



The Ring

Dramatization of J.R.R.Tolkien's suite of novels

by Christian Lanciai (2004)

The Characters:

Sauron, Lord of Mordor
Bel-Phegor, the foremost ringsmith
The eight other ringsmiths
Gandalf
Frodo
Sam
Pippin
Merry
Barliman Butterbur, the landlord of Brie
Nob, his groom
Aragorn, called the Strider
Bilbo
Elrond, the lord of the elves
Legolas
Boromir
Gloin
Gimli, his son
Saruman the White
Galadriel, Queen of Lothloria
Haldir
King Theoden of Rohan
Eowyn, his niece
Eomer, his nephew
Grima Wormtongue
Hama
Gollum
Faramir, Boromir's brother
Damrod
Mablung
Denethor of Gondor
Arwen, Elrond's daughter
a herold
orcs

The action is in Eriador, Rohan, Gondor and Mordor
in the beginning of the age of humanity.

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The Ring

Act I scene 1.

High gothic hall, very sumptuous but very dark and dreary.

Sauron (alone in a black robe and hood with dark glasses) No, this is not acceptable. Would I then give up my right? I forged the highest ring myself to concentrate all the world's power and all spiritual living forces in one single entity of concentration, which would rule all the world's powers and gather all the forged rings of the elven world in one readily accessible form in one hand. Mine would be all the power in the world in the possession of one handy magic ring, the last and most powerful and consummate of all the noble rings created by the elves for the right distribution of magic power. I did it all by myself, the most splendid of the rings of power! But the obstinate, abhorrent and stupid human beings objected to any order of our world and rose against my dominion, bringing forth wars that ruined all life in the entire world, and I encountered the haughty Isildur himself in battle, who cut off my hand to take possession of the ring himself. It was not acceptable, and I sent forth all the worst monsters and freaks in the world on an indefatigable chase for the perpetrator, and they caught up with him and pierced him with a hundred arrows causing him to fall down in the waves of Anduin disappearing in its depths with my ring, which since then never has been recovered.

But I know that the ring lives, for it has a life of its own sending out signals of its desire to return to its only rightful owner! We have now recovered from the horrors of war and our destruction, but we need the ring to be able to fully restore the order of the world and our realm. The ring is calling for me! I know it is in motion and never has been forgotten, and some unworthy impostor is abusing it for dirty tricks to practice jokes on his friends by making himself invisible, just for fun. That's what I call a failed purpose and downright power abuse!

(grabs with his iron claw and other hand a mighty hammer with which he strikes an enormous gonggong twice. Immediately nine other tall and ghostly servants robed and masked in black present themselves.)

You have heard my command! That ring is alive, and it has to be found! Use any means! Bribe anyone with anything! It is somewhere among the hobbits in the Shire somewhere in the northwest beyond the mountains. Bring its owner and the ring here to me! He must be my slave like everyone else!

1 It's a long way to the Shire.

Sauron What does that matter? What is any distance in the world to to the long arm of my law? You must find him and my ring, or else we will never overcome the world.

1 Yes, my lord.

2 Your law is the law of all the world, for no one has the right to defy it.

3 Your progress is the progress of the world, and we will further it by any means.

4 The ring is your own, only you have forged it, and it belongs to no one else than your own supreme power.

5 We shall visit the hobbits, explore their country and find the ring.

6 And we shall bring it to you.

7 Its violator shall pay the price for it by his people's submission forever.

8 No one escapes Sauron.

9 His is all power for all eternity.

Sauron That's the spirit, my servants! Go forth and search! Ransack the world and turn it upside down if necessary, but return the ring to its only rightful owner!

all nine (bowing) We hear and obey. *(They depart.)*

Sauron (after their departure) Here begins my last warfare, the last cry of Sauron in the world to recover his power in a war of defense against all human competition and stupidity and opposition! And I will never give up, as long as the ring lives and can return to me all the power in the world and have it all in the control of my hand! *(raises his hands (with the iron claw) to the sky as if to challenge even all heaven.)*

Scene 2. Bag End in Hobbiton.

Frodo No, Bilbo, you shouldn't have done that, just vanish leaving only question marks behind to shame you, as if you weren't enough disreputable already. Now you will go down in history as the mad Bilbo, who whisked yourself away at the height of your life's greatest party, of which you yourself was the host. You just don't do things like that. And this ring then, which you reluctantly left behind just by the persuasion of Gandalf Grey, the greatest mystery of your life, which you obstinately refused to share with anyone. All you left behind is mystifications, and I don't know if I should be angry with you or grateful for having made me your sole heir, who thereby also inherited your myths and lies, your bad reputation and all your unanswerable questions. Even to the question how you came across this ring you gave only inconsistent and ambiguous answers that must brand you forever as a lying mythomaniac. Still you warned me against the ring. Was that what turned you invisible? Was it your life's only theft and greatest deceit? How could I then ever resist the temptation of putting it on my finger... *(is about to do so when the door opens and Gandalf appears, who immediately understands what is about to happen.)*

Gandalf I wouldn't do that if I were you, Frodo

Frodo Gandalf!

Gandalf I seem to have arrived at the last moment.

Frodo Gandalf! You are back! Where have you been?

Gandalf Everywhere and nowhere. I have been researching and acquired more knowledge than what is good for anyone. Frodo, we are all exposed to supreme danger.

Frodo What has happened?

Gandalf How could I explain it? The prince of darkness has risen again and desires to enslave the entire world as if he learned nothing from his last lesson, when everything went to hell for him and for the world for the sake of his insane ambitions of power... Surely you haven't tried the ring, Frodo?

Frodo But what has Bilbo's ring got to do with a mad tyrant?

Gandalf Everything, Frodo, everything! You see, the ring that is yours, which Bilbo came across by accident, actually belongs to him.

Frodo If he wants it back, he should come for it himself, shouldn't he?

Gandalf It's not that simple. *(takes the ring and throws it into the fire)*

Frodo But what are you doing, Gandalf? Bilbo's ring!

Gandalf Take it easy, it will come to no harm. It is forged by the hands of the king of the elves, and its magic power resists all the four elements. Take it out of the fire now.

Frodo But it must be glowing hot!

Gandalf (pokes it out) Not at all. Feel for yourself. *(Frodo takes it up.)* Now study it carefully. Do you find anything written in it?

Frodo Yes, actually. There are small fine elaborate letters like of fire. But I can't make them out.

Gandalf The writ is in the language of the elves themselves. Let me see. *(takes care of the ring and examines it. Seriously:)* It is as I feared. It's the lord of the rings itself. It is without equal in the history of the world. There were many powerful magic rings forged by the knowledge of the fantastic skill and craft of the elves, but this ring was the very last one and the most powerful.

Frodo What does it say?

Gandalf "One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them,
One ring to bring them all and to in the darkness bind them."

Frodo That sounds awful!

Gandalf Yes, doesn't it?

Frodo What shall we do?

Gandalf For the sake of this single little ring, Frodo, the lord of darkness is prepared to launch the entire world into disaster and war, and that is his intention. Nothing could stop him, except this single little ring.

Frodo How?

Gandalf By its destruction.

Frodo But you said yourself, that it resists all the four elements!

Gandalf That's precisely why there is only one way to destroy it. We must return it to Mordor, from whence it came, and cast it down into the crater of the Mount Doom, which is a live volcano. Only from there it can never again be retrieved.

Frodo And who shall do it?

Gandalf You.

Frodo Why me?

Gandalf Don't take it so personally and seriously, but it would be best if the actual owner of the ring really did it. Hardly anyone else would be able to.

Frodo Can't you take it and do it yourself, who knows what it's all about and where Mordor is located?

Gandalf Don't tempt me, Frodo! In my hands the ring could become as dangerous as in the hands of Sauron, for I am a magician! Never forget that! I am a security risk! I totter between the abyss and despair and stand between good and evil and know more than what is good for anyone! Only an innocent like you could handle the ring correctly.

Frodo Pardon me, Gandalf, but isn't all this rather theatrical? Aren't you exaggerating? How could such a small ring achieve such an tremendous importance?

Gandalf You speak thus ignorantly of the mystery of magic. All power stems from magic. The problem is that there is white magic and black magic. As a magician I am myself only grey – I don't take sides with anyone. Still I have to make the right choice and must therefore do what is right.

Frodo But if the ring belongs to that Sauron, isn't he fully justified in demanding it back? Isn't that his perfect right? We might even get a reward for finding it.

Gandalf The important thing is not who is right but what is right, Frodo. The ring must be destroyed and Sauron with it. That's the only right thing in this case.

Frodo I still think it sounds a bit drastic.

Gandalf Sauron has sent out spies all over the world to search for the ring, Frodo. They have turned up in Rohan and Mirkwood and Brie. He might know it is in the Shire. They might show up here any moment. When they hear about how Bilbo vanished it's easy for them to understand they are on the right track. If they come here, Frodo, they must not find you here with the ring.

Frodo Shall I then run away and vanish like Bilbo?

Gandalf It might already be too late. (*Rustle outside.*) Quiet! What was that?

Frodo There is always something rustling around here in the bushes.

Gandalf But that was someone. Keep absolutely still. (*steals up to the door. Flings it open. Samwise Gamgwee is standing outside.*)

Frodo Sam!

Sam Forgive me for disturbing. I happened to hear that Gandalf was seen entering here. Welcome back, Gandalf!

Gandalf Have you been listening?

Sam I couldn't help overhearing the last.

Gandalf Come in quickly, and close the door! (*Sam enters.*)

Sam Are you in trouble, Frodo? Can I help you?

Gandalf He certainly could need some help.

Frodo Bilbo has given me the heaviest burden in the world for an inheritance, Sam, and I have to return it to its rightful owner.

Sam Where?

Frodo In Mordor.

Sam Gosh! Then I understand you have a problem.

Gandalf It is a problem for the entire Shire, Sam. The sent out spies of the lord of darkness could appear here any moment to start terrorizing the population.

Sam They are already here.

Frodo What are you saying?

Sam Dark riders dressed all in black and masked, so you can't even see their faces.

Gandalf Have you seen them?

Sam Two such phantoms have struck terror in the villages to the south.

Gandalf There is no time to lose, then. Frodo must get on his way.

Frodo Will you come with me, Gandalf?

Gandalf I can't. I am needed in other places. But Sam could follow you, as he already knows too much anyway.

Sam I will answer for you with my life, Frodo.

Gandalf Quiet! I hear something! Were you followed here, Samwise Gamgee?

Sam Not that I know of. I came here alone.

Gandalf Someone is coming.
(The door is flung open, and Pippin enters.)

Pippin (simply) Hi, Frodo! A black and masked rider has asked for you in Frogmorton.

Gandalf They are coming closer.

Pippin Is Frodo in trouble?

Sam If he is!

Gandalf He must away from here at once, Pippin. Sam will follow him. If you also follow, you will be even safer.

Pippin But will not people wonder where we have gone?

Gandalf That's better than having the entire Shire haunted by terrorists.

Pippin I don't understand anything.

Sam You should be happy with that.

Frodo Will you hang on, Pippin?

Pippin Where to?

Frodo Out on a venture. We must liberate the Shire from a political burden.

Pippin Do I have any choice?

Sam No, for like myself you know too much, and if the black riders will get at you, you will be sorry.

Gandalf Quiet! Someone is sneaking around the window.

Pippin (cries out) Just let them not discover us!

Sam (puts his mouth to his mouth) Shut up, Pippin.

Gandalf (steals up to the window, lurks, catches someone and cries out) Ha!
(He has laid hands on the terrified Merryman.)

Sam But it's just Merry!

Frodo Come in, Merry! What are you doing out in the bush?

Merry There seemed to be something exciting going on here.

Gandalf You can't guess *how* exciting.

Merry Are you heading for some adventure?

Pippin If we are!

Merry May I come along?

Sam I have sworn to defend Frodo with our lives, Merry. The black spies are after him. He must not get caught. Are you with us?

Merry Absolutely!

Gandalf That's enough. Let there be no more. You have to leave at once. Go to Rivendell at the foot of the misty mountains in the east. I will try to summon a council there with those elves who are still around. Most of them have gone over the sea to the west.

Frodo So we may see you there, Gandalf

Gandalf I sincerely hope so, Frodo. You have to hurry. The way there is not dangerous or long, but the only peril on the way is a possible encounter with the spies of Mordor.

Merry The spies of Mordor!

Pippin It's too late to back out now, Merry.

Merry What's really the trouble you're in, Frodo?

Frodo I don't really know myself, but apparently it has to be fixed.

Gandalf There is no more time to lose on chatting.

Sam We are ready, Gandalf. Are you ready, Frodo, Pippin and Merry?

Pippin Always ready!

Sam What are we waiting for?

Gandalf Hurry up, little hobbits! (*Frodo, Sam, Pippin and Merry hurry on out.*)
 I just hope we are not too late. We have a lead, but I am afraid it is the smallest possible.

Scene 3. The inn of the Prancing Pony.
 (The four hobbits knock on the door.)

host (opening the door shutter) What's on? What are you doing at this hour of the night?

Frodo We have been travelling all day and are looking for night quarters.

host Hobbits! And from the Shire! That doesn't happen every day! Come in! Come in!

(*The host lets them in, the inn opens up displaying a thriving public life, like in an old pub.*)

Make yourselves at home! Do you want anything to eat, or do you want to go to bed at once?

Pippin We can't go to bed on empty stomachs, can we?

Merry Of course we must have something to eat!

Frodo We shouldn't mingle with people and attract attention...

Sam Frodo, you must allow us to relax!

host I am sure you will sleep better if you get some compensation in your screaming bellies for your day's travail...

Pippin Exactly, Sir!

Host Just make yourselves comfortable, and we will bring you some food!
(*goes about his business*)

Sam We had better do as he says and not attract any attention by any protests.

Pippin Exactly!

Merry There is after all no point in starving to death, is there, Frodo?

Frodo Of course not. But it wouldn't be pleasant if the black riders would find us here and set the whole place on fire for our sake...

Merry You are exaggerating as always.

stranger (from a dark corner) Where do you come from?

Frodo Where are you from yourself, dark stranger?

Stranger I asked you first. But you are wise in being vigilant. There are some weird people around.

Sam Like you yourself, eh?

Stranger You have nothing to fear from me. I am honest.

Pippin Do you want us to believe that?

Sam Why are you then lurking in the dark?

Stranger As a wanderer from the east I am not kindly regarded here.

Merry (to the others) He seems weird.

Pippin To say the least.

host (bringing some food) This is the best my house can provide! Enjoy your meal!

Pippin You came at the last moment, indeed! We are absolutely starved!

host We are seldom visited by hobbits from the west. You must have some interesting story to tell.

Pippin If we have!

Merry Quiet, Pippin!

Pippin What is here for us to hide? What harm could it do to tell about our adventures in the Old Forest and with Tom Bombadil?

host Tom Bombadil? Have you met him?

Pippin In person! He was the one who recommended your inn as a safe place.

host I sincerely hope it will be so for you. What else did Tom Bombadil tell you?

Pippin Can you imagine, that he put on Frodo's ring and didn't become invisible! But Frodo put it back on and tried to sneak out invisible, but Tom Bombadil saw him! No one can fool Tom Bombadil, as he sees through everyone and everything!

Stranger It's true that Tom Bombadil by his intimacy with the trees and the water and the basic elements of nature is able to see everything and understand everything, but you shouldn't declare in public that he discovered your secret.

Pippin (wants to go down to earth, puts his hands to his mouth) Now I talked too much!

host Good heavens! Then one of you must be the very hobbit for whom I have a letter from Gandalf. (*turns to Frodo*) Are you by any chance Frodo Baggins?

Sam We can all confirm that he is.

host Here you are then. (*hands over a thick letter*) I should have sent it long ago, but then I forgot it, and then I heard that you might pass this way...

Sam What does he say, Frodo?

Frodo Bad news. He begs us to make haste to Rivendell. He recommends a fellow called Strider, a tall thin man who could help us on our way.

Stranger I know him.

Pippin And how could you know about him, Mister Unknown?

Stranger Because I am the one.

Host It is true, my friends. You have the Strider in front of you.

Frodo Gandalf says your real name is something else.

Aragorn Aragorn.

Frodo Correct.

Aragorn You are in danger, my little friends. This is no place for credulous hobbits. There are spies around everywhere here, and you just let the whole inn know that Frodo has a ring that makes him invisible. There could be no place in the world more risky for you now than this inn.

host (to Aragorn) Black riders have been asking for Frodo Baggins at the city gate.

Aragorn Then it was lucky that I found you first. We haven't got a moment to lose. Come!

Merry But the food!

Aragorn You travel best on an empty stomach. Come!

Pippin But the ale! And the dessert! Our pastries!

Aragorn Stay put and party if you like, little friend, but don't blame me if the bill then will kill you. Come on now! We must get ahead of them!

Frodo Aragorn seems to know what he is talking about. We don't. Come on!

(The hobbits leave with Aragorn.)

host What did we do to deserve these political problems? The last thing I ever wanted was unwelcome guests.

(Two black spies break in.)

1 Where are the hobbits?

host There are no hobbits here.

1 They have been here!

host In that case they are no longer here. What can we do for you, gentlemen?

2 Which way did they take?

host They went out. Beyond that I have no further report.

1 (to 2) They have run off. They got away again.

2 We will catch up with them. We travel faster by night than they do.

(The spies leave in haste.)

host Phew! They accepted the defeat!

Nob Who are those hobbits really? And why are they chased around by the whole world?

Host Because they haven't done anything, *Nob*. They are perfectly innocent.

Nob And who are those black masked terrorists? Why are they searching the entire country?

Host No one knows who they are, but everyone knows where they come from.

Nob Well?

host Mordor, the black hole of the world.

Nob Goodness gracious me!

(Suddenly the door opens, and Gandalf enters.)

Gandalf Have they been here?

Nob Who? Everyone has been here!

Gandalf The hobbits! The four hobbits!

host Yes, and two black spies as well. The hobbits got away first before the spies arrived.

Gandalf Did you give them my letter?

host Yes, and they are making haste to Rivendell.

Gandalf But the spies will catch up with them. I just hope Frodo will not do anything stupid. Did he read the letter carefully?

Host I hope so.

Gandalf I hope so too, for if he gets caught, my good Barliman Butterbur, the sun will never shine upon this land any more. Good night, gentlemen. *(leaves abruptly)*

host Gandalf Gray is always out on mysterious business.

Nob But he surely manages it as well as he can?

host So do we all, *Nob*, who have no other interest than to live for what we love in this world.

Scene 4. Rivendell.

Frodo in bed in a light and peaceful room. Gandalf wakes by his side.

Gandalf He is awakening. He is coming back. At last!

Frodo (wakes up) Gandalf! Is it true?

Gandalf Yes, my son, it is perfectly true. You are at last in safety after many terrible dangers. You have been through much. Forgive me.

Frodo It's not your fault.

Gandalf Yes, partly. I could have done more to anticipate the dangers. And I would have done more, if I hadn't been obstructed. But now I am here.

Frodo And seems to be alive in spite of all. What happened?

Gandalf The black spies caught up with you on the Weathertop. There you did what I always warned you against most of all: you put the ring on your finger and

turned invisible. Don't you understand, Frodo, that each time you put on the ring, it calls out in triumph to its owner: I live! I work! I am here! And there is so much of the soul of the lord of darkness in this ring, that he immediately feels the call and the outcry of the ring. So does his nine closest associates, the nine ringsmiths, who ruthlessly persecuted and chased you and your friends ever since you left the Shire. And now when you put on the ring in their presence you became one of them. You couldn't have made yourself more obvious and visible to them. You gave yourself away, while without the ring on your finger you could have sneaked away from them as usual. But just because you showed yourself with the ring they could hit you and strike you with their poisoned knife, which would have turned you their slave forever, if they had struck right. Fortunately it only hit your shoulder, and you got away like by a miracle.

Frodo The last thing I remember is how all nine of them set after me across the river but how the river waves rose above them and buried them.

Gandalf Yes, the river carried them away and bereft them of their horses, but they will come back. They got away with the utmost difficulty, and after the river rage your friends found you unconscious on the opposite shore. Then they brought you here in safety. Mordor lost this round, but there will be more. Rivendell like the Shire is out of reach of Mordor, but only for the time being. They are oases in the desert of darkness, where Sauron constantly keeps expanding his paralysing power and enslaving influence.

Frodo So they all made it? I was the only one who got into trouble?

Gandalf You are the only one they are after. Your friends are all out of danger except in your company.

Frodo How could I manage this, Gandalf? I keep succumbing to temptation all the time. I am just a small mortal human being. They almost succeeded in killing me and almost bereft me of my soul.

Gandalf But only almost. You have manifested an extraordinary power of resistance. You went on for seventeen days with the poisoned knife's edge in your flesh, which would have killed another within one day. You will do, Frodo. Your only weak spot is your own will, which is inclined to too much hesitation in anxious uncertainty. You totter, but you don't fall.

Frodo I did not fall because others supported me, like you.

Gandalf And I did not support you well enough. Forgive me. The dilemma of such as I is that we have to be present on too many locations at the same time. That is unfortunately impossible.

Frodo We do as well as we can, Gandalf. Could anyone ask for more?

Gandalf No, but we can always do it ourselves. But you have woken up. That is the main thing. Now you must see your friends. Come in, Sam, Pippin and Merry! He is alive! (*They enter overjoyed.*)

Sam Frodo! We made it!

Frodo So far!

Pippin The worst is over!

Frodo It has only begun.

Merry But you made it! Anyone else would have died! Elrond has been operating on you for three days!

Frodo Elrond?

Gandalf The lord of Rivendell, our foremost ally against Mordor. He has summoned a council for tomorrow. You may be present, as you now have returned to yourself. He got out the last poisoned piece of the knife's edge from your shoulder yesterday. Not until then your life was out of all danger. *(enter Bilbo)*

Frodo But who is here if not old Bilbo?

Bilbo Frodo, I am so sorry for all the trouble I have given you.

Frodo You didn't do it with any intention.

Bilbo No, I certainly didn't, by all the gods!

Frodo You didn't know yourself what the ring was all about.

Bilbo I should never have taken it from Gollum.

Frodo Gollum? Who is Gollum?

Gandalf His treal name is Smeagol. He was the one who took the ring from his friend Deagol, who found it on the bottom of the river. He killed Deagol, took the ring and was expelled from the community of his kind. He found his way underground down to the water caves, where Bilbo found him and tricked him out of the ring. Wasn't that the case, Bilbo?

Bilbo Yes, I won the ring from him by fair play in a game of riddles.

Frodo Has Gollum never tried to retrieve it?

Gandalf No one knows where Gollum is today. But Sauron knows the ring is in motion and active, and that's the only important thing. There is our challenge.

Frodo It's good to see you, Bilbo.

Bilbo And you, Frodo, in the lack of others.

Gandalf Let him sleep now. We have an important conference tomorrow.

Pippin You have made it, Frodo! You will live!

Merry And we along with you!

Frodo Thanks, buddies. We'll carry on.

Sam That's the spirit, Frodo!

Gandalf Rest now, Frodo. You will need more powers than you ever will get.

Frodo I am aware of it, Gandalf.

(Gandalf gets everyone out and then leaves himself.)

Frodo For me the ring is just a perpetual horror and consuming worry of sleeplessness and persecution and worst of all: an abysmal temptation and seduction, to which I know I will one day succumb. King Sauron, the real owner and ruler of the ring, has the power to call on me and and seduce me by the ring. I can hold out against it and resist its surging urge of power, but for how long? I don't want to think about it.

Act II scene 1. The council.

Elrond First of all I wish to thank you all for having come. You have arrived from far and near, and several of you have spited terrible distances and dangers just to reach here. Especially prince Boromir from Gondor in the far south and our hobbits from the westernmost parts of Eriador. We also have our dwarfs from Erebor, the solitary mountain in the northeast, and Legolas from the northern outskirts of Mirkwood. Then we have Aragorn, the strider fromn Arnor, and Gandalf Grey, after Saruman the White the foremost of magicians. These are our most important guests, who all have vital news to tell, and for whose sake we have summoned this important conference, which could be critical for the world's future. I give the word first of all to Boromir.

Boromir The situation is worrisome, my friends from near and far. The forces of darkness have raised their menacing powers again and challenged us with new armies displaying powers of force that we haven't been able to resist. They are threatening Rohan and Gondor, and we find ourselves seriously besieged. We can't defend Osgiliath, which has been continuously invaded and which population now are escaping in vast numbers. I wished most of all to just inform you of the situation and ask you if you know anything about the origin and rise of the new power of Mordor.

Elrond We have all observed the new potent aggression of Mordor with great concern and are puzzled by the same issue: how has Mordor been able to resurrect? Were not Mordor and Sauron thoroughly defeated when Sauron lost the lord of rings and his right hand, thus liberating the world from its greatest menace? Gloin from Esgaroth.

Gloin Orcs have started to appear again at night in Mirkwood. They come from the south in thousands, overwhelming peaceful areas in raids by night, so that Mirkwood again has become a perilous part of the world. In Esgaroth we fear the worst. We are only seven dwarf kings left.

Bilbo Do you know anything about Balin?

Gloin When things went well for us, Balin with Oin and Ori and a lot of other dwarfs decided to recapture Moria and continue the works in its mighty mine passages. It seemed to go well in the beginning, but then the contact was broken. We have twice sent messengers there to examine the situation who returned without results. We will venture a third effort, but new crowds of orcs are at large, and we fear the worst.

Legolas Where do all these orcs come from? Didn't we put them all down once and for all?

Gandalf I regret that I am able to answer that question with the worst possible news of this conference. Saruman the White called on me for an evaluation of the situation. I went to Isengard but did not find the good old Saruman the White. He was no longer white. He has fallen under the influence of Mordor.

(Everyone is appalled.)

Elrond (shocked) How was this manifested?

Gandalf He was like obsessed with 'the new power' as he called it, which he considered invincible, and he wanted me to join the game. He has fallen ill in the hopelessly morbid disease of lust for power. He is in constant touch with Mordor and imagines he could be as powerful as Sauron himself. Therefore he wants the lord of the rings. He has learned that it showed up in the distant Shire and knew that I had been conspicuously busy there, wherefore he assumed that I knew the whereabouts of the ring. That was the only reason why he summoned me.

Legolas And what about the orcs?

Gandalf Saruman is himself building up an army of orcs that is growing every day. Sauron and Saruman have joined hands together against our entire free world, the greater part of which still has implicit faith in Saruman, especially the king of Rohan.

Boromir The riders of Rohan would never join Sauron and Mordor. That is an absolute impossibility.

Elrond Where do you stand yourself, Gandalf Grey? If you resisted the persuasion of Saruman, how did you get out of his reach alive? He would hardly have wished you to expose his treason to the free world.

Gandalf I refused to accept his offer and to work with him. I was then detained by force and imprisoned in Orthanc, where I was guarded night and day by roaring orcs and werewolves. You know how secure Isengard is as a prison. It's an impregnable fortress. No one is let in or out without the authority of Saruman. It was finally Gwaihir, the eagle, the lord of winds, the greatest of the large eagles, that brought me out of there. He brought me to Rohan, where I was allowed to borrow the fastest horse of the realm, whereupon I immediately rode to the Shire and could follow the fresh trails of the hobbits through trials and despair here to Rivendell. Bree has still not recovered after the visits of the black spies all around there.

Gloin We have also been visited by the black spies. One of them came to Esgaroth and delivered a message. We should cooperate with Mordor and for that be richly rewarded. We only had bad experience of Mordor and therefore asked for time to consider their offer. "Don't consider too long," the dispatched black masked rider said and disappeared. Then the orcs started invading Mirkwood.

Legolas I have heard that Rohan is paying tribute to Mordor by delivering horses. Is that true?

Boromir Impossible. Rohan has never paid tribute to Mordor. Breeding horses is the pride and honour of Rohan. Would Rohan sell it to Rohan out of sheer cowardice? Unthinkable.

Gandalf Unfortunately it is true. The king of Rohan is in trouble. I don't know yet in what way.

Elrond May we now at last learn all about the lord of the rings. Does it really exist?

Gandalf It does exist, I regret to say, and is active, and Sauron has become aware of it. That's why his life and ambitions have awakened again. Therefore he has sent

out his nine ringsmiths to find it by any means. That's why they have persecuted these four hobbits through all Eriador from the Shire all the way here. They have seen the ring, for Frodo put it on in their very presence. Frodo almost had to pay for it with his life. Only Elrond could save him and liberate him from a poisoned knife's edge that had found its way into his shoulder. Only by the direst need could Frodo be saved to Rivendell.

Elrond And here he is safe, but for how long?

Boromir So the ring is to be blamed for everything. How shall we go about it? Couldn't we use its power against Mordor?

Gandalf You fool, don't you understand that the power of the ring is an illness and the most deadly of all diseases? Even Sauron was good from the beginning. Both he and the orcs were elves once upon a time. He learned forging magic rings from the elves, but he was affected by the obsession to forge a magic ring to rule all the others. The elves generously and frankly shared all their magic knowledge with him, which they have regretted ever since. Sauron went his own way and managed by his ruling ring to assume control of all the others with three exceptions: the three rings that are still in the possession of the elves. Sauron can never have power over the elves, and that is why we are safe here. By coincidence the ring has landed by the innocent hobbits, who never had anything to do with the world order. It seems like a providence by destiny that they would be entrusted with the ring without using it, until it pleased Bilbo to do a trick with it at his birthday party. Then the ring and Sauron woke up to life. It is alive, and Sauron lives mainly because of it and its magic. Therefore it must be destroyed.

Boromir But how? By sending it to the bottom of the sea?

Gandalf There is only one way. It has to be thrown into the fiery crater of Mount Doom itself.

Boromir (laughs) And who will do this?

Gandalf There is only one who could do it: the bearer of the ring himself, who now is Frodo.

(a pause of silence)

Elrond Could he make it?

Gandalf It depends on Frodo himself.

Legolas We have no alternative. He must make it. We can't resist the power of Mordor by mundane means. As long as the ring lives and is active, he will continuously expand and overrun the world with his cruel inhuman orcs. The ring must be destroyed, and only Frodo can do it. But he has friends who could help him.

Sam Us for example.

Pippin We are four able hobbits together.

Legolas I will gladly help you on the way as far as I can. Gandalf will surely also stand by you.

Gandalf Of course.

Gloin I am too old and slow, but I will gladly send my son Gimli along with you. He is in the prime of his age.

Gimli No one is stronger than a true dwarf.

Boromir I will gladly join for the sake of Gondor and Rohan. Aragorn, you haven't said a thing during the entire conference. Do you have considerations?

Aragorn I protected the hobbits with my life from Bree and all the way here. Would I then now let them down?

Elrond The matter is settled. We have an impressive protection escort for you, Frodo, as far as it is possible, and I don't think anyone of them would fail you unless under compulsion. But in the end it is all up to yourself. You have to make it for the sake of the world, Frodo. Consider it.

Frodo Who can manage such a responsibility? But the more grateful I am for your united help. I will be needing it perhaps all the way, and I doubt such a task could be performed by anyone alone.

Aragorn We swear allegiance and absolute faithfulness to your mission unto the end, Frodo.

Legolas We are all with you to the end.

Sam We will follow you down the crater of Mount Doom if necessary, Frodo.

Boromir You may count on us. Just trust us.

Elrond Gandalf, you know the ways. Guide them well and right.

Gandalf Of course.

Elrond Then we have reached some result. The ring has accomplished a sacred fellowship for leading it to its destruction. I wish all success and happiness in the world to the fellowship of the ring, for no one will need it more than you.

Frodo I do think we can make it. Four hobbits can always manage and are invincible if they stick together.

Elrond Thanks for those words, Frodo. They raise the hopes for ourselves and the world.

Bilbo It's a pity I am too old to be able to follow, Frodo.

Frodo You have already done your job. You got us the ring. You have given us enough trouble already.

Bilbo It wasn't intentional, Frodo.

Frodo (pats his arm) I know, Bilbo. It was just a stroke of luck.

Bilbo We'll be seeing you when you come back.

Frodo I sincerely hope so, Bilbo. *(they embrace)*

Elrond I thereby declare this council concluded.
(They break it up.)

Scene 2. Barad-Dûr. Like act I scene 1.

Sauron Only one! How is it possible?

A serving orc No more have arrived.

Sauron Well, let him then appear. *(the orch opens the door to a black spy)*

Only one, Bel-Phegor? Where are the others?

Bel-Phegor We almost got the ring-bearer. We would have had him caught, if the hard currents of the Bruin hadn't suddenly started bolting and carried us away in the middle of our crossing.

Sauron Don't tell me you allowed the ring-bearer to reach Rivendell!

Bel-Phegor We could not stop him. We were stopped by elven currents.

Sauron What happened to the others?

Bel-Phegor All their eight horses were lost. They lost their clothes, armour and everything. Only I could get away and get here.

Sauron A defeat! My first one! Why didn't you take him before reaching the current?

Bel-Phegor We caught up with the hobbits on the Weathertop, where we succeeded in inflicting a mortal wound on the ring-bearer. He would have been ours if he had not survived and got away. Now he is in the hands of the elves, who alone know the art to heal the wounds of a deadly poisonous dagger from Mordor.

Sauron Bad luck! But that must not stop us! Now the elves are assembling all the good powers of the world to a council, which probably will decide on the eternal destruction of the power element. But it can only be scrapped here in Mordor where it was forged in the hottest fire in the world in the crater which reaches down to the centre of the earth by our volcano! They will probably send a troupe with the ring-bearer on an expedition to implement the final destruction of mine and the world's order! That must not happen! We must stop all such efforts!

Bel-Phegor An impossible mission. They will meet with a thousand adversities on their way and even worse dangers.

Sauron We need time! We have to make every effort to delay them and thwart their progress!

Bel-Phegor We will soon have enough hosts of orcs to overrun all Gondor, Rohan and Numenor with.

Sauron Rohan is already in our grip. In Gondor no one suspects what a total annihilation they are facing. Then all Eriador will be open to us, and Rhovanion will be there just for us to take over. Our only threat is from Gandalf Grey and the expedition of the elves, that must be stopped! Go! I have to confer with the stupid Saruman.

(Bel-Phegor leaves. Sauron turns to a large shimmering crystal ball.)

Saruman! Saruman! Do you hear me?

Saruman('s voice, booming) I hear, o master! What news?

Sauron The ring-bearer is still at large and probably on the road south with Gandalf. They will probably dare the mad venture to destroy the ring, since that is their only chance.

Saruman That chance is probably the most minimal. We can surely divide them, destroy them and catch them on the way. They have no chance, since we have spies and agents everywhere.

Sauron That's what I mean. They have to be stopped by any means! As long as the bearer of the ring is free with the ring in his hands, no one is free on earth, there will be no order, and our power is threatened, which else would be absolute. He must be stopped!

Saruman Of course.

Sauron How could you let Gandalf get away?

Saruman No one thought he could escape from safest prison isolation in the world.

Sauron And how could you fail in persuading him?

Saruman He was too naïve in the incurable obstinacy of his idealism.

Sauron Damn! There must be no more free spirits in this world! It is intolerable to the world order

Saruman Naturally. But even Gandalf can be fixed. A thousand hells are waiting for him with challenges on his way south, and he could impossibly manage them all.

Sauron But so far he has superated all obstacles and so have his intolerable hobbits. He even managed to escape from you although you had him caught.

Saruman I didn't count with the possibility of a winged flight.

Sauron You don't say that he flew away?

Saruman He was fetched by one of the great eagles.

Sauron Those incorrigible elves again! Well, we will soon be rid of them for good in this world. Not a single one will be left when I am finished with them!

Saruman Of course, master. Instead we will have the great masses of orcs, that will keep the world under their command.

Sauron At least they are obedient. All that is human will only generate disobedience and chaos.

Saruman That shall now be remedied.

Sauron Stop Gandalf and his hobbits! Guard all passes and roads and especially the underground ones!

Saruman All the underworld is already in the control of the orcs.

Sauron That gives me pleasure! That at least is something! Carry on like that! People all the earth with loyal orcs, werewolves and trolls and other monsters! All that is evil furthers our interest by obeying us!

Saruman Exactly, master.

Sauron (*leaves the crystal ball which fades and goes out*) Nothing can stop us from prevailing except a few petty hobbits and that blazing idiot Gandalf. They are like small ants in our way, but their smallness and insignificance makes them all the more irritating and difficult to get a hold on. We need more time to get our invincible army organized, so that we may overrun the whole world without any small entity of ants slipping away. But they have my ring. As long as they have it no one is safe in this world.

Scene 3. Lothloria.

Galadriel We have guests, Haldir.

Haldir As long as they are not our enemies they are welcome.

Galadriel Therefore they have been well taken care of, for they are more than just our friends. They are the fellowship of Gandalf Grey.

Haldir Is Gandalf with them?

Galadriel No, he seems to have become busy on the way. They came staggering in here after having wandered through Moria.

Haldir I can understand that. And they all survived?

Galadriel Obviously by Gandalf's assistance only.

Haldir Then they have much to tell. We only receive such guests once. You did provide for them well enough, I hope?

Galadriel Of course. One of them is even one of us.

(opens the doors, and the hall is opened with all the eight members of the fellowship)

Haldir You must be tired, my friends. Do you wish for anything? Lothloria is still a free country where everything is possible.

Aragorn Thank you, we have noticed that. We are almost completely restored after the nightmares of Moria.

Haldir What actually happened?

Legolas Everything had changed. Sirannon was dammed to a black and nasty lake of putrid water, where a slimy monster guarded the way and tried to stop us from entering. Our only pony probably became its victim.

Sam Poor old faithful Bill! *(sniffles)*

Legolas But we entered, and nothing happened until we reached the mighty pillar halls with Balin's grave close to the gate of Dimrill. There we were attacked by an army of orcs, which dispersed entirely however when a real Balrog appeared. Gandalf defended us against the Balrog at the last bridge of Khazad-Dûm, but the Balrog brough Gandalf down with him as the bridge collapsed.

Galadriel Gandalf could have managed.

Frodo and Sam Do you really think so?

Galadriel He usually manages. He even succeeded in escaping the prison-safe captivity of Saruman.

Aragorn You seem to already know everything, my queen. Is there anything you know that we don't know that you could inform us about?

Galadriel I wish to speak with the ring-bearer alone.

Aragorn You heard, fellows. Let's obey our queen.

Haldir Come with me, my friends. I have much to show you.

(Haldir brings out the others.)

Galadriel I have a mirror, Frodo. I can see strange things in it and even the future.

Frodo I see that you are wearing one of the nine magic rings on your hand, queen Galadriel.

Galadriel Yes, but it is not affected by the lord of rings. The elves have kept unharmed and independent. Sauron does not see me. Is he seeing you?

Frodo I see him when I put on the ring, and then the risk is that he sees me.

Galadriel You should never put it on. It is to be destroyed, you know.

Frodo Yes, I know. But sometimes circumstances force me to, and its burden is getting heavier every day. But you, my queen, have managed, and your realm isn't even threatened. It seems even safer than Rivendell.

Galadriel Still we are closer to Mordor, and we have the orcs in our rear at Moria. They could any moment come swarming out like locusts from the mountains and up from Mordor, and then nothing will remain of our free forests. But they keep away, since they fear us. Orcs and trees don't go well together.

Frodo Couldn't you take care of the ring? You could use its power only for good means, and its power would in your hands even be constructive.

Galadriel Yes, I could correct a thing or two, and we could remove the threat from the orcs and Mordor. But what then, Frodo? Power demands expansion for its survival, and therefore it never survives but turns self-destructive. You know as well as I, that the core element of power is absolute corruption unto self-consumption. Therefore it must be destroyed, and only you can do it.

Frodo So I can't be relieved of my difficult task?

Galadriel No, Frodo, for only you can carry it through. Only you as a hobbit is enough modest and clever at slipping away. And I will help you. You will have some cloaks of invisibility especially made for us elves but fitting hobbits as well. With them you can camouflage yourselves perfectly in any natural environment.

Frodo You give us hope, Galadriel.

Galadriel That's intentional. I do what I can to help you. I cannot do more. Keep the ring, Frodo, until you are able to destroy it.

Frodo I obey you, my queen.

Galadriel Thank you, Frodo. You are saving the whole world.

(enter Aragorn and Legolas.)

Aragorn We had better not stay here too long. It's easy to become spoilt in the land of the elves.

Legolas Especially if you are an elf yourself.

Frodo I think we are ready to go at any time, if the others are.

Boromir (has entered) We are all rested and ready. I long to get home to Minas Tirith.

Aragorn Then we have something in common, Boromir.

Frodo Nothing is keeping us here any longer except the paradise, which we must leave anyway. I thank you, my queen.

Galadriel It was a pleasure, and good luck, Frodo, on your sacred quest.

Scene 4. In a desolate wilderness.

Aragorn We have to accept the situation. The orcs are all around us, and whatever we do we will be in mortal danger. On top of that we are lost after the downfall of Gandalf. Some of us want to go to Minas Tirith, while others wish to complete the passage to Mordor and Mount Doom. We are totally divided and disoriented, but Frodo remains the only ring-bearer among us. Therefore he has the last word. We follow you, Frodo, and support you whatever you will do. What do you wish to do?

Frodo I don't know.

Boromir Typical. That makes us more confused and divided than ever.

Sam I would most of all return to the Shire. I have had enough of evil ugly orcs. Let others who wish struggle with Mordor.

Boromir That's exactly what we intend to do. Aragorn is of the same mind as I, and Legolas is also with us. What about you, Gimli?

Gimli You know that I am best in battle, but I am even better in enduring hardship.

Aragorn Gimli speaks for all of us. We are all with you whatever you choose to do, Frodo. What is your preference?

Frodo I share your division. Some want to go east and others west, while others want to go home, some want us to divide, others want us to stick together, everyone is pulling me in different directions. Leave me alone. Let me think.

Aragorn Frodo wishes to consider the matter in peace and quiet. We must allow him to. How much time do you need, Frodo?

Frodo An hour.

Aragorn Good. Call on us in an hour when you are ready. You will be able to decide quite alone, and no one will influence you. Come, let's go.

(leaves with the others. Frodo is left alone.)

Frodo I know it is madness, but it has to be done. I have to go alone straight into the arms of Mordor and sacrifice the ring to the volcanic fire. None of the others wish to go east. How could I then ask them to follow me? I have to sneak away from them quite alone, so that they will be free to do what they want.

Boromir Frodo must not be left alone. Then he could turn himself invisible and vanish. I have to watch him.

Frodo Boromir, is that you?

Boromir Yes, Frodo.

Frodo I thought you would leave me alone.

Boromir I have an appeal to you, Frodo.

Frodo I thought as much.

Boromir (kneels in supplication) Don't sacrifice the ring. Let's use it instead for what it was made for: to bring the world in order. In Minas Tirith it would be in safe hands, and that would ensure the victory of Gondor over Mordor. What more do we need?

Then when Mordor is subjected we could go and throw the ring into the precipice of doom. Isn't that reasonable?

Frodo It has to be thrown into the fire of Mount Doom at once, Boromir. It must not be postponed. Then the vicious circle of power play and mad ambitions would only recommence. You know that, Boromir. You belong to the fellowship of the ring.

Boromir Is it then wiser to walk straight into the trap of Mordor with the ring in your hand to more or less offer it to Sauron? That's exactly what he wants! Therefore he keeps pulling you and the ring in that direction! Don't you think he is seeing you? Don't you think he knows the ring is in a chain round the neck of Frodo who is here by the falls of Rauros at this moment! Do you think he is stupid?

Frodo No, he is not stupid, but everyone who follows him is stupid, and he is depending on his stupid slaves. That's a stupidity as great as to desire the ring at all, which I am afraid that you are doing, Boromir.

Boromir It's a means, Frodo! We are pressed! The whole world risks being devoured by horrible orcs. I regard the ring as a a political means of the very kind that we need! By the ring the power balance can be swung to our favour, and Rohan and Gondor could beat the orcs! Are you opposed to that?

Frodo No.

Boromir Then give me the ring!

Frodo You are bigger than I, Boromir. You have no right to master me by the right of your superior physical strength.

Boromir Give me the ring, I said, before I use force to take it from you! I can't allow you to give it over to Sauron! We men who can fight in battle have greater need of it! (*grabs him*)

Frodo No! (*escapes, hides behind a cliff and disappears*)

Boromir Where is he? Where did he go? No, Frodo, no! That's just what I wished to avoid! Of course he has now turned invisible and run off! Forgive me, Frodo! I did not know what I was doing! It's over now. The attack is over. Alas, what have I done!

Aragorn (*enters with the others*) Where is Frodo?

Boromir He is gone.

Legolas What has happened? Why is he gone? He was supposed to call on us when he had made up his mind.

Boromir He knew that we all preferred going to Minas Tirith. He knew he alone wanted to go to Mordor. Therefore he has now left on his own and given us liberty.

Sam Frodo! No! (*runs out*) Frodo! (*calling outside*)

Aragorn At least Sam wishes to follow him. What about the rest of us?

Legolas Frodo seems to have chosen for all of us. We all preferred to go to Minas Tirith. Boromir is right. He has released us from the fellowship and given us leave to go to Minas Tirith without him. Is that our wish?

(All seem to agree.)

Pippin But what about Frodo and Sam?

Aragorn Something tells me they manage better without us and we without them, for they have the ring. Two small hobbits could get away with smuggling the ring into Mordor, and without the ring we can easily reach Minas Tirith without Mordor stopping us. Frodo is wiser than any of us.

Gimli Let's then immediately succour Minas Tirith!

Boromir You said it, Gimli.

Legolas We have no time to lose.

Aragorn Are you following us, Pippin and Merry, or would you rather return home?

Pippin Our only chance to see Frodo and Sam again is to follow you, for you are hardly likely anyway to let them out of sight.

Aragorn Right conclusion, Pippin.

Merry Of course we will hang on! Everything is happening here and now!

Legolas To Minas Tirith!

Boromir A moment, my friends. I feel responsible for all this. We can't just abandon Frodo and Sam to their fate. Shouldn't we at least get some confirmation to what has happened before we leave?

Aragorn Boromir is right.

Boromir I am always right.

Aragorn But we can't split up too much. Legolas and Gimli, you search the river. I go up to the hilltop to make a survey. You, Boromir, stay here with Pippin and Merry, just in case Frodo and Sam suddenly would show up. We have to have some assurance in this.

Boromir If anything happens I will blow my horn.

Aragorn Do that. We depart. (*Legolas, Gimli and Aragorn depart.*)

Pippin What really happened, Boromir, when you were alone with Frodo?

Boromir Did you keep watch on me?

Merry We are not as stupid as you think.

Pippin We saw you stealing back to Frodo and checking that no one saw you.

Merry But we saw you, and we saw you had an argument.

Pippin What happened?

Boromir You must believe me, my little friends. Nothing happened except that our argument led to that Frodo suddenly pleased to disappear.

Merry We saw your chasing him.

Pippin But we were too far away! We didn't arrive in time!

Merry Aragorn also suspected something and came before us.

Pippin We decided not to say anything until you had first explained yourself.

Merry Did you try to take the ring? Did you break the fellowship?

(*Suddenly there are roaring orcs everywhere around them attacking them.*)

Boromir Orcs! Take cover! Run away, hobbits! I can beat them!

orc 1 Take the small ones! It's them he wants!

(The orcs capture Pippin and Merry while Boromir fights their overwhelming supremacy. They wound him mortally, twenty to one, and disappear with Pippin and Merry but many orcs, about twenty, remain dead.)

Boromir (dying) That's what I got for my mistake. Frodo and Gandalf, I can't say how sorry I am. I have let you down. *(blows his horn with his last strength.)*

(Aragorn arrives presently, followed by Legolas and Gimli.)

Aragorn Boromir!

Legolas Orcs!

Boromir They took Pippin and Merry. It was my fault. I have let you all down.

Aragorn No, Boromir!

Gimli It is all too obvious, Boromir, that you defended their lives with your own.

Boromir I failed them, Aragorn.

Legolas These orcs are no ordinary orcs. They are of the size of men and come neither from the north nor from Mordor.

Gimli Saruman!

Legolas You said it. Gandalf was right in his worst apprehensions. These great powerful orcs is what we have to expect of Saruman's evil army.

Boromir They said, it was the little ones he wanted, Aragorn. Gimli and Legolas are right. They came from Saruman.

Legolas The mightiest magician of the free world has become an instrument for the prince of evil.

Boromir (lower) I am sorry, Aragorn. It is all my fault. I tried to take the ring from Frodo.

Aragorn (lower, seriously) That explains it.

Boromir I am truly sorry. *(dies)*

Aragorn Boromir! Boromir!

Legolas He is dead.

Aragorn Did you find anything by the shore?

Legolas One boat is gone and two backpacks: Frodo's and Sam's.

Gimli The case is clear.

Aragorn Then the only thing we can do is to bury Boromir.

Gimli The orcs will dig him up and eat him.

Legolas We should bring him along to Minas Tirith.

Gimli How?

Aragorn We have only one choice. Let us send him down the river in one of the boats. Perhaps it will come through the Rauros falls and reach Osgiliath, where the Gondor people in that case will have to take care of him. Or else he will continue out to the sea and be taken care of by the waves there.

Legolas A beautiful funeral.

Aragorn That's the best thing we can do for him.

Gimli That the fellowship should end like this!

Aragorn We are still together, and we have Pippin and Merry to save. The orcs travel fast, but we could be faster still, for Rohan has horses which orcs cannot ride.

Gimli What are we waiting for?

Legolas Boromir first, Gimli. Nothing is more important at the moment than to do what we can for hopefully the first and last casualty among the fellowship of the ring.

Gimli What do you think about Gandalf then?

Aragorn Gandalf always returns.

Legolas Aragorn is right. Gandalf has always returned.

Aragorn Something tells me we have no right to accept that he is dead.

Gimli I hope you will be right.

Aragorn The Boromir case is different, though.

Legolas So let us do our work and then get going.

(They start preparing for Boromir's departure.)

Act III scene 1. Lothloria.

Gandalf (wakes up on a bed in an enlightened room) Where am I?

Galadriel (appears) You are at home, Gandalf. You have come right.

Gandalf Is it true? Paradise yet again? After all I went through, the lost paradise yet another time, the last remnant of the good old golden world. So am I really in Lothloria? I am not just dreaming?

Galadriel You have passed through the hardest struggle which ever a mortal survived, but it was necessary, for Saruman is fallen, and only you can replace him.

Gandalf (watches himself in a mirror) My hair is all white.

Galadriel Yes, you are white now. You are no longer Gandalf Grey.

Gandalf I recall the long horrific struggle with the balrog. We went down into an underground lake, where his flames went out but he instead turned into a slimy monster, but I didn't let him go, until he had had enough. Still I didn't let him go. I pursued him all the way back to the chamber of fire, where he became aflame again, but still I continued persecuting him higher up, until we reached the highest watch tower of the dwarfs, where I finally threw him down alone. Then I was unconscious from the exertion until the lord of winds Gwaihir found me and recalled me to life.

Galadriel It was I who sent him. I knew you were around.

Gandalf And he brought me here.

Galadriel You are restored, Gandalf. We have tended you well, and you have no further needs. You are ready now for an even harder struggle than the one you in spite of all survived.

Gandalf But I am completely at a loss. What happened to the fellowship of the ring?

Galadriel They passed through here, and we did what we could for them. I am afraid a lot has happened to them since then.

Gandalf I fear the worst.

Galadriel It's time for you to equip yourself, Gandalf. (*claps her hands. Enter elves bringing Gandalf's new clothes in shining white.*)

Gandalf You have thought of everything then, Galadriel. Am I then really to become white?

Galadriel Yes, as white as Sauron and his nine ringsmiths are black, and as pure as Sauron is corrupt.

Gandalf And you believe me worthy of this responsibility?

Galadriel We have unanimously found you worthy enough. We of the elfen world can not take part in the mortal world, but we can take decisions that could affect it. Our decision this time was unanimous.

Gandalf You fill me with new courage and powers.

Galadriel That's intentional. Your friends are waiting for you. They need your help, for king Theoden of Rohan is in danger.

Gandalf And the ring?

Galadriel It follows its own course and is carried to its destruction in Mordor, but a lot of things must first be directed correctly before everything is fulfilled.

Gandalf I find it my greatest honour and joy, Galadriel, to be a pawn in the game of the elves of caring for the mortals.

Galadriel But you have to think and manage by yourself. We can only show you an introductory direction.

Gandalf And I intend to stick to that course, Galadriel. Just send me off. I am ready.

Galadriel We didn't expect anything else, faithful Gandalf.

Scene 2.

Legolas We can't follow their tracks any longer. They have entered the Fangorn.

Gimli No one enters the Fangorn forest unpunished. We dwarfs know that.

Legolas You learned too late not to cut down too many trees.

Gimli We didn't know better then!

Legolas It cost you all the eternal enmity of all elves.

Aragorn Don't argue now, brothers. We have two hobbits to track down and save. We have to confer.

Gimli At least they have managed.

Aragorn Yes, as far as this.

Legolas I don't think we need to worry. The orcs took them, the riders of Rohan took the orcs, the hobbits escaped and managed to get as far as into this forest. And you can't guess what secret helpers can be found in a forest.

Aragorn Like that one, for example? (*indicates a bent figure in a gray cloak with a long staff, whose face is concealed by the cloak but who obviously observes them.*)

Gimli It's the same weirdo we saw yesterday. It must be Saruman.

Legolas (rises at once and stretches his bow) Speak, stranger, or we will force you to!

Aragorn (pulls his sword) Explain yourself, Saruman!

Gimli (raises his axe) By the head of Balin, you had better save your head by speaking!

stranger You must be coming from Lothloria. What have you done to your hobbits?

Aragorn What do you know about our hobbits?

Stranger I only know that the whole world is chasing them and that you have lost them.

Aragorn And is it certain that you haven't taken them yourself, Saruman?

Stranger You must be the Strider. Anyone can see who you are. You still walk around in elven clothing, but only one of you are of the elven tribe. You should be nine. What have you done with the other six?

Aragorn (to the others) He knows everything about us. It must be Saruman.

Stranger You haven't taken the ring from Frodo and killed him, I hope?

Aragorn What do you know about the ring?

Stranger The same as everyone else: that everyone wants it, but only one can have it.

Legolas You speak with a cloven tongue, wanderer. But I don't think you are Saruman, for then we would have detected some evil in you.

Gimli How do you know that weirdo isn't evil?

Aragorn Who are you, if you are not Saruman?

Stranger Let me first guess who you might be. But where is Boromir?

Aragorn (alarmed) What do you know about Boromir?

Stranger Only that he should be among you. Have you lost him too? The king of Gondor will ask questions, for Boromir was his eldest son.

Aragorn (rises) Lower your bow, Legolas. Alas, stranger, Boromir was murdered by the orcs, and we have buried him as well as we could out of reach of the orcs, who are everywhere and who could surprise us any moment. We sent the dead Boromir in a boat down the falls of Rauros.

Stranger I am sorry. Then you have only the absence of the hobbits to explain.

Aragorn Yet again, what do you know, who is a total stranger to that part of the world, about hobbits?

Stranger (calmer) Take it easy, wise men. I think you know me. You must at least have heard my name some time. I know everything about hobbits, at least two of them. They are in safe hands. They found their refuge here in the safe shadows of Fangorn, and they are out of all harm. But what about the other two?

Gimli I don't trust him. (*increases his vigilance with his axe*)

Stranger Lay down your axe, bold dwarf. You don't need it against me.
(*opens his cloak and shows his shining white clothing*)

Aragorn Saruman! (*raises his sword again. Legolas immediately lifts his bow again.*)

Stranger Have another guess. (*drops his hood*)

all three (stunned with astonishment) Gandalf!!!

Aragorn (collects himself) Gandalf! You are back!

Gandalf I was never lost. Now tell me about Frodo and Sam.

Aragorn We have a sad story to tell. It happened in connection with Boromir's death. Frodo left us to carry the ring alone to Mordor, and Sam followed him.

Gandalf That pleases me.

Legolas I never thought you were lost, Gandalf.

Gimli I apologise, but a dwarf is always on the alert.

Gandalf Let's hear it now. Go on, Aragorn.

Aragorn The orcs who killed Boromir abducted Pippin and Merry alive. The orcs were attacked by the riders of Rohan, who destroyed them to their last man, but Pippin and Merry had succeeded in escaping before then. We followed their traces here. What more do you know about them?

Gandalf They ran into Treebeard, who took care of them.

Aragorn Who and what is Treebeard?

Legolas The oldest among the ents. Then they are in good hands indeed.

Aragorn The ents?

Legolas A tribe of the trees, almost as ancient as the elves. The elves were the first to arrive in this world, the ents arrived partly by their ordination, then came the dwarfs, and last came man.

Aragorn What does a tribe of the trees?

Legolas Their prime task is to cherish all trees, cultivate forests and protect them, for the world cannot be kept green and productive without them.

Gandalf It's a soft and slow tribe that all the same could be activated to overwhelmingly powerful actions, wherefore about the most stupid thing you could do is to make them your enemies.

Legolas You dwarfs did that by your deforestation.

Gimli We didn't know any better then. We were just working.

Gandalf Saruman has made them his enemies and even worse enemies than you dwarfs ever did, and that will be his eventual downfall, but he isn't aware of it yet.

Legolas What will the ents do about Saruman?

Gandalf You shall see, Legolas. He has dug his own grave. He thought he could acquire the ring alone instead of Sauron, wherefore he allowed his orcs to kidnap two innocent hobbits, but they were the wrong hobbits, he will only get hard cheese, and his orcs will perish with him. We can do nothing to save him. We can still save king Theoden of Rohan, though, who is in danger.

Aragorn In what way?

Gandalf You will see. It's time for us to move on.

Gimli We will not get far without horses.

Gandalf Don't you think I thought of that, Gimli? Aren't we here in the promised land of the horses? Do I not have Shadowfax himself ready for you with three others? Wouldn't I assist you, now when I am back?

Aragorn (bends his knees to him) Welcome back, Gandalf. Lead our way. We will follow you like we followed Frodo.

Gandalf You lost him. Me you may lose more than once.

Aragorn Never voluntarily.
Gandalf Come along then, my friends. We have plenty of work to do.

Pause.

Scene 3. King Theoden's room of state in Edoras.

Theoden My son, my poor fallen son, how could I possibly go on living when you, the future and light of Rohan, has passed away, lost with all life's meaning! How could I be anything more than a pessimist, fatalistic and defeatistic with all my country any more! Not even you, Eowyn, my niece, the blinding beauty of all Rohan, its pride and most brilliant flower, is reason enough for me to go on living.

Eowyn My father, as the head of our country your licence has no limitations but for one thing: to commit the supreme treason of cowardly giving up.

Theoden We still have one backbone to fall back on, our last great moral support, the reliable Saruman, the highest developed magician in the world, but he is long since he was here now.

Wormtongue He has sent his warmest condolences.

Theoden Do you think they will help? My friend, we are bleeding to death! Is Saruman completely unaware of this? We are butchered by orcs who come from nowhere, the land of darkness are stealing our horses, the deadly Sauron grows constantly a greater threat by the uploading of his armies, Gondor is worried and searching for help, and now the news of Boromir, slaughtered by orcs! Two crown princes gone down at the same time for both Rohan and Gondor! We have never before seen such dark prospects! And from where do these abominable hosts of new well grown orcs come, who never before could stand any daylight? These new monsters have turned into a world menace and plague! Where do they come from? They seem to turn up from anywhere, from west and east and north and from the mountains in devastating and meaningless raids of paralyzing destruction! Their only purpose seems to be the spread of terror and horror!

Wormtongue No one knows where they come from.

Theoden And how can we defend ourselves against such an utterly inexplicable and invisible enemy? We are all exposed without any defence!

Eowyn Your riders will never fail you, my king, and they will fight back.

Theoden But without waiting for any order! We can't have irresponsible reckless initiatives that question the leadership of the king and state!

Wormtongue And that's why Sir Eomer has been taken into custody.

Eowyn Have you arrested my brother Sir Eomer, the defender of Rohan?

Theoden We had no choice. It was plain insubordination.

Eowyn There is something here I cannot understand.

Theoden There is much going on here that no one understands, dear Eowyn.

Hama (enters) Most honoured king, we have a visitor.

Theoden Who then pleases to disturb me in my national grief?

Hama My lord, I fear it is the least desirable of all trouble-makers: it is Gandalf the magician.

Theoden That was the last thing we wanted. How dares that villain show himself here?

Hama He has come in the company of Aragorn, Isildur's son, and a dwarf and an elf.

Theoden Have you disarmed them?

Wormtongue Don't let them enter!

Theoden If they come unarmed it's all in order, and protocol cannot forbid their entry.

Wormtongue I warn you, my king: they are only here to make trouble.

Theoden Could we get more trouble than we have already, Grima Wormtongue, on every front? Bring on the damned stormcrow and his bandits! It can't get any worse in the country and the world than it is already anyway.

Wormstongue Don't be too sure.
(*Gandalf, Legolas, Aragorn and Gimli are shown in.*)

Theoden You are not welcome, thief.

Gandalf You got your horse back.

Theoden Yes, but then he refused to have anyone more in the saddle. What's the pleasure of having the fastest and most brilliant horse of Rohan if he refuses to have any one riding him any more but that stormcrow Gandalf?

Wormtrongue You are coming disturbing the king in his grief for his only son, who fell in battle last week.

Gandalf I heard about this and come in the first place with regrets to join you and the country in the sincere sorrow of the entire world. This double loss of first the heir of Gondor Boromir and then prince Theodred of Rohan is irreplaceable and catastrophic to our world.

Theoden You have delivered your condolences. You may leave.

Gandalf Not so fast, king Theoden. Hear my news first.

Theoden Your news are not welcome, for they were always bad.

Wormtongue Throw them out. They disturb the king in his inconsolable grief.

Gandalf Hold it for a moment! Do your guards draw swords and lances against completely peaceful messengers, king Theoden? Has your proxy Wormtongue been given such authority?

Theoden Withdraw your weapons! No swords shall be drawn here against visitors who have come without arms! (*tired*) Let Gandalf speak and deliver his bad news and then leave.

Gandalf I have heard that you have imprisoned the first defender of all Rohan, your nephew Eomer.

Theoden He rode to battle without given orders.

Gandalf He butchered orcs. Since when has it been a crime to defend his country against its cruellest attackers?

Theoden What is this? You said, my servant Wormtongue, that Sir Eomer conspired to raise a rebellion.

Wormtongue That's what I was told.

Gandalf These orcs were sent out from the west by your ally Saruman to abduct a company of small innocent hobbits.

Theoden Has Saruman anything to do with orcs?

Gandalf I advise you, Theoden to question Grima Wormtongue on this issue.

Theoden What do you know about this, my chancellor?

Wormtongue This must be some kind of a misunderstanding. Gandalf only tries to poison your brain, my king.

Gandalf By telling the truth, Wormtongue? What have you yourself been poisoning the king with all this time? Lies and drugs and poisons?

Theoden Is Saruman in league with our enemy Mordor?

Gandalf We know that he is and that he himself is gathering an army of a new kind of orcs, more erect, hardy and enduring and who can stand sunlight and even can ride.

Theoden Then they are coming from there. Has then our best friend Saruman prepared a dagger attack straight in our back? Do you know anything about this, Grima Wormtongue?

Wormtongue Nothing.

Eowyn No, he knows everything.

Wormtongue You know nothing, Eowyn. You just keep quiet.

Eowyn No, Grima, it's time for me at last to let it out. I have endured your advances and insolent efforts at extortion all too long. I have kept quiet, for I first wanted to see how far you would go. You are Saruman's henchman, and you always were. And when my brother Eomer, the most qualified defender of Rohan, attacked the traitor Saruman's orcs, you by the command of Saruman made sure that he was placed in custody for having done his duty.

Theoden Is it true, Grima Wormtongue?

Gandalf Look at that worm. He lowers his glance and says nothing. I can answer for him. Yes, my king, all this is true. Your friend Saruman has long since been planning the destruction of your country Rohan in collusion with Sauron himself. The key to world dominance is in Rohan because of its strategic position. With Rohan vanquished it would then be easy to conquer Gondor and all Eriador.

Theoden Grima, do you have anything to say for your defence?

Eowyn Everyone accuses him. No one can defend him. We have all followed his calculations, insidious manoeuvres and subversion of the state. And finally, my king, he was always bribed by Saruman to fill your ear and mind with venomous sedition and corrupting drugs and rumours.

Theoden What is your advice, honest Gandalf?

Gandalf Liberate your nephew at once. Restore his high command of all the forces of the realm. He knows the right thing to do and is your foremost strategist.

Theoden And what should we do then with the worm here, who obviously all the time deliberately has deceived us?

Gandalf He is not dangerous any more. His teeth have been removed. If he so wishes, let him go to war with Eomer, or let him be exiled as far away as possible.

Theoden What is your choice, Grima?

Eowyn He has also enriched himself at the cost of the state, and everything that has vanished of national revenues is well kept in his possession.

Theoden You are hardly wanted here any more, my Wormtongue. Go home to Saruman, if he wants you.

Wormtongue I have nothing more to say. (*spits and leaves*)

Gandalf I believe, king Theoden, that we now have managed to straighten up the helm of the country.

Theoden I misjudged you, old Gandalf. I regarded you as a trouble-maker, stormcrow and incorrigible disturber of peace, but your enforced opening of our eyes was well needed. I can see that clearly now. You are all my most welcome guests. Tonight we shall feast and draw up some vital plans, and Eomer shall join us.

Eowyn (turning to Aragorn) We have been expecting you for a long time.

Aragorn Princess, we are happy to find that we did not arrive too late.

Theoden I will ride out myself in the war side by side with my nephew. My Eowyn will remain in charge of ruling the entire kingdom in the meantime. And if we are lucky, not only Eomer and I but all the leading riders of Rohan will be back encouraged and intact with the enemy thoroughly beaten. And then we shall celebrate.

Gandalf We still have far to go.

Theoden How far and how long it takes will make no difference, Gandalf, as long as we prevail.

(offers his hand to Gandalf, who accepts it.)

Eowyn smiles to Aragorn, who blushes modestly.)

Scene 4. Isengard.

A high impressive tower chamber with a balcony and view.

Saruman At last then the world is lying at my feet! Everything works, and the flood follows our staked out groove in its vital cleansing of the world. Sauron is my instrument, and he cannot guess what kind of a double play I wage behind his back. Soon Rohan will be a finished chapter, destroyed and extirpated with all its ridiculous chivalry fancies, and we take over. Sauron, our collaboration has worked out well and will continue to grind the world to dust for our feet, until the moment of truth arrives when I will be able to scuttle you and turn you over to your own vultures, monsters and freaks! – Yes, what is it?

A servant Grima Wormtongue is here.

Saruman Grima Wormtongue? What is he doing here?

Servant He is here.

Saruman Then he carries news of the utmost importance. Show him in.
(enter Wormtongue, nervous and distraught)
Grima Wormtongue, what are you doing here?

Wormtongue Master, Gandalf is back.

Saruman Yes, it was unavoidable. I should have kept better watch over him and made his escape impossible. Of course he has to go on making trouble and creating havoc everywhere. What is that stormcrow up to now?

Wormtongue He knows about your alliance with Mordor and has warned king Theoden, who has liberated Eomer and reinstated him as the first knight.

Saruman What are you saying, scarecrow?

Wormtongue I have come to warn you.

Saruman Against what, you miserable raven?

Wormtongue Things are not quite working out according to plans.

Saruman They have to work out according to plans! Our plan is infallible! Nothing can go wrong!

Wormtongue King Theoden knows now that the orcs from the west have been sent out by you.

Saruman My human orcs, a hybrid of orcs and men, as cruel and ruthless and soulless as the orcs and as powerful and capable as men, my most wonderful creation! It's not good that Theoden at last has woken up. He was peacefully sinking down into the sleep of his welcome ruin.

Wormtongue He knows you instigated the murder of his son.

Saruman A necessary operation to remove an obstacle in the way. Is it Gandalf who has given him all this information?

Wormtongue Eowyn betrayed me.

Saruman You should have left her alone, you incorrigible goat! I warned you! That link was your weakness!

Wormtongue I could have had all Rohan in my hands by her.

Saruman You were mistaken, you fool! What more bad news do you bring?

Wormtongue All the riders of Rohan have been gathered for the defence of Gorge Helm.

Saruman So they can defend Gorge Helm. So what?

Wormtongue If they reject the attack of the orcs, they could then attack Isengard.

Saruman They can never manage an attack by my human orcs! They are too monstrous! They are invincible! They are the crown of creation! They are my masterpiece! They could lay siege to even Barad-Dûr!

Wormtongue You never know what tricks Gandalf could be up to.

Saruman That stormcrow! He will soon have flapped around for the last time! But what kind of a strange noise is it I hear?
(Great rumbles outside, like of water cascades.)

Who on earth have broken the dams? (*goes out on the balcony*)

What is this? The entire forest is moving about against my fortifications with all the mountain dams busted! What have you done, you miserable Wormtongue?

Wormtongue (joins him on the balcony, terrified) I feared something like this. It's the ents.

Saruman You failure of a gutter reptile, what have you now been up to? What have you told the ents?

Wormtongue (more and more frightened) Nothing, master.

Saruman Has Gandalf stirred them?

Wormtongue Not that I know of. But you did not count with them in your plans. They may have become angry for your deforestation of the south Fangorn.

Saruman You accursed plague bug, you have ruined everything! And I trusted you! You have failed in everything I commissioned you to do! Get out of here! (*throws him down from the balcony*)

Wormtongue (screaming, falling) Master!

Saruman The ents! I forgot all about them! Of course! I should have counted with them! I should never have risked making them my enemies!. Here is now another deluge coming down from the mountains drowning all my life's work, everything I lived for, my mines and industries and the breeding ground of the orcs! Everything is drowned and put out in the released waters of the mountain dams, blown up by the full power of the furious and righteous wrath of the ents! What a fool I was! How could I forget them! And what will Sauron say? I couldn't catch any hobbits, and now my entire army is going down the drain. Probably the army of Gandalf at the Gorge Helm has also now annihilated all the ten thousand orcs. What do I have left? Nothing! Only my own towering vanity!

(Suddenly the door opens, and enter Gandalf, Theoden and Aragorn with Pippin and Merry.)

Gandalf It is all over, Saruman. You are lost.

Saruman Not quite. I will never leave Isengard.

Theoden Saruman, you have been working on the destruction of your own realm for years. Now at last you are exposed and vanquished. I forgive you everything if you work with us in the continued struggle against Mordor.

Saruman Would I work with you, demented war-mad perpetrators of outrage? Am I not one of the highest wizards of wisdom of the world, elevated above all mundane intrigues? Leave me alone!

Aragorn Saruman, no one has intrigued as much as you together with Sauron against all the rest of the world. You are just play-acting.

Saruman I give you the damn, you bugs of shit! Get lost from here, and take that miserablke stormcrow with you! He is the one who has caused all the havoc of this world!

Gandalf Saruman, you are no longer the first among magicians. You are no longer white. You have yourself caused your own downfall. We can't do anything for you unless you cooperate.

Saruman What have I to do with this world? I swear myself free from all responsibility for all your wars and atrocities! Leave my tower at once!

Theoden There is nothing we can do. Let's leave him here isolated in his tower of loneliness forever. He has no power or influence left. He wanted it like this himself. We leave him to the mercy of the ents.

Gandalf They are not likely to ever let him out of the prison he chose for himself.

Aragorn Good night, Saruman, even if you'll probably never sleep well again.

Pippin It wasn't Gandalf, you wicked warlock! We were the ones who succeeded in turning the ents against you!

Merry You should never have tried to abduct us!

Pippin Your orcs are a failure, Saruman! They are all stupid oafs!

Aragorn Come now, Pippin and Merry. In view of how much you have done for us already, you will also be of invaluable help for us in the future.

(They leave. Pippin cocks a snook at Saruman before they are gone.)

Saruman Some halflings! Some hobbits caused my downfall! Some innocent, harmless, infantile hobbits! That's what was needed to stir up the ents! Alas, these hobbits! In their inanity they have turned the entire world into chaos! I stand naked before Sauron, and he will never forgive me! Could it be worse? Yes, it can always be worse. I face my downhill and only stand at the beginning of it, and my fall will be long and gruesome. *(walks resignedly out on the balcony)*

My ents, that I could forget you!

Act IV scene 1. A desolate camp in the wilderness.

Frodo and Sam lie sleeping by a smouldering camp fire.

Gollum appears, wobbling, crawling on all fours.

Gollum Now they are asleep, the conceited wretches! Shall I take the opportunity now and strangle them in their sleep? The problem is that there are two of them. I have to take one at a time. Bide your time, Gollum! So far you had patience! Take no risks! It is yours! That's the only important thing! You must not let go of your right! Therefore I will not let you out of my sight, you conceited creatures and drivelling dogs, until I have my treasure! So far you have managed, and you will manage even longer, and the more you trust Gollum, the better! I am your only guide! I am the only one who knows the way! Without me you are lost, and you know it! So bide your time, Gollum, and the treasure will naturally fall into your hands, which that traitor and hypocrite Bilbo Baggins stole from you many decades ago! It is yours! You took it by force, and you killed to get it! You can kill again and will kill again as long as it becomes yours! That you would turn up at the swamps of Moria, you cursed toads, and at last give hope back to Gollum! There you lie sweetly sleeping, you miserable pig, with the treasure condealed around your neck! How fain would I not strangle you immediately to get it, like I strangled that miser Deagol! But Smeagol is more clever and rests his case of strangulation until he is

certain of his case, but then! The treasure will be yours at last again, Smeagol, if you just await the right moment with patience, which has to come...

Sam (has woken up) What are you doing with Frodo, Gollum?

Gollum Nothing, dear friend, nothing.

Sam (activated, immediately awakes Frodo) Wake up, Frodo! Gollum is pawing you again!

Gollum I haven't touched him!

Sam It will be the noose again, Gollum! We will have you on a leash!

Gollum (beside himself) No, no, no that! Anything but that!

Frodo Don't torture him, Sam.

Sam He lurked around as if he was going to strangle you! He almost had his long slimy fingers around your neck!

Gollum Gollum is innocent! Gollum is innocent! The cruel bastard is lying! Samwise just keeps on torturing me!

Sam I can't trust him, Frodo. We should get rid of him.

Frodo We need him, Sam. We couldn't pass through the black gate of Mordor. There is only one other way, and only he knows about it.

Sam We have to leash him and keep closer watch on him.

Gollum (heartrending) No, no, not that!

Frodo Let him be, Sam. Don't make him worse than he is. It's difficult enough for us as it is.

Gollum (suddenly alert) I smell human beings.

(Suddenly their camp is surrounded by armed warriors. Gollum disappears as fast as an eel.)

Faramir Halt! Who are you? Speak, or die!

Sam (terrified) Who are you?

Faramir You are surrounded! We have orders to kill anyone moving around in the country who doesn't belong to Gondor! Password!

Frodo We are just hobbits from the Shire in Eriador.

Faramir (astounded) What are such midgets doing here?

Frodo (more and more collected) We are here on a mission by Gandalf Grey.

Faramir Do you know him? Come up, Damrod and Mablung. They are only children.

Frodo But who are you?

Faramir Faramir of Gondor. Explain your Gandalf connection.

Sam There were nine of us. Gandalf himself was lost in the caves of Moria. Two of us were men like you, Boromir of Gondor and Aragorn the Strider.

Faramir Did you know Boromir?

Sam If we did!

Faramir (carefully) What do you know about him?

Frodo (observes that Sam is hesitating) He was the most brilliant knight of the fellowship of the ring together with Aragorn and Legolas, the elf and the dwarf Gimli son of Gloin and...

Faramir The fellowship of the ring?

Frodo Yes, that was founded at Elrond's in Rivendell.

Faramir (to his followers) We have happened to run into the most remarkable fellows of Ithilia.

(to Frodo and Sam) Tell me more about Boromir. I have to be certain that you are not lying. Mention something special about him.

Sam He had a horn, which sounded wide and far when he blew it.

Frodo I hope everything is well with him.

Faramir Why did you separate from him?

Frodo (sees Sam's hesitation) The fellowship was dissolved. We had to find our own way after having lost Gandalf.

Faramir That Gandalf would be lost is really most devastating bad news. How are the others?

Sam Well, as far as we know.

Faramir No, they are not. Boromir is dead.

Frodo (appalled by surprise) What are you saying?

Faramir Your surprise convinces me more than anything else of your sincerity. I tell you that Boromir is dead.

Sam How do you know this?

Faramir An abandoned boat came drifting down the Anduin. When we towed it to the shore there was nothing in it but the body of Boromir with obvious signs that he had been killed by orcs.

Sam What happened then to the others?

Faramir Nobody knows. You mentioned nine. Gandalf, Boromir, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, you two, who else?

Sam Two others like us, Pippin and Merry.

Faramir We must search for them all. Now tell me about your mission. Where are you going?

Frodo You must let us go. We are on our way to Mordor to destroy the lord of the rings in the flaming crater of Mount Doom-

Faramir Two tiny hobbits like you? My men saw a third party in your company. Here he is.

(Two warriors bring in the captured and heartrendingly whining Gollum.)

A funny monster in your company. Who is he?

Frodo Gollum, our guide. Only he can show us the way.

Faramir Two children and a pathetic creep. How could you even pass the Minas Morgul?

Frodo Gollum knows another way. Don't hurt him. That will only make him worse.

Faramir (signs to his men to loose the ties of Gollum) But you are all three our prisoners. We should bring you along to Minas Tirith.

Frodo You could then regret sabotaging our mission.

Damrod It doesn't seem probable that Gandalf would have gone down. He always returns. If these are on a mission by him we should let them go.

Faramir Gandalf's word gives you freedom. But what should we do with this creature?

Frodo We take responsibility for him.

Faramir Of all creatures in the world, he would be the last one I would trust. Which way do you intend to follow?

Frodo Kirith Ungol.

(The men look at each other.)

Mablung No one has come through that way alive.

Faramir Its reputation is that it is the most difficult of all roads.

Frodo I am afraid we have no choice.

Faramir At least you are not lacking in courage and determination. You are braver than most men. In Rohan and Gondor most men find their courage failing after the deaths of Boromir and Eoden, the heirs of both realms, who were lost almost simultaneously. Both the kings of Rohan and Gondor are broken down by sorrow.

Damrod We have almost given up. It's almost only Faramir here and Eomer of Rohan who still are defying the orcs, but Eomer has now been imprisoned for treason. Only Gondor still has resistance enough.

Faramir If you really are the bearer of the lord of rings, we should bring it with us to Gondor for safe custody.

Frodo That exactly was Boromir's argument, and now he is dead.

Faramir Do you mean there is a connection?

Frodo There *could* be a connection. The ring must get to Mordor.

Faramir (gets the right perspective) Two children and a freak. Yes, such as you could actually trick your way into Mordor without being caught. No one else could do it. We have to trust Gandalf, for we have no one else to trust. I never trusted Saruman. They say in Gondor that he made an alliance with Sauron.

Sam It is true!

Faramir So we have no one else than Gandalf. We have to stake all our bets on this one card, and he has staked it on you. You may go. I will send food and supplies with you, so that you won't have to thirst or starve to death on the way. The thirst is particularly difficult in Mordor, for almost all waters there are bitter or poisonous. But you have to come back alive, or else...!

Frodo I sincerely hope you will find Aragorn and the others.

Faramir Something tells me we will meet them with my father at Minas Tirith.

Frodo You are like Boromir. Your father isn't the king, by any chance?

Faramir Yes, my small friend, Boromir was my brother.

Frodo Then we are truly very sorry.

Faramir But if he really committed a mistake, I will not commit the same one. Go quickly now, before I change my mind.

Sam What about the supplies?

Faramir They are all ready. You may take what we have. We have to return to Minas Tirith anyway and search for your friends.

Sam Give them our greetings, if you meet them.

Faramir Of course. Happy journey now, my children, and arrive safely. We'll see you later.

Frodo It sounds like a prophetic promise.

Faramir I hope it is.

Frodo Come, Sam. Come on, Gollum. (*They depart.*)

Faramir A strange company, probably the strangest in the world.

Damrod Do they have any chance?

Faramir If they don't have any chance, the world has no chance.

Scene 2. Barad-Dûr.

Sauron Saruman has failed me. I can't reach any contact with him any more.

(*enter Bel-Phegor.*)

So, there you are. Any news?

Bel-Phegor Saruman has fallen. All his army of orcs is annihilated. Gandalf himself brought him down.

Sauron Details?

Bel-Phegor He suffered a crushing defeat and was beaten back at Gorge Helm. Then almost all Isengard was destroyed by furious ents.

Sauron Ents?

Bel-Phegor Yes. Saruman had forgotten about their existence.

Sauron It's the first time for centuries they make any appearance. Does that mean the king of Rohan can make war again and that Gandalf has returned?

Bel-Phegor Gandalf is now the white magician of the elves instead of Saruman.

Sauron The elves, always the elves. Unreachable and ethereal, invisible and non-existent except to those they like. We can never reach the elves except by ruining their country, and that is fragmentary. So we have lost Saruman. Well, no one could trust him anyway at length. He failed, and we release him. What do my spies have to say?

Bel-Phegor The fellowship of the ring is probably dissolved after Boromir's death. The two hobbits that Saruman's orcs managed to catch, were the wrong hobbits. All the others are on their way to Minas Tirith, except two hobbits.

Sauron The ring-bearer and his aid?

Bel-Phegor Probably.

Sauron What do we know about Gollum?

Bel-Phegor He is on his way here.

Sauron As a guide for the hobbits?

Bel-Phegor Could be.

Sauron Reinforce all guards at all entrances to Mordor from the north to the west. Highest alert. If we get the hobbits all is clear. Meanwhile we shall attack Minas Tirith. We haven't broken Rohan, but we could break Gondor in battle. Our Nazgul is ready for fight.

Bel-Phegor Yes.

Sauron You shall have the supreme command, Bel-Phegor. Gather the forces and smash Minas Tirith to pieces.

Bel-Phegor That's the only word we have been waiting for. (*leaves*)

Sauron The ring on its way home to Mordor, and all our battle forces are ready for war. It's time to release wrath and destruction over the world. No one can stop us as long as the ring lives, and it is within reach! At last, Gandalf, you have won another round, but the last one remains! And the world hasn't seen my ultimate weapon yet: I shall darken the sun and abolish the day, so that the power of darkness may overwhelm the world without any resistance and take possession of it all without any light in the world being able to do anything about it! Darkness will conquer and prevail by its own all-paralyzing, terrifying and smothering all-powerful essence!

Scene 3. Minas Tirith.

Denethor So they come, when everything is too late? Well, let them come. They can do nothing anyway. Everything is lost and is only getting more lost. The only remaining hope is Faramir, my last son. If he fails me there is only one thing left for me to do.

herald (announcing) Gandalf with followers!

(*enter Gandalf with Pippin.*)

Denethor Is that all? Are you coming alone, Gandalf? Where are your friends? Have you lost them each and everyone? Then your news is even worse than usual.

Gandalf Control yourself, Denethor, regent of Gondor. Only because I come first of all I am not alone.

Denethor No, I can see that you are bringing along a dwarf.

Gandalf No, it is Pippin the small one, a hobbit.

Denethor Do you present him to me as a gift, like another clown?

Gandalf I had hoped to meet your son Faramir here.

Denethor He is gone for a raid to Ithilia but is expected back any time.

Gandalf And I am tired of all the prejudice of Gondor and Rohan against me. Just because I bring relevant warnings and important information I am not exactly enjoying being a bringer of bad news.

Denethor But you always bring bad news.

Gandalf Not this time. Saruman is lost, he has been revealed as that dagger in the back of Rohan and Gondor he has been, and his entire army has been crushed at Gorge Helm.

Denethor Don't you think I know? Your news is old. And what good is it against Sauron and the threat of Mordor?

Gandalf Rohan is liberated from its enemies in the north and west and is therefore free to turn its entire force against the south.

Denethor And where are the riders of Rohan then? Why aren't they here?

Gandalf Give them time, Denethor. They come directly from the battle and have to get time to recuperate first.

Denethor Then they are arriving too late. Haven't you seen what is happening in the east?

Gandalf (watches out to the east) Yes, he has started moving, but he has much larger forces than we, who therefore move the more slowly.

Denethor Don't you see the darkness?

Pippin What's that darkness slowly approaching us? Is it an eruption of the Mount Doom?

Gandalf No, Pippin, it is Sauron's masquerade. He believes himself to be able to defeat us with greater efficiency if he may wage war in darkness, where only his orcs can see and no one else. But I see something more.

Pippin Five riders on their way to Minas Tirith!

Denethor (eager) At last! Faramir has made it!

Gandalf And with margins. What more do you know, Denethor, who has been schooled in the magic arts? Did you know that Grima Wormtongue was Saruman's creature who poisoned Rohan and the entire house of king Theoden?

Denethor I warned king Theoden against his Wormtongue, but Wormtongue was too powerful. I could do nothing. If my son Boromir hadn't fallen I would have intervened by force and demanded Wormtongue to be put on trial. Is he alive?

Gandalf Saruman himself had him disposed of.

Denethor No loss. *(firm steps outside)* But now I hear the arrival of my last living son. *(stretches out his arms towards Faramir as he enters with his following.)*

Welcome back, my beloved son! You arrived home in time before dark!

Faramir Sauron is sending armies here from both Minas Morgul and the black gates of Morannon. They will reach here at the same time as the darkness which he has released from Mordor. *(observes Pippin)* But who is this? You are not the first hobbit I have seen. You must belong with Sam and Frodo.

Gandalf Have you seen them?

Faramir We met them in Ithilia. I couldn't keep them from going on their own towards Kirith Ungol.

Gandalf (benumbed) Kirith Ungol!

Denethor How could you let them go?

Faramir How could I stop them?

Denethor Boromir had stopped them if he had lived!

Gandalf Boromir tried to stop them and is therefore no longer alive.

Denethor What do you mean, Gandalf? Are you suggesting that the hobbits killed Boromir?

Faramir Don't be daft, father. Boromir could only have been killed by orcs.

Denethor If he had lived he would have been here with Frodo and Sam and their sacred burden, and all Gondor and Rohan would have been saved! But you let them go and gave up Rohan! Now the ring is wandering straight into the arms of Sauron!

Gandalf Certainly there are concerns, Denethor, but it is possible that Faramir did the right thing in letting them go. Sauron has now his whole attention on the war, and that gives two small hobbits a chance of getting through his lines in order to destroy the ring.

Denethor But we need the ring! You have missed your life's greatest opportunity, