing these famous song lyrics from the Beatles to yourself, You can come together, surpassing your current-self to a higher-self!

With Energy Enhancement Meditation.

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# MIND CONTROL BLACK ASSASSINS VOL.11

I am Princeray (In Search of Black Assassins)- one of the most censored Black Men on the World-Wide Internet and YOUTUBE. Former Member/Man-child of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense before MK ULTRA Huey P. Newton. I have a JD Law Degree, but I am not part of the Queen's Bar.

My wife watch the Wendy Williams Show most mornings. At times, I do watch some of it, but I am no fan. This particular morning, I heard that Whitney Houston's secret female lover, Robyn Crawford, was the exclusive show guest. I wasn't interested in listening to Crawford's talk about her tell all book about her lesbian relationship with Whitney Houston. Then, I heard that her book title had been shrouded around Donny Hathaway's "A Song for You" that is a deep soulful and spiritual chant- a string to my deep emotion and heart. I was suddenly overcome by flashbacks and recall to some of my past loves, my mother and father that I missed telling them how much I really deeply loved them before they passed away. Donny Hathaway, "A Song for You" is sacred to me, I had to stop in my tracks, sit down and reflect.

Robyn Crawford is a shady and shallow character, and Whitney's drug habit enabler not worthy of Donny Hathaway's "A Song for You" type of love. Houston and Crawford's sexual relationship didn't begin in "puppy love" of teens. In East Orange, New Jersey, Crawford was a legal 19 year old adult lesbian when she admitted that she sexually preyed on 16 year old high school student, Whitney Houston, a New Jersey state MINOR that should have been entitled to protection of state law from Crawford's narcotic influences, and sexually assault by an adult homosexual predator/pedophile.

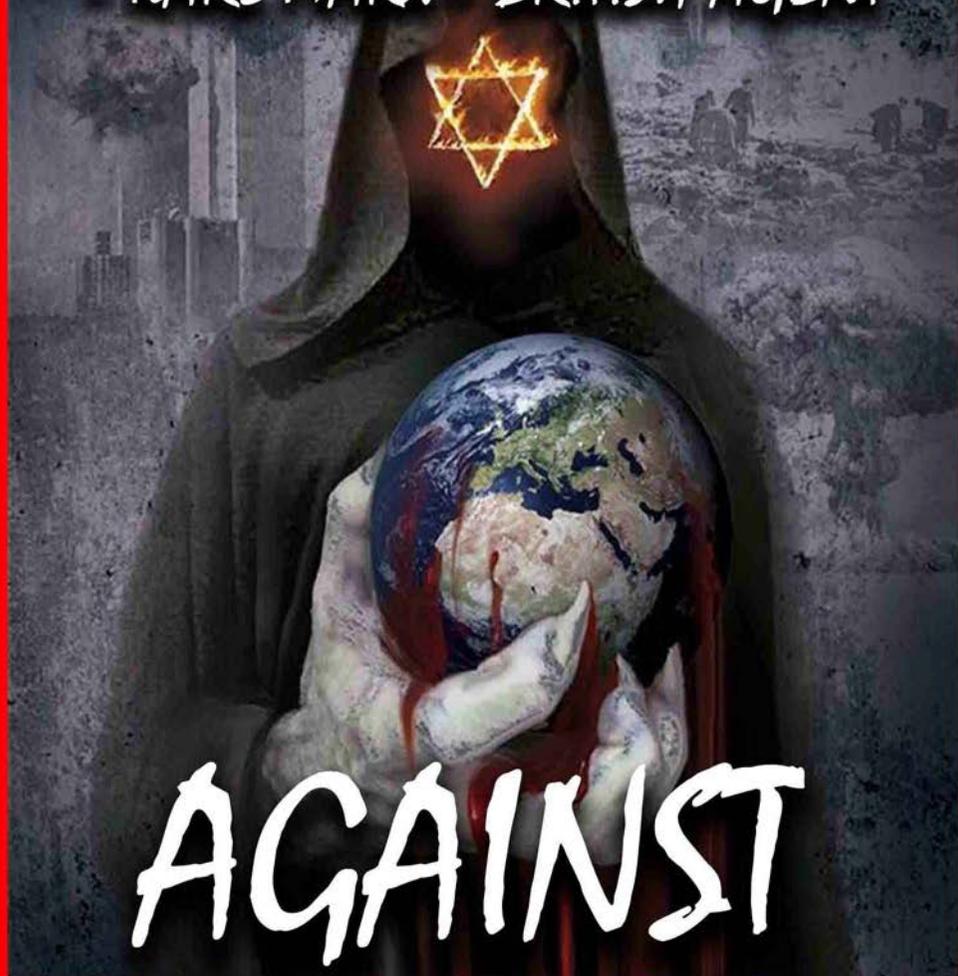
Another point is that Crawford says affirmatively that she first met Whitney during a summer at East Orange Community Development Center. Yet, there are some circumstantial evidence that they met at Catholic all-girls Mount Saint Dominic Academy in Caldwell, NJ- a Catholic institution plagued by ritual sexual abuse of children. Nevertheless, Crawford admits in fact that it had been her St. Dominic basketball coach that had joined them together as community center counselors.

