



“A Hobbit’s Tale”



All piano pieces were written by Andrew Hanson, who also wrote this short story “A Hobbit’s Tale”.

Distances between locations and periods of time may not always be accurate, as I am not the original author of the first stories about Middle-Earth [J.R.R. Tolkien].

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## **A Hobbit's Journey**

Mungo Sandybanks woke early. He peered out of his bedroom window, where he saw the stars above just beginning to fade and the sky around them lighten. His feet felt the cold, hard floor beside his bed. He threw his cloak over his shoulders and stepped outside. Despite the chilly early morning stillness, he didn't retreat back indoors.

Mungo needed to climb the next hill to the west. He needed to see, in the new light of dawn, on this day of days, where it all had started. He needed to see where Frodo the Nine-Fingered and Samwise the Brave began their journey those many years ago.

As he crossed a bridge over one of the many marshes of Frogmorton, he knew his actions must seem absurd to the casual observer. He was a hobbit. Rarely do hobbits awake, let alone leave their cozy hobbit holes, before the break of dawn.

However, this brief, early journey was very important to him. Despite that he lived in Frogmorton, separated from Hobbiton only by the Three-Farthing Stone and the village of Bywater, and that he had been to Hobbiton a great many times, on this day, the 25th of March, in the year 1544 (by Shire Reckoning), the 125th anniversary of the destruction of the One Ring and the defeat of the Dark Lord Sauron, he needed to see the Sun Rise on Hobbiton.

### ***Play "As the Sun Rises on Hobbiton"***

The sunrise that Mungo observed was even more brilliant than he had anticipated. He could just barely make out Bag End and the Party Tree (the only mallorn in all of Eriador) to the west from where he was, as the new day's eastern sunlight from behind him reached those historic locations in Hobbiton.

"I thought I might find you up here."

Mungo jumped, startled.

"Steady on," said Andwise as he patted Mungo on the back, "it's only me, Andy."

"You gave me a start," replied Mungo, "and anyway, why did you think you'd find me up here?"

"You always were the sentimental one."

"Am not!"

"Are so!"

"Just because I hike to the top of hills to watch sunrises on occasion," retorted Mungo, "does not mean that I am sentimental!"

"Prove it!"

“How?”

“Race to the Three-Farthing Stone!”

And race, they did. At least, Mungo tried his best to maintain his balance as he charged down the hill, but you see, once you’ve hiked up a hill, it’s all downhill from there, and it’s difficult to keep from tripping over one’s own large and hairy hobbit feet. Unsurprisingly, Mungo stumbled and rolled the rest of the way down the hill. By the time that he had picked himself up from the foot of the hill, Andy was already almost to the Stone. Mungo gave it one last effort, but it was no use. Andy won. Andwise Gamgee, descendant of Samwise Gamgee, the Brave, had beaten him once again.

“Sen-ti-men-tal! Sen-ti-men-tal!” Mungo could hear Andy calling from the Stone.

“Enough, enough already! What you say we head over to the Party Tree to help decorate for the festivities today?” asked Mungo, eager to change the subject.

“I’d rather have a half over at the Green Dragon,” replied Andy, “Much closer anyway.”

“Drinking this early in the morning? I’d understand a few puffs of Old Toby--”

But, Andy won that argument, and so Mungo joined Andy for half a pint, and a pipe-full of Old Toby, down at the Green Dragon. It seemed that Andy wasn’t the only one with the idea. Several hobbits from Hobbiton, Bywater, and Frogmorton started to gather shortly after they arrived. Supposedly, these hobbits wanted to start the celebration early, with a Party at the Green Dragon.

### ***Play “A Party at the Green Dragon”***

Songs were played, dances were danced, ales were drunk, food was eaten, pipe-weed was smoked, and the celebration of the anniversary of the destruction of the One Ring had officially begun.

Suddenly, a hobbit burst through the front door of the Green Dragon.

“It’s gone! It’s gone, Andy! The Red Book is gone!”, he exclaimed.

“What d’you mean it’s gone?”, asked one hobbit.

“What happened? Where did it go?”, asked another.

“Are you sure? Someone take it?”, asked a third.

“Quiet! Be quiet all you lot! Let him talk!”, shouted a fourth hobbit.

After he had a chance to calm down a bit, the hobbit who had burst in spoke up again.

“I don’t know where it went. I don’t know if it was taken or who would have taken it. All I know is



that it's not where it should be, and the place where it should be is Andy's."

"Hold on," said Mungo, "why should it be at Andy's?"

"Because," replied Andy, "I was asked to read from it at the celebration. I borrowed it to practice. What *I* want to know is what *you* were doing in my home to notice that it was missing?"

"Well," replied the hobbit, "I knew that you had borrowed the book, and on my way here, I saw that your door was wide open, which I thought was odd. I walked inside and I saw books and papers strewn all about the floor and the table, but the Red Book was nowhere in sight. As I turned to run here to tell you this, I saw a note posted to your door. I brought it here for you."

"Well, what did the note say?", asked one hobbit, impatiently.

"Yes, tell us! Tell us!", shouted another, excitedly.

"Right, well, here it is then," he said as he pulled out the sheet of paper.

*"I have lost much. Now you have too.  
Where your book is, I give a clue.  
Look to the east. There is a frog.  
Look for it at the inn called Log. --VT"*

"The Floating Log Inn! That's where it is!"

"Who's this VT feller anyways?"

"Let's get to Frogmorton! That's where we'll find the book!"

In all the commotion, with hobbits going this way and that, out the door, down the road, heading generally for his own village of Frogmorton, Mungo stayed behind. None of it made sense.

*Andy was asked to read from the Red Book.* Sure, that at least he could understand. Andy was a Gamgee. He lived in Hobbiton. Samwise the Brave was his great-great-something-or-other. Being chosen to recite from the Red Book at celebrations was a high honor, and Mungo knew this. He also knew that, being a Sandybanks from Frogmorton, he would never receive such an honor.

As the story goes, Frodo Baggins, Samwise Gamgee, Meriadoc Brandybuck, and Peregrin Took were first arrested when they arrived in Frogmorton, on their way to Hobbiton on their return journey from Gondor. The Floating Log Inn was once home to the First Eastfarthing Troop of Shirriffs. Despite the Floating Log was rebuilt into a fine inn, this history remains tied to the Inn's reputation.

Thus, in the whole of the Shire, the Green Dragon likewise remains the most popular inn.

Mungo left his stool and began walking back to Frogmorton. As he headed east, he pondered the situation further. Who is this *VT*, and why would he want to steal the Red Book? Mungo knew the value of the Red Book of Westmarch to the hobbits. It contained the account of Bilbo Baggins entitled "There and Back Again, A Hobbit's Holiday" and the further account of Frodo Baggins entitled "The Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and the Return of the King". But, what did *VT* want with it? Was it stolen out of spite? Because he had "lost much", did he simply want others to also suffer loss? Also, how did this *VT* know it would be in Andy's home?

As Mungo reached the hill just before Frogmorton, he saw a great many hobbits still hanging about the Floating Log below. What, if anything, had they found? It seemed unlikely that someone would bother to steal the Red Book only to relocate it a few miles to the east. But, he supposed he should check out the situation there anyway. It wasn't long before he found Andy.

"Where've you been, you lullygagger?", Andy asked.

"I look my time, because I was thinking. There's just so much that doesn't make sense to me."

"Me either, Mungo. We've searched this place from top to bottom. There's no sign of the Red Book as the riddle in the note said there would be. I do reckon, though, that there's a lot more hobbits in the Floating Log today than there has been in the past hundred years."

Mungo ignored the last comment. "It doesn't make sense to me that someone would steal the book just to move it somewhere else in the Shire and tell us exactly where it is. What's the point?"

"Maybe there isn't a point. Maybe someone is pulling a prank, and it'll turn up before the celebration this evening. That's my guess. Anyway, there's no use staying here. I'm going over to the Ivy Bush in Hobbiton to see if anyone knows anything over there. Coming with?"

"I just got here, so I'm going to stay. Send word if you hear anything."

Mungo didn't hear any news from Andy later that afternoon, and toward evening, word reached the ears of those in Frogmorton that the celebration at the Party Tree had been canceled. It seemed that there was no desire to celebrate, when the residents of the Shire had suffered a loss so great.

Mungo walked to the Floating Log that evening to find the proprietor cleaning up.

"Care if I get a half before closing?", asked Mungo.

"I'll see what I have left. I sure got a lot of business this afternoon with all the commotion about the

Red Book missing and some sort of clue leading half the town of Bywater here.”

The proprietor’s voice trailed off as he headed to the back room to drain the last of his stores. Mungo sighed in frustration. Still nothing made sense to him, despite thinking it over in the hours between finding the note and deciding to get another ale at the Floating Log.

Mungo thought it over again. *“I have lost much. Now you have too. Where your book is, I give a clue. Look to the east. There is a frog. Look for it at the inn called Log.”*

*Look to the east. There is a frog.* Obviously, that means Frogmorton. There are many frogs in Frogmorton. That’s why it’s so named.

*Look for it at the inn called Log.* The Floating Log Inn. Again, obvious. What was he looking over? And why didn’t Andy seem as concerned as he was about this?

*Look for it. IT.* Wait a minute. Does *IT* mean the book, or does *IT* mean a frog?

*Look to the east. There is a frog. Look for IT at the inn called Log.*

At that moment, Mungo saw from the corner of his eye that a window had been left open near the fireplace. Just outside the window he saw a rather large frog.

Around its neck was tied a note.

Mungo fell off his stool, he was in such a hurry to catch the frog. Thankfully, frogs that large don’t normally hop very quickly, and it wasn’t long before Mungo caught it, untied the note, then set the frog free. He unfolded the note only to find another riddle.

*“Well done, my friend. You solved the clue.*

*Where to go now, and what to do?*

*You must leave soon, lest I will flee.*

*Ask for help at the Inn of Bree. --VT”*

Simple enough. The Prancing Pony is the Inn of Bree. But, Bree is such a long way from here. Besides, hobbits aren’t meant for long journeys. *Aren’t they? What about Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin? Their journey took them much farther than Bree, that’s for sure.*

Mungo weighed the voices in his head and made his decision. He would make the journey to Bree. But, would he make it alone? He could ask Andy, but he really didn’t seem too concerned about the missing Red Book in the first place. Andy was always that way, though. Nothing ever bothered him. He was always so easy-going: racing to the Three-Farthing Stone, getting ales in the early hours of

the morning. Mungo supposed that Andy was secretly glad that the book was missing. He didn't seem the kind of hobbit who would have wanted the responsibility of reading at a celebration anyway. But, Mungo told himself not to think such thoughts. Of course, no hobbit in any part of the Shire would ever want such a volume of the history of their race to go missing.

As Mungo arrived home that evening, hung his cloak and returned to bed, thoughts were still buzzing through his head, like a particularly busy hive of bees. It was many minutes before he could shut his eyes, and many more minutes before sleep found him. But, just before he finally dozed off, he determined that he would leave for Bree in the morning, taking the riddle with him.

Alone, he would take the East Road, a Road that Goes Ever On.

### ***Play "The Road Goes Ever On"***

Mungo Sandybanks woke early. He peered out his bedroom window, where the stars shone brightly in a sky that maintained its darkness. He needed to pack before he could set out on such a journey. He'd never been to Bree, in all his years living in Frogmorton, and he didn't know how far it was or how long it would take him to get there. *Better to be prepared than not*, he thought.

First he packed the note that had been tied to the frog, because it was the item of most importance and he did not want to lose it. Even though he could remember what it said, just as he could recall the riddle from the first note, he wanted to take it with him in case he needed to compare the note's handwriting with some other note that he might find later.

Second, he packed a knife that he had normally used to cut meat for cooking. He wasn't sure what to expect on this adventure, but he knew that it was dangerous outside the Shire, and he didn't want to fathom what could happen to him if he were caught in a situation without anything but his bare hands to protect him. Still, a knife isn't much, compared with a dagger, sword, or a bow and arrows, but it was better than a mere walking stick, which he also set aside for the journey.

Third, he packed bread, honey, jam, mushrooms, carrots, potatoes, a small pot, a box of tinder, apples, more Old Toby than was good for him, and, of course, a pipe with which to smoke it. With these provisions and the note stowed away in his bag, the knife on his belt, and the walking stick itching to finally find some extensive use, he put on his cloak, and opened his door.

*You must leave soon, lest I will flee.* He hoped that the break of dawn was soon enough. Despite his preparations, Mungo didn't feel particularly eager to take the first step, now that his door was open. However, he didn't care to dawdle and discover that he had taken too long, only for the Red Book to travel even farther away from him, stolen away in the unfamiliar hands of VT.

He took the first step out the door, and one step after another, he slowly made his way east. As he

walked, it took a great deal of nerve not to simply turn around at Budgeford and walk back home. Farther along, he came to the village of Stock. Once again, his resolve was tested. *After I cross the Brandywine Bridge just beyond Stock, Mungo thought, there's no going back.*

What stopped him was the aroma wafting from the Golden Perch Inn as he walked by it, and his stomach began to growl. Already his thoughtfully-packed rations seemed meager next to what his nose told him could be found inside, not to mention the best beer in the Eastfarthing. *No wonder I'm hungry, thought Mungo, I didn't stop for second breakfast, and it's already time for lunch! I suppose I can stop for a quick bite and half a pint of this famed beer before I continue traveling.*

So Mungo, against his better judgment, veered off course.

Once inside, he made himself comfortable, sitting at a table in the corner. Mungo couldn't pinpoint a specific food that caused the aroma that brought him inside. He supposed the smells were caused by a combination of several foods, most of which he couldn't take with him while traveling, because it may spoil--meat, stew, cheese, butter, the best beer in the Eastfarthing--and it all made him think about the comforts of the Shire, what he would be giving up if he left the Shire now.

As he ate, he began to talk himself out of taking the journey. He thought he might return to Frogmorton or Bywater or Hobbiton and ask someone to go in his stead. There had to be other hobbits better suited for long journeys than he was. It wasn't even a question about going back to ask someone to go with him, Andwise maybe, but someone to go instead of him. The longer he sat, the more he ate, and the more he ate, the longer he thought, and the longer he thought, the more he talked himself out of the journey, until the time came to leave the Golden Perch and return to the Road. As he reached the Road, he knew he had to make a decision: to go east, over the Brandywine Bridge and onward with the journey to Bree, or west back home.

He knew that the note said, *You must leave soon, lest I will flee.* He knew that the longer he delayed, the chances of catching up with this VT would lessen. His mind told him that he shouldn't turn back, that he had to continue onward, but his stomach told him to stay in the Shire.

He chose to go west, back to Frogmorton.

Mungo walked slowly, feeling guilty, and was almost back to Budgeford, when suddenly an arrow whizzed by his head and struck the tree in front of him. He didn't know what to think or what to do, so he panicked and began to run, thinking, *Who is trying to shoot me? And why? I need to get inside, where it will be safe!* He continued to run just as fast as his little hobbit feet would carry him, but yet again, another arrow whizzed by, this time just behind him, striking the tree he had just passed. So, he ran faster. Budgeford was just around the corner, over the River, and then he could at least hide inside a stable. *But, he thought, what if he follows me into the stable and corners me?* Unfortunately, there wasn't an Inn in Budgeford, so it was unlikely for him to hide among other hobbits.



Another arrow. This time it struck a tree several strides in front of him. But, this time, he noticed something unusual about the arrow. There was a note attached to it. He stopped dead in his tracks, crouching down, hoping that he couldn't be seen by the shooter, something he should have done in the first place. He looked up. He saw the note-and-arrow still protruding from the tree. He had to chance reaching for it. He crawled towards it. He counted to three. He jumped, he grabbed the note, and he ran to Budgeford, hiding inside the first stable he came across. There were two ponies inside, which whinnied, startled, as he ran and crouched into the farthest corner of the stable.

He hadn't noticed any more arrows whizzing by him on the way, and he began to think that there wouldn't be any more. Strange as it might sound, Mungo had come to the conclusion that the arrows had come from VT himself, and that, once VT saw that Mungo had grabbed the note, he knew he had fulfilled his purpose in delivering the message and so, he didn't need to shoot toward him anymore. Of course, he would have to read the note to be sure. Just as he had guessed it would be, it was in the same script as he had seen in the previous note. This time it read:

*"I was told you might give up the quest.  
Going home is folly. Let me suggest  
That you turn around and continue on,  
If you wish to see another dawn. --VT"*

Mungo stared at the note, letting its contents sink in. He began to take short and staggered breaths, realizing that it was not he, Mungo, who was following VT, but it was VT who was following him. *Here I was thinking about my stomach and about how much of a bother and inconvenience this whole journey would have been. I never thought it would be so dangerous or life-threatening! What's more, it might be even worse if I stay home!* Mungo didn't know what to do. The note left him rooted to the spot in fear; if he continued west, he might be shot right there on the Road, and if not, then he might be shot in his sleep, for the note did say, *If you wish to see another dawn.*

He could continue on, as the note suggested to do, but as he now fully realized, the journey forth might prove to be just as dangerous as the journey back home. If he could get shot at by an arrow while so close to home in the Shire, it could surely happen anywhere in Middle-earth. He thought about going into hiding until all this went away, but he knew that was a ridiculous notion too. *VT knows I have two of the three notes that he's left behind. He knows who I am. He even knows, as his note says, that I might have been tempted to turn back. How did he know that, I wonder? He's gotten inside information about me somehow, and he's not going to let me rest until I complete this quest. What am I to do? Where am I to go? Should I continue? Run? Hide? What?*

Mungo felt a bit ridiculous, but he realized too late that he actually uttered out loud the last few questions. The two ponies in the stable stopped chewing their hay and stared at him as though Mungo had lost his mind. In that moment, he actually thought he would lose his mind.

“Run, hide, do whatever you need to do, but don’t stay here with the ponies.”

Mungo looked up. Standing at the entrance of the stable in front of him, her hands on her hips, but with a smile on her face, was a hobbit with long, wavy brown hair.

“Hi, there. Name’s Prisca Frumblefoot,” she extended her hand, which Mungo shook while standing, “Now, pray tell, who are you? And what seems to be the problem?”

“Well, my name is Mungo Sandybanks. I’m from Frogmorton...”

“Oh, really?,” interrupted Prisca, “I’m from Bywater! Right down the Road! Well, originally. I haven’t lived there for a few years. I was just bringing these two ponies back for my father who still lives there. I got the ponies in Bree. For a great price too. At least, great as far as Bree goes. Prices are lower in Edoras, but of course they’d be lower in Rohan. I mean, prices can’t get much lower when you get the ponies from the source, the home of the Horse-Lords! Sorry, I got carried away there. I asked you a question, didn’t I? What seems to be the problem with you?”

Although Mungo was overwhelmed by Prisca’s personality, inwardly he felt that he could trust her. However, that may be because he was an easily trusting hobbit. Having lived a fairly sheltered life alone in Frogmorton, especially in comparison to Prisca’s seemingly adventurous one, he hadn’t experienced a truly significant betrayal of trust before. So, in part because of Prisca’s boisterous personality, Mungo didn’t feel there was any reason he couldn’t trust her.

So, Mungo told her the entire story up until this point, without leaving out any details. Because Prisca tended to interrupt with questions and her own comments, the story actually took quite a while, and it was early evening by the time he finished telling it. Mungo showed her the notes that he’d received and expressed his concern for his safety. He explained that the clues led him to Bree, but that he wasn’t sure what he would find when he got there.

“I mean,” Mungo said finally, “this doesn’t make any sense. What further notes or clues am I supposed to find at the Prancing Pony if *VT* follows *me* there and arrives *after* I do?”

“What if it’s more than just him?,” suggested Prisca, “What if *VT* is setting out the clues ahead of you, but there are others, accomplices, who are following him to make sure someone gets the clues? What if someone saw you untie that clue from that frog, so you became the target to follow? What if they waited outside all night to make sure you left the next morning and followed you all the way to Stock, and when you doubled back, they had to prod you back forward?”

All these notions felt very eerie to Mungo. To be followed and watched made him feel violated. His mind was so full of unanswered questions. Among them, one question that still bothered him was,

*Who told VT that he might give up the quest?* He didn't voice this concern, though.

"Why is the note signed *VT*, then, if it was written by an accomplice?" asked Mungo.

"I never said it was written by an accomplice," replied Prisca, "I don't know, maybe all the notes were planned and written out even before the Red Book was stolen. Maybe they decided to have extra notes on hand *just in case* you turned back, not because they knew you would."

At least that was an encouraging thought.

A pause. Prisca broke the silence.

"So, what do you intend to do?"

"It's too late now to walk to Bree, but I don't want to walk home in the dark either. For all I know, my followers could be expert marksmen who can see better in the dark than I can..."

Prisca interrupted, "It's not too late to go to Bree if you travel by pony! Come on now, this one's Bill. You can ride him. I'll ride this one, Jill. Up you get. Let's go!"

And with that, Mungo's entire afternoon of sitting in a stable feeling sorry for himself was over. Mungo, who had never ridden a pony before, had a bit to learn, but very little time to do so, because Prisca didn't wait for anything once she got an idea in her head. Jill began to gallop at full speed, with Bill struggling to keep up, due to Mungo's unsureness at the reins. In no time, they were crossing the Brandywine Bridge together, riding past the Old Forest, the fields to the west of Bree, until finally, they reached the open gates of Bree-town itself, and the Prancing Pony.

Inside, Mungo knew what he needed to do. *Ask for help at the Inn of Bree.* He strode up to the proprietor of the Prancing Pony, Tom, and said to him, "My name is Mungo Sandybanks from Frogmorton. I have traveled all the way here, because of this note." He showed him the second note with the riddle about Bree. "I need to know if you can tell me anything about this. It says I am supposed to ask for help at the Inn of Bree. It's signed with initials *VT* on the bottom."

Tom eyed it closely. "*VT. VT...* I'm afraid the initials don't ring a bell, and there hasn't been any strange characters in here lately leaving notes or riddles about. I'm sorry I can't be of more help. Unless you're looking for hobbit-sized accommodations, in which case, I would be able, and very happy, to help you. Will the two of you be needing separate rooms?"

Mungo hadn't thought about this, but Prisca answered for them both, "One is just fine thanks."

Tom led them to their hobbit-sized room, where Mungo and Prisca each brought their respective

belongings, but because neither had eaten any meals since noon, they both went back down to get some food, not wanting to use up their rations while not on the Road. After they had their fill, they went back upstairs, intending to go to bed, but when they came back to their room, they saw yet another note on the mantel of the fireplace. This one read:

*"You know that I've been following you,  
So continue forth with this next clue.  
A Red Book rests at Rivendell,  
Find it or lose your friend as well. --VT"*

At this moment, Mungo's heart sank. He almost didn't let Prisca read the note. He couldn't believe it. *Will VT stop at nothing? What does he want from me? Other than to make me suffer? But why me? Why do things that are important to me have to be taken away? History is important to me, and the Red Book is stolen. I've made a new friend, and now her life is threatened. Is this some plot for revenge? If it is, I don't understand, because I've never done anything bad to anyone!*

Mungo came out of his reverie, only to find Prisca looking directly at him and smiling.

"I knew," said Prisca, "when I volunteered to take the ponies and come with you that there might be danger involved. I am not going to turn back now. I will help you see the course." With that, she yawned, stretched, and said, "Let's get some rest. We have a long journey ahead of us."

Prisca wasn't kidding. Even on the backs of ponies, the journey was a long one. They rode hard, galloping through Chetwood, past Midgewater Marsh, making their first stop at the Forsaken Inn, near Weathertop in the Lone-Lands. Knowing that it would take them longer to reach Rivendell from the Forsaken Inn than it did to get there from Bree, they got up early and rode hard again. When they were nearest Weathertop, they stopped a moment for an early meal, planning to eat as much as possible for second breakfast so they wouldn't have to stop again until nightfall.

"I have mushrooms, carrots, potatoes, and a pot to mix them into a stew," Mungo explained to Prisca.

"And no meat to put in there?" scoffed Prisca, "I'll get my bow. See if I can at least get a coney or two. Add some flavor and substance to your vegetable stew. You get wood and water."

Mungo, surprised at Prisca, did as he was told. He set the wood up and set it on fire with some of the tinder he had brought with him, added water to the pot and started to bring it to a boil. He used his knife to begin cutting up potatoes, carrots, and mushrooms to put in the stew. A few minutes later, Prisca was back with three rabbits, skinned, and ready to also be cut up. Mungo, thankful to have Prisca with him on this journey, didn't ask questions, but enjoyed the meal with her, until the time came to pack up, put out the fire, and move on to Rivendell.

They continued to ride hard until nightfall. They had just reached the Last Bridge before the Trollshaws, but decided not to cross it until morning. They found a spot off the Road, but not too close to any trees, so they could build a fire for warmth, lay down blankets on the ground, and cover themselves with their cloaks to sleep until morning. This was Mungo's first experience sleeping on the ground, so he wasn't sure whether he could sleep through the night. Prisca, on the other hand, had done this before, so it wasn't long before she was asleep. The ponies too, tied to a nearby tree, were so tired from their hard gallop that they were asleep in no time.

Mungo, the only one awake, lay there looking up at the night sky. Even after three days of traveling, the stars seemed different out here than they did in the Shire. He was proud that he had been able to come all this way, but he knew that he wouldn't have been able to make it this far without Prisca. Mungo looked at her while she lay there sleeping. To think, if they were to turn back now, they would both be killed. At least they had been able to, so far, avoid danger going forth.

Just then, he heard a howl, coming from his left. Shortly after, another howl coming from his right. The ponies, spooked, had no problem pulling free from the tree. Mungo and Prisca didn't tie them very tightly, because the ponies were well trained--they knew that, if tied, they were to stay put. They, however, did not anticipate being hunted down by a pack of wolves. In dismay, Mungo watched while the ponies ran off, east down the Road. Prisca bolted awake. "Mungo..."

"Shhhh..." said Mungo, "I can't tell how far away they are."

"How far away *what* are?"

"Wolves. I heard howling. That's what spooked the ponies."

"Quick, grab my bow-and-arrow," said Prisca, "It's over in my pack by the tree." They had left their bags by the horses the night before.

"We don't know how close they are," explained Mungo in a very shaky voice, "If we make any sudden movements, they might attack."

"If they attack regardless," retorted Prisca in an elevated whisper, "and we don't have any way to defend ourselves, it won't matter!"

"I have my knife..."

"Fine, if you won't get my bow, then I will."

Prisca ran towards the tree. A wolf leaped out from behind a nearby tree and knocked her over



while she ran. Mungo saw this and ran toward the creature with his knife held high over his head, yelling very loudly to prevent it from attacking her again. Mungo heard a growl from behind him, as the second wolf ran to join the action.

Just then, Mungo felt an arrow graze his right ear. It hit the first wolf, killing it. The second wolf was stopped dead behind him with a second arrow. It was over. Some unknown huntsman *or huntsmen* had just saved their lives with two arrows. Mungo was tempted to yell his thanks to the darkness. *But, he thought, what if it was the band of accomplices who are following us that saved us? Who else would be out there, and awake, at this time of night? Who else would be watching us?* When he saw Prisca, his mind stopped its questioning. There were no bite-marks upon her, but there were plenty of scratches from when she fell as the wolf jumped on her. He guessed that some of the scratches were probably from the beast itself. She was unconscious.

*Whoever they are, whoever saved us, why won't they come out of hiding and help us now?*

It was then that Mungo began to yell out to the darkness, not to express gratitude, but to ask for help. "Help! Help us! Please, come out and help us!" At that point, he noticed that his right ear, having been grazed by the first arrow, was bleeding. He was never able to handle bleeding very well.

Mungo could hear the galloping of horses--not many, but definitely more than one--coming closer from down the Road. He didn't have to wait long before he saw two riders appear on the bridge. When he caught a glimpse of them, he felt himself become weaker. He fainted...

When he awoke again, he was in a bright room, though he couldn't tell if it was morning or afternoon. He was laying on a soft, very comfortable bed with white linens. He looked from side to side and tried to lift himself up from the bed to see farther away. An unknown hand and an unknown voice stopped him.

"Here, you find a rest unlike any other rest. You are Taking a Rest in Rivendell."

### ***Play "Taking a Rest in Rivendell"***

Mungo Sandybanks woke early. He was in the same bright room, on the same soft, comfortable bed, covered by the same white linens. Now, however, he didn't feel as weary as before. Physically, he felt so much better. His ear was healed, from what he could see. Mentally, his mind was brimming with a thousand questions. *I know I am in Rivendell, but who told me so, and who brought me here, and who took care of me? Where is Prisca, and who is taking care of her?*

*Aren't the elves supposed to have all left Middle-earth?* Mungo also thought to himself. He knew the story of Elrond and Arwen. He knew that Arwen had chosen a mortal life so that she might live one

lifetime with Aragorn. He also knew that her father, Elrond, had chosen to travel to the Undying Lands without her. Apart from Arwen, though, didn't the other elves sail west? Didn't Elrond, Frodo, Gandalf, and Galadriel all take the very last ship to leave the Grey Havens?

"Good morning, master Sandybanks."

Mungo bolted upright and looked around. Beside his bed was an elf.

"Good morning," Mungo replied, warily, "who are you?"

"My name is Elladan," the elf replied, "I am one of the sons of Elrond. My brother is Elrohir. We both have tended to you and Prisca these past two days."

"Prisca? How is she? Where is she? Did you shoot the arrows that saved us from those wolves?"

"Fine, fine. Prisca is here too, and she is faring just fine. My brother and I do not know who shot the arrows that saved you. We came to your aid after we discovered your ponies attempting to cross the Ford of Bruinen. We knew that the ponies would not have come this far without an owner, and they wouldn't have been running so swiftly or trying so desperately to cross the Ford had they not been in danger. We guessed that they had left their owners behind, who had remained in danger. We have looked after the ponies for you."

Mungo took this all in. "Why are you here? I thought Rivendell had been deserted..."

"We two, like our sister Arwen, chose to stay in Middle-earth, in Rivendell, rather than leave these shores," Elladan explained, just as an elf Mungo assumed was Elrohir entered the room.

"You thought Rivendell was abandoned," interjected Elrohir, "and yet you traveled here? And just what did you expect to find? The Red Book of Westmarch is not here. Yet, elves are here."

"What?" said Mungo, "How did you know I've been searching for the Red Book?"

Just then, he saw Prisca emerge into the room behind Elrohir.

"I've already explained everything to them. They know about the riddles and about VT. We've been waiting for you to awake so that we can show you what we've found."

She produced a red book from behind her back, but it was not the Red Book of Westmarch. It was another book that had been bound with red-colored leather. On the cover was:

*An Elf's Journey*

*An Account of the War of the Ring*  
*Valandil Telemnar*

Mungo couldn't believe it. He finally had a name to go with the initials.

"I hope you don't mind," continued Prisca, "but I took the notes from your pack to show them to Elladan and Elrohir, while I was relaying your story and the purpose of our quest. The initials caught their attention right away, and as the riddle suggested, a red book does rest at Rivendell, but not the particular Red Book we're hunting. This red book is in the same script as those notes."

"Indeed," interjected Elrohir, "but as I've explained to you already, Prisca, that's not possible, because Valandil Telemnar is dead."

"Dead?" asked Mungo, surprised.

"Dead," confirmed Elladan.

A silence hung in the room for a moment. Mungo wasn't sure what to expect after traveling all the way to Rivendell, but he certainly wasn't expecting *this*.

"Let him read it," said Prisca, finally.

All three pairs of eyes looked at her. "Let him read it," she repeated, "I've already read it. Mungo needs to read it too, before we can have any meaningful discussion about what to do next."

With that, Prisca handed over the volume, and Mungo began to read.

**An Elf's Journey**

*October 15, 3018.*

*A number of elves from Lothlorien have been summoned by the Lord Elrond to attend a Council to assist in deciding a matter of utmost importance. The matter to be discussed is intentionally vague, but there are theories as to its purpose. Other elves believe, and I agree, that the One Ring has been found, and other races--humans, dwarves, and wizards--are to join the elves in Rivendell to inevitably fight over this powerful jewel. It is certain that Elrond will want it destroyed, but I presume that many others at the Council will want to take it for themselves.*

*This Council is to be held in Rivendell on October 25, ten days from now. I am to attend, not to serve as a deciding member of the Council, but to keep a written account of the things that are discussed and decided there. I intend to return to Lothlorien shortly thereafter.*

Mungo continued to read about Vandalil's journey to Rivendell and the Council that was held there. Of course, because of Bilbo's and Frodo's own accounts in the now-missing Red Book, he knew what sorts of discussions and arguments were had there. He also knew of the final decision of the Council, to send Frodo, along with eight other companions, on a journey to destroy the One Ring.

Mungo continued to read from that point.

*It has been the decision of the Council to destroy the One Ring. Frodo Baggins is to continue to be the ring-bearer, as he brought it from the Shire to Rivendell. Three other hobbits are to go with him: Samwise Gamgee, Peregrin Took, and Meriadoc Brandybuck. An elf, Legolas of Mirkwood, and a dwarf, Gimli son of Gloin are to go too. Mithrandir will also accompany them, as well as two men, Aragorn, the only heir to the throne of Gondor, and Boromir, an heir to the Stewardship of Gondor, who also tried to persuade the Council to give the ring to Gondor to help fight the foes of Mordor. Thankfully, the Council saw through his argument, as they knew that the One Ring could not be wielded or used to fight the enemy. Instead, it must be destroyed.*

*I, however, am no longer needed in Rivendell, having written down what I was called to write down. I am to return to Lothlorien tomorrow. It is unlikely that I will write any more until then.*

*February 20, 3019.*

*I have been back in Lothlorien for several weeks. I write now, because a great grief weighs upon my heart, and upon the hearts of many other elves. Mithrandir, Gandalf the Grey, fell into shadow while the Fellowship passed through Moria. We learned this news several days ago, but for many of us, the sorrow and loss is still very near, even days later. It is a shame and a pity that, while the remaining members of the Fellowship were able to see the beauty of Lothlorien, Mithrandir, who loved them dearly, will never again see the Golden Leaves of Lorien.*

### ***Play "The Golden Leaves of Lorien"***

*March 2, 3019.*

*Scouts report that Uruk-Hai are massing in Isengard, supposedly for an assault on Rohan. King Theoden of that land intends to empty Edoras, their hilltop capital city, to evacuate to Helm's Deep. It is likely that the forces under Saruman's command will vastly outnumber those who defend Helm's Deep, a significantly smaller force that includes peasants primarily, because the Rohirrim are too far away to be of any assistance. In order to assist them in their dire need, Lothlorien is sending a contingent of elven archers to Helm's Deep. Again, I am to go, to continue my account.*

*March 3, 3019.*

*We are riding as swiftly as our steeds will carry us. We have ridden throughout the night.*

*Scouts report that the armies of Isengard will come to Helm's Deep by nightfall.*

*We must get there first.*

*As we ride hard, we do not look back. Nor do we look to either side. We simply look forward, directly, to wrath, to ruin, to war.*

*While I do not look back now as I ride, I do remember back to a happier time. I remember joyfully crossing these plains in my youth. I remember how peaceful it was then.*

*I remember how wondrous it was Crossing the Plains of Rohan.*

***Play "Crossing the Plains of Rohan"***

*March 4, 3019. The Battle of the Hornburg is won.*

*March 17, 3019. The Battle of the Pelennor Fields is fought and won.*

*March 25, 3019. The Battle of the Morannon is fought. It is won when the One Ring is destroyed in the fires of Mount Doom. Sauron is irrevocably defeated.*

*March 28, 3019. Destruction of Dol Guldur begins.*

*May 1, 3019. Coronation of King Elessar at Minas Tirith.*

***Play "Coronation at Minas Tirith"***

Mungo finally looked up. He had been reading for several hours, and the sky was beginning to darken. He had been left to read in peace, but now he had questions that needed answering.

Only five unusually brief entries completed the account, the longest of which was three sentences. Once again, nothing made sense. What happened? Why were these entries so short? He looked back to previous pages. He noticed that these entries were in a different script, which also did not match the script from the notes he received from this mysterious VT.

At that moment, Elrohir entered the room.

"You've finished, I see," he said.



"Yes. I have," said Mungo.

"And?"

"And... well, I'm not sure where to start."

"You want to know," guessed Elrohir, "how this book came to be in our possession and why the last entries are different from all the others?"

"Yes. Let's start there."

"Vandalil Telemnar," he continued, "was one of many casualties during the Battle of the Hornburg at Helm's Deep. However, his account was rescued and brought to me before the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. As you can imagine, Elladan and I were both too busy to continue the account fully, but I did take it upon myself to note a few important dates during and after the War of the Ring. After King Elessar's Coronation, we brought the book to Rivendell with us where it has rested since."

"Then, why is this important to me?" asked Mungo, "If Vandalil Telemnar is truly dead, then this account is useless to me. Obviously, the script and the initials on the notes that I received belong to someone who still lives, who has been following me these past days, and who will not allow me to rest until I've found him. Are you sure there is no other volume that might work?"

"No, there is not," replied Elrohir, "This is the only volume that features both the initials and the script as you see on your notes."

"Then I can only come to one conclusion," stated Mungo, "Vandalil Telemnar is not dead."

Elrohir sighed. "Prisca has already come to the same conclusion. It is possible, however unlikely. You see, I wasn't at the Battle of the Hornburg. I did not personally check to see whether every archer who fell to the ground during battle did not simply get up again after the battle was done. Elves are incredibly honorable. We would never feign death to avoid death."

"I'm not saying that Vandalil did that, specifically," replied Mungo, "Perhaps he was knocked out, unconscious, while the fighting raged about him, but did not regain consciousness until after the battle was over. Suppose that Vandalil was simply *left* for dead?"

"Prisca has put forth that theory as well," said Elrohir, "Again, I find it difficult to believe. However, it is not impossible. If it is as you say, then Vandalil Telemnar has brought great dishonor to himself and to his people through his recent actions: stealing the Red Book and threatening to murder you."

This leads to another question: if it is him, why is he doing these things?"

"Believe me, sir," Mungo said, "I've asked myself the same question many times. But, I have an even more important question: where do we go next? We've found his red book, so in that sense we've solved and followed his last riddle, but that doesn't tell us where to follow--"

Elladan burst into the room.

"Prisca is gone. Along with all of her belongings."

He paused. "There's a note."

*"Lords Elladan and Elrohir,  
Search high and low, far and near,  
You shall not find your hobbit friend,  
Until you come to your journey's end. --VT"*

"The note is addressed to us?" said Elrohir.

"It is," responded his brother.

"So this entire journey wasn't about getting to me," said Mungo, "It was about getting to you?"

"It appears that way," replied Elladan.

"You said that all of her belongings were gone. There was no sign of a struggle?" asked Elrohir.

"None," answered Elladan.

"Then she went willingly?" Elrohir turned to Mungo. "Could Prisca have been..." Elrohir searched for the right word. "Could she have been associated in some way with Vandalil?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Mungo, taken aback, "She has been with me through this entire journey. I've trusted her the whole way. She has never led me astray. She'd never betray me."

"How did you meet her, Mungo?" Elladan asked.

Mungo told them about the day that the two had first met, in the stable at Budgeford. He ended with a question: "Surely, she already told this story to you... I thought she had relayed our entire story from when we left the Shire to when we arrived on your doorstep."

"She didn't," responded Elrohir.

Mungo seemed crestfallen. *Why wouldn't she have explained that part of the story? No. I cannot doubt my friend now. I have trusted her this far. I will not betray her trust now. Perhaps she didn't feel that the way we met was important, that only the notes and riddles were important. She was purposefully brief, sticking to the goal of the whole journey, to find the Red Book. But... if I remember one thing about our first meeting, it's that Prisca isn't brief when it comes to most things.*

Mungo cleared his throat. "Valandil Telemnar caught Prisca off guard," theorized Mungo, stubbornly, "He had her at knife-point. He threatened to kill her, or even to kill me, if she didn't come quietly. And... bring her pack. Yes. That is what I think happened. That is what I choose to believe."

A pause. "You may believe what you wish," said Elrohir to Mungo, finally, "However, your question remains: where are you to go next? This riddle is not as obvious about location as the others were. *Until you come to your journey's end?* The end of your journey will be when you find the Red Book, which is with Valandil Telemnar. However, you have been following him by a trail of clues. This clue doesn't assist you in any way, because it doesn't give the next location, meaning that you can't arrive at your journey's end, which is the heart of this clue."

Elladan had been thinking with his head down throughout Mungo's story and theories. He raised it and looked at his brother. "I think it might mean the Grey Havens."

"Why would you think that?" asked Elrohir.

"Don't you see? The note isn't addressed to Mungo. It's addressed to *us*. Valandil means for *us* to follow to *our* journey's end. We've been in Rivendell these 125 years since the War ended. I think this riddle means the *ultimate* end to our journeys, that is, in going to the Undying Lands."

"You know as well as I do, Elladan, that our father was on the last ship to leave the Grey Havens to the Undying Lands after the War. We chose mortality when we chose to stay in Rivendell. Arwen died two years ago in Lothlorien, because she chose to stay with Aragorn."

"Brother," said Elladan, "you forget that Samwise Gamgee also sailed to the Undying Lands."

"And brother," replied Elrohir, "*you* forget that he was a some-time bearer of the One Ring in Mordor, and was therefore promised a place on that ship by our father."

A hesitation. Elladan continued. "What of the rumor that has reached us of Aragorn's companions Legolas, son of Thranduil, and Gimli the dwarf?"

Elrohir balked at the notion. "A dwarf sail to the Undying Lands? To Valinor? Outrageous."

At this point, Mungo, who had been listening intently, interjected. "What is the rumor?"

"Well, it is rumored that, when Aragorn died three years ago, Legolas built a grey ship in Ithilien, using it to sail, with Gimli, down the Anduin, over the Sea, and on into the West."

"A rumor only," interrupted Elrohir, "I choose to believe that Samwise Gamgee left Middle-earth on the last ship that could carry him to Valinor, and only because he was a ring-bearer. Frodo Baggins, along with Bilbo Baggins, were granted passage on the grey ships for the same reason. And all of this, because our father made it so. Bearing a ring does not grant passage, but being of immortal kind does, which elves are. Because our father was a lord and leader of many elves, he was able to allow the passage of three hobbits into Valinor, into Aman. A dwarf cannot simply sail into the West whenever he feels like it. Nor can an elf, after his time to leave has come and gone, *as ours has*."

"But, what if you're wrong, Elrohir? What if our time has come? What if we can leave Middle-earth? I adore Rivendell, and I don't want to leave this home behind, but what if the rumors are indeed true? What if Legolas and Gimli made it to Valinor? And what if the rumors are true about the country? What if it's like everything we've ever heard and better? Doesn't the sea call to you?"

Elrohir sighed with finality. "Yes, brother. The sea calls to me as it does you. While I doubt the rumors about Gimli, there is a part of me that hopes I am wrong... Elladan, let us investigate the rumors, as well as the newest riddle, in Lindon, at the Grey Havens."

Finally, Elladan, Elrohir, and Mungo packed their things and left for the Grey Havens in the morning. Mungo felt as though he was experiencing his entire journey over again in reverse. He had already reached the easternmost end of the Great East Road when he reached Rivendell. Now he had to journey back through the Lone-Lands, through Bree, and through the Shire in its entirety to reach the westernmost end of the East-West Road. Through days that felt like months and a week that felt like a year to Mungo, they rode to the Grey Havens. They arrived on April 7th, at sunset.

It was unlike anything Mungo had seen before. After he passed through golden arches, Mungo didn't even look at the elven architecture anymore. All he saw was the horizon, the sky, the clouds, the sun, and the sea. Even what the elves had built years ago around that scene paled in comparison to the natural beauty he saw that evening. What he saw next absolutely stunned him.

Sitting on a bench facing away from the shore, facing Mungo, was Andwise Gamgee.

Mungo spoke first. "You? What are *you* doing here?"

"Surprised, Mungo? How was your *little adventure*?"

"You didn't answer my question, Andy," Mungo raised his voice, "*Why are you here?!*"

"Why? I had to see my goal through to the end."

Andy's calmness aggravated Mungo. "Which was?"

"To see that the Red Book leaves Middle-earth. Permanently."

"What?! Why?" Mungo actually became a bit concerned for Andy's mental well-being.

"Over 200 years ago, Bilbo Baggins did the unthinkable for a hobbit. He went on an adventure, to the Lonely Mountain and back. Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin, did the same when they went to the ends of the world to *save the Shire*. They had to save it all over again when they got back, but for what? For fame, for riches, for glory. Did hobbits care about any of that before? No! Now, we share their story as we read from the Red Book at every yearly celebration that we have in their honor. These four, these five, have gone from being the *shame of the Shire* to being an *inspiration*. Hobbits are wanting to abandon their homes and see what the rest of the world has to offer them."

Andy paused, "But, I don't think that Hobbits belong in the rest of the world. Hobbits belong in their cozy hobbit holes in the Shire. Remove the Red Book, and you remove the inspiration to leave, to see the world for itself, to make homes elsewhere, to travel and never return... remove the Red Book, and we keep the Shire the way it was meant to be. Inhabited by true hobbits, who love things that grow *from* the earth, not footsteps that carry them *across* the earth to distant lands."

Mungo interrupted him. "Why not destroy the book then?"

"Everyone would have known I had done it. Other hobbits knew that I had borrowed to the book to, as I said it, *practice* for the reading, the evening of the celebration. I had to make it look as though someone had stolen it. Besides, I couldn't simply destroy the Book. I didn't have the heart to do that. It's too valuable a volume to simply set it ablaze or rip it to shreds."

Mungo stopped him a second time. "Then why send me on this wild goose chase after you? Did you intend to hold the book for ransom? If so, what could you gain by that? I have nothing to give you. You said yourself that you wanted the Book removed from the Shire, so even if I could pay the ransom, the Book would then be right back where you didn't want it to be!"

"I've said nothing about a ransom. I've made no promise about returning the Book. No, the notes you received were not ransom notes, and they weren't even from me. You know that the notes were not signed *AG*. They were all signed *VT*. This wild goose chase was his idea, not mine."



Mungo suddenly remembered. "Where is Prisca? Where is Valandil?"

In that moment, Elladan and Elrohir raised their bows. Valandil had walked out from behind a pillar, his left hand grasping tightly to Prisca's shoulder, his right hand holding a dagger to her neck.

"You shoot, and I slit her throat. Do you understand me?" threatened Valandil.

The brothers studied the situation and lowered their bows.

"Now let me say my piece," Valandil said.

"We're listening," Elladan replied.

"At the Battle of the Hornburg, I was presumed dead and left there. I awoke several days later unsure of where I was or who I was. It was months before I remembered enough to make my way home, to remember who I was and where I belonged. By then, I didn't belong there anymore. All my friends, my family, they had all left Middle-earth on the grey ships into the West. I was left behind."

Valandil swallowed. "I thought it was too late. I thought your father Elrond had taken the last ship to the Undying Lands. I thought it was useless to hope there would be another. But, then I heard that a hobbit named Samwise Gamgee was granted passage to Valinor. Again, three years ago, I heard yet another rumor that an elf and a *dwarf* sailed over the Sea and into the West."

Valandil continued. "I sought the name Gamgee in Hobbiton and I found Andwise. He told me that he might be able to help me. A year ago, we sat down together and devised a plan."

Andwise interrupted. "I did not know whether Valandil would be able to reach the Undying Lands himself. I knew that Sam had been promised a place on another ship to Valinor, a promise made by Elrond. I knew that Elrond's sons still lived in Rivendell. I thought, if anyone could help him cross over the Sea, it would be them. We knew that you had probably chosen to stay in Rivendell for a reason, so it would have been useless to persuade you with words to come to the Grey Havens. So, we came up with a way to lure you here, and by golly, our plan worked!"

Elrohir spoke up. "I'm curious to know what your plan is now, Valandil. You can't simply hold a dagger to Prisca's throat all the way to Valinor and expect us to go with you. And if we promise to travel to the Undying Lands with you if you release her, once you do, what can you do if we go back on our promise? You will no longer have any leverage against us."

Valandil faltered, "We will still have the Red Book--"

Elrohir finished his thought, "Which Andwise does not want returned, no matter the circumstance."

Besides, even if you return it now, we can still take back our promise to go with you.”

Mungo was not expecting what happened next.

Prisca cleared her throat and slowly stepped away from Valandil, but surprisingly, he made no move to restrain her. Then, she spoke directly to Elrohir. “Elrohir, you told me so yourself that elves are incredibly honorable. You would never go back on a promise.”

Mungo looked at her in disbelief. “Prisca?”

“Yes, Mungo. I’ve been in this from the beginning.”

*“But I trusted you! How could you!”* Mungo heard himself yell out to her.

“I met with you that day in the stable, because I was meant to. It was all part of the plan. I was to help you on your way to Rivendell, unsuspectingly, and to help lure Elladan and Elrohir here. I did that. But, I can’t do *this* anymore. I went along with your plan, Valandil, because you missed your family and your friends and I understood your longing for them and need to be with them. I wanted to help you reach them. I hope I have. But, Andwise, I cannot help you.”

Prisca continued. “As a child, I was so inspired by the annual reading of the Red Book of Westmarch that I made it my goal to travel the world someday. I have been to nearly every location recorded in that book, except one. Valinor. Other hobbits had gone there, so why couldn’t I? That was my promised price for assisting Valandil--a chance to go with him on the ship over the Sea.”

She paused. “But, I know better now. It is possible that I could never make it to Valinor, since I’ve never worn a ring of power. Besides, once I leave on that ship, I can never come back, no matter what the outcome. I can never enjoy the simple life of the Shire again as I once did when I was little, and I can never revisit some of my favorite places in this Middle-earth, Edoras, Osgiliath and Minas Tirith, and Dale. What’s more, I can never have children of my own to further that inspiration. I believe the loss of the Red Book would be too great a loss for future generations.”

Prisca spoke directly to Andwise. “What is life without conflict? What is a story without a struggle? Andwise, you want to take away the Red Book, because you think it dwells too much on darkness, on a former evil, and you think that hobbits should simply move on with their peaceful lives, forgetting the evil and the darkness of the past. You would rather have hobbits planting seeds in the ground to grow into flowers than planting a desire in their hearts to seek out adventure!”

Prisca paused. “Don’t you realize that we wouldn’t have such good in this world to celebrate unless that good had an evil to fight against? Don’t you realize that the good in this world wouldn’t even seem as good as it is if not for the evil to compare with it? There are those from every race who

want to be heroes, who want to fight the good fight for the good worth fighting for. Can *you* take that inspiration away, Andy? Even if you take the Red Book, that desire *will still be there*."

Andy looked at Prisca, then at the rest of them. He then laid his head in his hands and began to cry. Mungo walked over to him and sat down next to him.

"Andy, talk to me. What's going on with you?"

"I am ashamed," Andwise said, "I have that desire in me too. I want to be a hero. I want to be brave like Samwise the Brave was. His blood runs in my veins, and yet I have never really had the courage to leave the Shire. But you did, Mungo. You left. I was right when I thought you might turn back, but you did something I could have never done. You continued the journey."

Andy began to calm down. "I wanted to be rid of this Book, because I never thought I could live up to Samwise the Brave. Others expect me to be like him. They think that I should travel the world like he did. It's not that I don't want to. It's that I don't think I can. I don't think I have it in me. I thought if I got rid of this Book, then the Shire would eventually forget about the stories, and I could live this peaceful life without the expectations of others. I was selfish. I'm sorry."

"Andy," said Mungo, "Don't you see? You've already made it out of the Shire. You've come to the Grey Havens! That's no small distance from Hobbiton... Let's bring the Red Book back, and then you, me, and Prisca will go on a journey... anywhere in Middle-earth. Then, when you are asked to read at the yearly celebration at the Party Tree again, you can tell your own story there too."

For the second time since their arrival at the Grey Havens, Elladan spoke.

"That settles it. The Red Book of Westmarch will return to the Shire, with Andy, Mungo, and Prisca. Valandil, Elrohir, and I will attempt to discover whether the rumors are true."

Both Valandil and Elrohir looked taken aback. Elrohir said, "Elladan, what do you mean--"

"Brother," said Elladan, "It's time. It's obvious that Valandil misses his family and his friends. I, too, miss mine. I miss Father the most, and I think you do too. Perhaps we will discover that the rumors aren't true about Legolas and Gimli, but I long for the sea, and I must know for sure."

Elrohir looked at Elladan, then looked at the water. "Yes... I *am* ready... The Sea calls to me too... It is time to begin our own journey... Let us go find out, brother."

It was then that the three elves and the three hobbits parted, On the Shores of the Sea.

***Play "On the Shores of the Sea"***