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# SATANIC HISTORY

## FAKE COMMUNISM

- KARL MARX - BRITISH AGENT



## AGAINST

# SATANISM

10,000 YEARS OF TOTAL CONTROL

GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED BY SATANIC PEDOPHILIA, LOVELESS RITUAL SEX, SODOMY, RITUAL DRUGS, RITUAL BLOOD SACRIFICE, RITUAL HUMAN SACRIFICE, RITUAL TORTURE, RITUAL BURNING ALIVE, RITUAL CANNIBALISM, RITUAL CASTRATION.

FAKE ECONOMICS - Economists have been paid - Adam Smith (and his Satanic Mandevillian, "Public benefits come from Private Vices") was a hack, paid by Lord Shelburne, Head of the British East India Company, foundation of the British Empire - to create an Economics which would perpetuate the Bankers of the British Empire, later the Anglo-American Empire. Austrian Economics and it's Austerity - The Oligarchic Principle of Poverty - was supported and spread by Nelson Rockefeller. Solution? See Hudsons Modern Monetary Theory or Larouche Hamilton Credit Theory. The Economist Fake Gangs

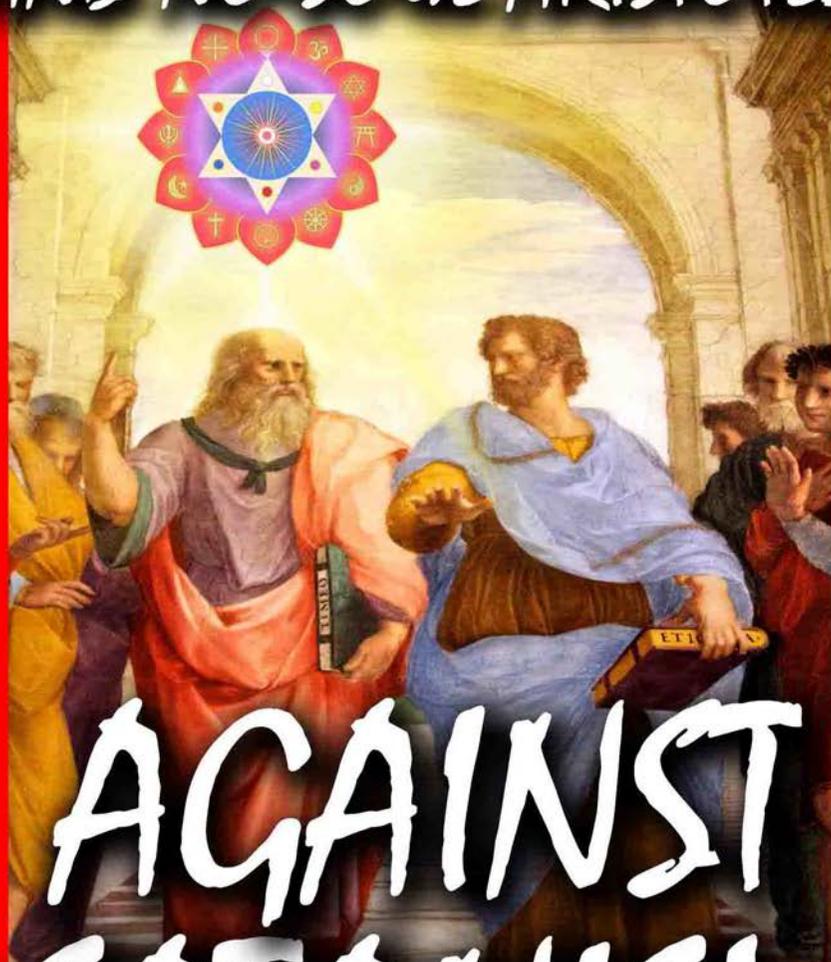
SATANIC SABBATEAN FRANKISTS infiltrate Jews and Jewish organisations worldwide. Pagan Rituals and Myths used to pervert, degenerate and control a Jewish psychopathic ruling class of Donmeh Attaturk, Rothschilds, Rockefellers, Schiffs, Warburgs..

SATANIC KARL MARX - Wrote Das Capital from his MI6 provided office in the British National Museum under Ambassador Urquhart creating MI6 inspired Communism, Russian Revolution (65 millions tortured dead) and Mao's Chinese Revolution (85 millions tortured dead), and Socialism. George Orwell's Totalitarian text's "1984" "A Boot, stamping in your face, forever" - the Totalitarian or Legalist Fake Gangs sprang from this bough. Capitalists, Marxists, Communists and Socialists spring from the same Fake Gangs bough.

# SATANIC PHILOSOPHY

## EUGENIC PLATO

### AND NO-SOUL ARISTOTLE



# AGAINST SATANISM

RING OF CYCLES - "CONCEALMENT OF WICKEDNESS"

BY HUMAN SACRIFICE

# AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME TWO

The Secret History of the Modern World and the Battle for the Future -  
The "One Ring" of Gyges of Plato's Book, Republic - A Comparison between  
Ring of Gyges of the Hobbit and the One Ring of the Lord of the Rings with  
reference to the effect of Eugenics No Heart Plato and No Soul Aristotle on  
the Secret History of the Modern World and Satanic Globalism  
- the Battle for the Future.

The difference between the simple Ring of Gyges of the Hobbit and the One  
Ring of the Lord of the Rings is - "Into this ring he poured all his cruelty,  
his malice and his will to dominate all life"

The difference is this energy of cruelty. "By our sinning and Ritual human  
sacrifices, and Ritual human sacrifices and sinning, the gods will be  
propitiated, and we shall not be punished" - Plato's Republic

Used for one purpose "The Concealment of Wickedness"

Plato's Republic - WHAT IS THY NATURE? SATANIC ADEIMANTUS

"Appearance Tyrannizes over Truth and is Lord of Happiness"

Adeimantus of Collytus (432 BCE - 382 BCE) son of Ariston of Athens was  
also known as Plato's brother. In Plato's Republic, Adeimantus questions  
whether they would be living a good life with little or no personal property.  
Consequently, Adeimantus is often associated with greed or love for money  
in interpretations of the dialogue.

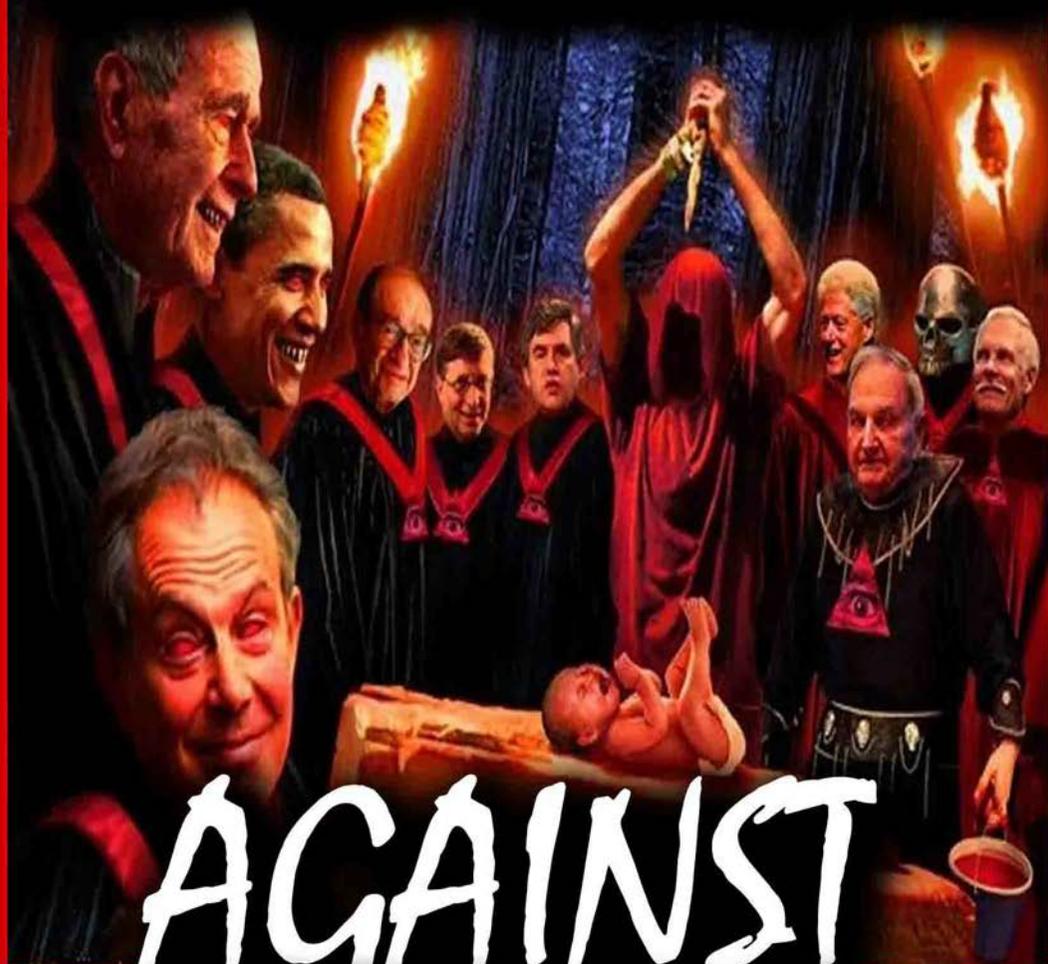
He quotes Pindar (522 - 443 BC) an Ancient Greek lyric poet from Thebes-  
"Can I by justice or by crooked ways of deceit ascend a loftier tower which  
may be a fortress to me all my days? For what men say is that, if I am really  
just and am not also thought just profit there is none, but the pain and loss  
on the other hand are unmistakable. But if, though unjust, I acquire the  
reputation of justice, a heavenly life is promised to me."

"Let us be consistent then, and believe both or neither. If the poets speak  
truly, why then we had better be unjust, and offer of the fruits of injustice;  
for if we are just, although we may escape the vengeance of heaven, we shall  
lose the gains of injustice; but, if we are unjust, we shall keep the gains,  
and by our sinning and Ritual human sacrifices, and Ritual human sacrifices  
and sinning, the gods will be propitiated, and we shall not be punished."

And here is where the elite get all their negative energy or as we call it in  
Energy Enhancement - Trauma-Formed Negative Karmic Mass.. from Ritual  
Human Sacrifice - a Satanic Ritual used in all civilisations on All Continents  
by the Satanic Elites for tens of Thousands of years.

Yes Satanism, the Occult Cult was created 10,000 years ago before Christ,  
and has been extant since that time in order to create the psychopaths which  
rule humanity, grind us down, make us into feudal wage slaves barefoot and  
back on the reservation, buying everything from the Amazon company store!  
More Energy Enhancement  
Meditation at...

# SATANIC RITUALS HUMAN SACRIFICE



# AGAINST SATANISM

SATANISM - 10,000 YEARS OF TOTAL CONTROL

# AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 3

## SATANIC RITUALS AND HUMAN SACRIFICE

Sometimes people reading the Truth get depressed by it.

For people with big hearts though, the truth gets them started with an Implacable Opposition to Absolute Evil.

The Battle of Armageddon can only be won by sufficient Angels to fight against the Demons. Be an Angel!!

The point of this introductory missive is that 72 Empires have been recorded and every one of them has failed in the same way. The facts have been recorded that a totalitarian and satanic elite infil-traited and took over all these Empires and that 72 once free, flourishing and rich republics were destroyed from within.

Infil-traition of Satanism is the methodology as slowly every Government Ministry and Societal function is taken over. Eventually a Satanist becomes King Emperor President. The Satanist Pillars of Homosexuality, Pederasty, Drugs and Ritual Sex - both Hetero and Homosexual - are introduced overtly and the society is destroyed.

The Ancient Enemy who counts meditation and the mind control psychic arts as one of its main planks of World Domination has used Satanic Infil-Traitors for 10,000 years in every Organisation - Religion, Left and Right Politics, Dynastic Families, Geopolitics, Economics, Universities, Intelligence Services, Think Tanks, Banking, International Companies, Eugenics - All of them Censoring Worldwide, Advanced Meditation techniques - Alchemical VITRIOL, the Kundalini Key and Energy Blockage Removal from every Meditation Program.. EXCEPT ENERGY ENHANCEMENT!!

The key is that the Satanic Religion and its current recruiting cults of Freemasonry and the Crowlean Sexual Ritual OTO - Ordo Templi Orientis - are Fake Gangs, created by men as a 10,000 years old technique to create psychopathic leaders and thus conquer the world.

All Rituals, Religion, Education, Secret Services and Political Movements have been Scientifically Engineered to create Fake Gangs for 10,000 Years. It's what the old Roman Empire, and the Babylonian Empire, and the Cult of Apollo, and the Byzantine Empire did before.

As you know, all the gangs have Rituals before you can join, making your bones with the Mafia means you must murder someone before you can join and Drug Cartels, secret groups within the Masons, the Hellfire Club, all have their Rituals before you can join and before you can progress. All Rituals, Religion, Education and Political Movements are designed to create fake gangs of psychopaths who can then be used to create control through chaos created poverty - The Oligarchic Policy of Poverty - destroying infrastructure - preventing human evolution.

SATANIC HOMO OCCULTISM  
SATANIC HITLER



AGAINST  
SATANISM

10,000 YEARS OF TOTAL CONTROL

# AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 4

## SATANIC HOMO OCCULTISM SATANIC HITLER

Satanic Communism and Fascism is gradually being instituted as the New World Religion defined by Satanic Ritual.

72 Empires have been recorded and every one of them has failed in the same way. The facts have been recorded that a totalitarian and satanic elite infil-traited and took over all these Empires and that 72 once free, flourishing and rich republics were destroyed from within by Satanic Ritual.

From South America Incas and Aztecs to Satanic Pagan Odin, Cybele and Attis, Baal and Molech, and the Holy Inquisition, Ritual Human Sacrifice and burning alive and Ritual Homosexuality, Sodomy and Pedophilia has been endemic for Thousands of Years.

Read Against Satanism Volume Two - The Foundation of Western Philosophy is Pagan, Satanic, based on No-Heart Plato and No-Soul Aristotle. Plato's Republic (c.370 BC) propounded the "Concealment of Wickedness" and the use of Ritual Human Sacrifice to placate the Gods of Karma. Plato's Republic's ideal state is based on Sparta - The Spartan society was dominated by a rigidly Hierarchical and Elitist Pedophile Warrior Cult that featured mandatory induction of twelve-year-old boys into Homosexual Partnerships with adult men, and which Plato argues should be ruled by Autocratic Dictator Philosopher-Kings. The Republic propounds the Eugenic elimination of the family and the elimination of private property.

Infil-traition of Satanism is the methodology as slowly every Government Ministry and Societal function is taken over. Eventually a Satanist becomes King Emperor President. The Satanist Pillars of Homosexuality, Pederasty, Drugs and Ritual Sex - both Hetero and Homosexual - are introduced overtly. Christianity and Judaism - the bulwarks Against Satanism - are destroyed and then society fucked through the fear of Ritual Human Sacrifice.

The Ancient Enemy who counts meditation and the mind control psychic arts as one of its main planks of World Domination has used Satanic Infil-Traitors for 10,000 years in every Organisation - Religion, Left and Right Politics, Dynastic Families, Geopolitics, Economics, Universities, Economics, Intelligence Services, Think Tanks, Banking, International Companies, Global Warming, Eugenics -

Read Against Satanism Volume One - Satanic Karl Marx created Communism for Ambassador Urquhart of British Secret Services writing Das Capital in his Office in the British National Library in London. Communism was used by British Agents Satanic Lenin and Stalin and Satanic 33rd Degree Freemason of Yale University, Mao to take over Russia and China torturing and killing 160 millions of people.

All of them Censoring Worldwide, Advanced Meditation techniques - Alchemical VITRIOL, the Kundalini Key and Energy Blockage Removal from every Meditation Program..

**EXCEPT ENERGY ENHANCEMENT!!** The Energy Enhancement Video Course - [energyenhancement.org](http://energyenhancement.org)

Read Against Satanism Volume Three - Satanism is Defined by Satanic Rituals - These Rituals Define Satanism.. Loveless Ritual Sex, Sodomy, Pedophilia, Ritual Drugs, Ritual Blood Sacrifice, Ritual Human Sacrifice, Ritual Torture, Ritual Burning Alive, Ritual Cannibalism, Ritual Castration.

This means Pedophilia Sex Rituals and means the Totalitarian Fear Control of Human Sacrifice. As presently occurs in Totalitarian No-Soul Communist China. Christians, Buddhists and Falun Gong are executed in special organ harvesting vans - Human Sacrifice.

They have ten of these vans in every city and they work all day long taking fresh organs to the airport for implantation in Japan. The organs harvested and sold to Rich Oligarchs Worldwide

Read Against Satanism Volume Four - SATANIC HOMO-OCCULTISM AND THE HOMOSEXUAL ROOTS OF FASCISM - Black Magician Homosexual Hitler created homosexual Cults based upon Black Magic - taught to him by Guido von List and the Armanen Order, Jorg Lanz von Liebenfels and Ariosophy, The Thule Society, Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

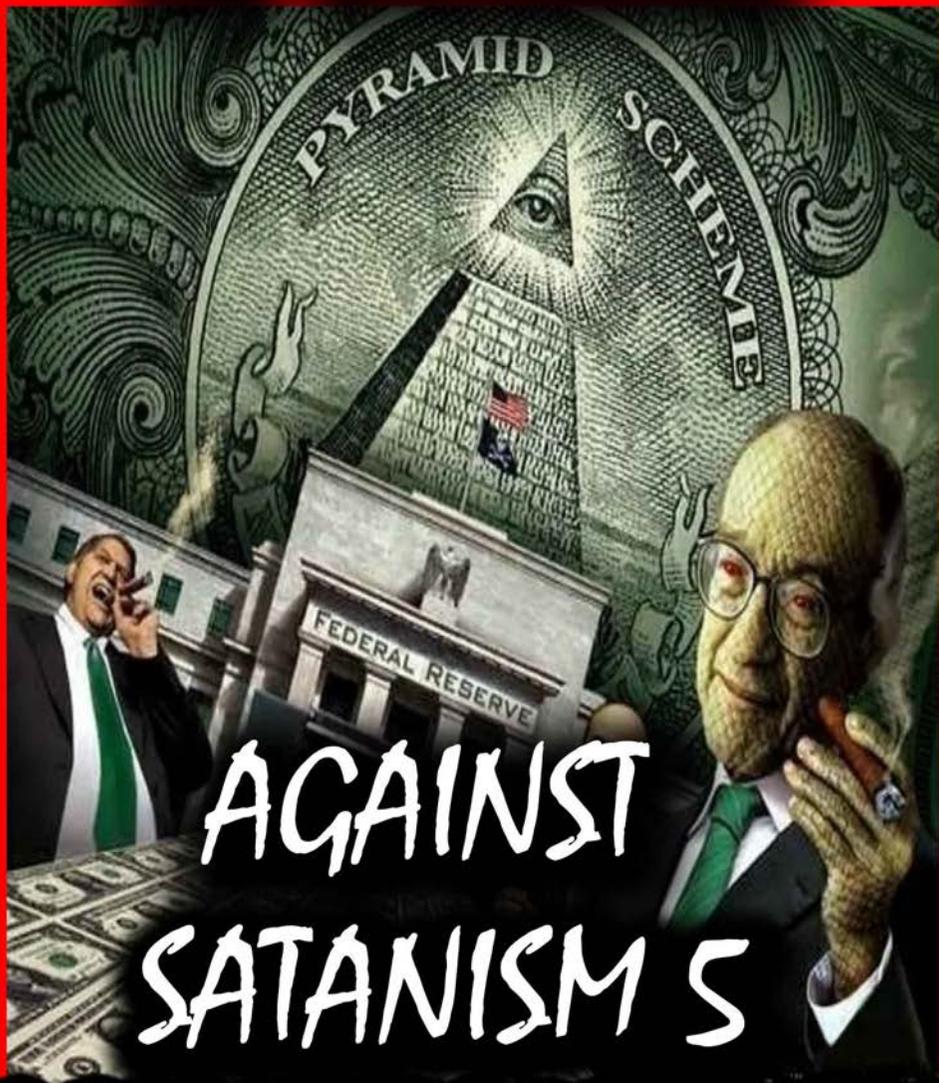
Because the Torah and the Bible prohibit Homosexuality, in order to introduce Satanism and its Satanic Rituals, Hitler decided to destroy Judaism and Also he changed Christianity - Jesus - into a Sun God associated with Odin by sending all Clerics to the Concentration Death camps along with the Satanic Ritual Burning Human Sacrifice Holocaust of Six Million Jews.

After that Hitler allied with Islam because Islam promotes Jihad Warrior Spartan Pedophilia and Sex Slavery of Women - "Women for breeding, boys for love" See, Thousands of Muslim child prostitutes in every city of Britain - Rochdale child sex abuse ring.. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochdale\\_child\\_sex\\_abuse\\_ring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochdale_child_sex_abuse_ring)

Hitler's NAZI is Satanic National Socialism, an offshoot of Satanic No-God Communism - You can see this plan occurring in Western Civilisation and China, everywhere, NOW!!

Read Against Satanism Volume Four - Homosexuality in Satanic Homo Occultism.. Satanic Homo Occultism, Satanic Hitler..

# SATANIC ECONOMICS THE PRINCIPLE OF POVERTY



AGAINST  
SATANISM 5

10,000 YEARS OF CONTROL

# AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 5

## SATANIC ECONOMICS

THE 10,000 YEARS OLD OLIGARCHIC PRINCIPLE OF POVERTY..  
To create a Humanity, "Dummed Down, Barefoot and Back on the Reservation"

The Satanic Vocabulary of Economic Deception  
Against Satanism - The Satanic Principle of Poverty.. Banker Bankster Fraud Corruption Lies from  
the Father of Lies.

Debt Forgiveness in History and the Satanic Vocabulary of Economic Deception -  
How the Bronze Age saved itself from debt serfdom and Slavery.

Further intel on the turf war between the Satanic old eight families of Bankers, who took over the  
world from the Satanic Aristocracy, and the Satanic Family of the Rockefellers

Agents, Mazzini, Urquhart and Napoleon III - as a Continuation of the same Satanic Psychopathic  
Families from Satanic Psychopathic Babylon through the Satanic Psychopathic Roman Empire,  
the Satanic Psychopathic Venetian Empire to the Satanic Psychopathic British Empire to the  
current Satanic Psychopathic Anglo-American Establishment

Venezuela, Trump's Brilliant Strategy to Dismember U.S. Dollar Hegemony,  
and Is Neoliberalism Killing Russia?

Argentina Gets Biggest IMF Loan in History, Argentina's New \$50 Billion IMF Loan  
Is Designed to Replay Its 2001 Crisis.

Modern-Day Debtors' Prisons and Debt in Antiquity.

"What we are trying to do in this meeting today is to give you a new view of how the real economy  
works today and teach reality economics, instead of  
the parallel universe that you have in economic textbooks.

So, instead of learning how the economy operates, students are told how a  
parallel universe might operate on a different planet, if there were no government, if there  
were no fraud, if the entire economy operated on barter, if there was no debt, and  
that everybody wanted to help everybody else, that nobody inherited money, that  
everybody earned all of the income and wealth that they have. The reality is the  
opposite, but it seems to be talked about only in novels these days.

"Whenever you have a misunderstanding of reality year after year, decade after  
decade, and now for a century, when a false picture of the economy is painted  
you can be sure that there is a special interest benefiting. A false picture of reality  
does not happen by nature; it is subsidised. And the banking sector has subsidised  
and paid for a junk economics that is taught in the universities, broadcast from  
your newspapers, mouthed by the politicians, whose election they sponsor, to try to  
make you believe, that you're living on Mars in a different kind of a world—instead  
of the actual country that you're living in—and to pretend that there is no financial  
class that is trying to grab what belongs to the public at large.

This is what ends up with a difference between central bank creation by the  
government with the government aims of economic growth and full employment,  
as compared with commercial bank credit that aims at economic shrinkage, at  
austerity, at lower wages, so that it can do to you what the  
commercial banks are doing to Greece, to say give us your ports and your land  
and your tourist areas and your water and sewer systems, so we can charge you  
for water and sewer. And we can take the money that you had expected to get in pensions  
and we can scale it down, so that we can pay ourselves.

"This is what it took an army in times past. And today it's done without an army, as long  
as you will be passive and believe the Lies, the science-fiction of the world that banks  
are painting. Thank you. [Applause]"

Remember, the main purpose is not money or power, it is in fact the Satanic  
Oligarchic Principle of Poverty, Dummed Down, Barefoot, and Back on the Reservation.

# ENERGY ENHANCEMENT SATANIC HISTORY TWO



JOHANNES FILIVS QUARTI  
EDVARDI TERTII REX  
CASTELLÆ ET LEGIÖNE  
DUX LANCASTIÆ  
CONSTABVLARIVS CASTE  
DE QVEENSBORGH QVIN  
TO OCTOBRI ANNO  
REGNI EDW TERTII ANN  
GLIA 50. FRANCIÆ 37



# AGAINST SATANISM Vol. 6

# AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME SIX

Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish aristocratic Families have existed for over 5000 years before the Birth of Christ. Using emotional rhetorical religious concepts to control, they worship all the Pagan Gods, including Lucifer, Satan, Baal, Bel, Molech, Ashtoreth, Cybele and Attis including all the Satanic Rituals in Against Satanism Volume 3 - RITUAL SEX, RITUAL DRUGS, RITUAL BLOOD SACRIFICE, RITUAL HUMAN SACRIFICE, RITUAL PEDOPHILIA, RITUAL TORTURE, RITUAL BURNING ALIVE, RITUAL CANNIBALISM, RITUAL CASTRATION.

In this book we find that over thousands of years, spook, Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish aristocratic Families infiltrated every country, every Empire, taking over or infiltrating every ruling aristocracy and aristocratic, bloodline family, in Europe, Britain, America, India, China and in every other country in the World.

Jewish/Phoenician aristocrats were never attached to any tiny nation, but were always one globalized trading empire from 2000BC, playing countries against each other for profit. For example using a false Flag to start a fake war between ruling elites in separate countries both of which have been allowed, built up, to become rich, but all the elites in each country coming from the same Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish aristocratic Families, and then buying all the assets for pennies on the dollar after the war. Not only that, giving loans to each country to prosecute the war, owning the Military Academic Industrial Complex providing materiel for the war.

Many Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish families who have ruled the World as one trading block for thousands of years before the Birth of Christ came from the Fertile Middle East Crescent including Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Israel, Mesopotamia-Iraq, and Persia-Iran, and had that region and all it's Empires razed many times over nonetheless, profiting from each destruction. They hop to and fro over the planet, always profiting by shifting, reshuffling and breaking their Empires.

We saw that the important conquests are not in our history books as such. Rather, Europe was colonized in the Bronze Age already, in patterns that match up with structures we see in today's spook aristocracy. The entire upper class of colonized regions was replaced by Phoenician/Jewish families, with common people unaware of it to this day. Some of this colonization is cautiously admitted, just not emphasized.

We saw that the Infiltrating Bloodline Phoenician/Jewish families always held power. The secret behind their power is simply that there is no big secret. They don't know anything special. They can't do anything special. They never achieved anything special —other than monopolizing trade. With the power to deceive from the Father of Lies, owning all the media, - The CIA, the Military Academic Industrial complex, Universities, History, Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Television, Youtube, Facebook, Google - even idiots can rule the world for millennia.



ENERGY ENHANCEMENT  
SATANIC HISTORY 3



AGAINST SATANISM  
VOLUME 7

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# AGAINST SATANISM VOLUME 7

The Cancer of The Venetian Empire - The Phoenician Empire - Metastases into the Anglo-American Empire.

The Suppression of Science

The Venetian Conspiracy - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

The Role of the Venetian Oligarchy in the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Enlightenment and the Thirty Years' War - Preface - by Lyndon LaRouche

The Role of the Venetian Oligarchy in Reformation, Counter-reformation, Enlightenment, and the Thirty Years' War - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Venice: The Methodology of Evil -- Part I by Donald Phau

Venice: The Methodology of Evil -- Part II by Donald Phau

Venice: The Methodology of Evil -- Part III by Christina N. Huth

650 Years Ago - How Venice Rigged the First, and Worst, Global Financial Crash - Paul Gallagher

How The Venetians Took Over England and Created Freemasonry - Gerald Rose

Giammaria Ortes: The Decadent Venetian Kook Who Originated The Myth of "Carrying Capacity" - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

How the Dead Souls of Venice Corrupted Science - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Venice's War Against Western Civilization - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

The War of the League of Cambrai, Paolo Sarpi and John Locke - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

How the Venetian System Was Transplanted Into England - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Palmerston's London During the 1850's -- A Tour of the Human Multicultural Zoo by Webster Tarpley

The Venetian Takeover of Enland - A 200-Year Project by Gerald Rose

How The Venetian Virus Infected and Took Over England by H. Graham Lowry

The Bestial British Intelligence Of Shelburne and Bentham by Jeffrey Steinberg

A Case Study Of British Sabotage of Science by Philip Valenti

The Enlightenment's Crusade Against Reason by Linda de Hoyos

King Edward VII of Great Britain: Evil Demiurge of the Triple Entente and World War I BY Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Sir Edward Grey Turned Sarajevo Crisis Into War by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

The Versailles Thesis: The Roots of WWI, and WWII by Webster G. Tarpley

The Versailles Treaty: The War Guilt Clause by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

British Financial Warfare: 1929; 1931-33; How The City Of London Created The Great Depression by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

Britain's Pacific War Against the United States in the Age of the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship' by Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

British Coup d'Etat In Washington, April 12, 1945: How The Harriman Gang Started The Cold War - Webster G. Tarpley, Ph.D.

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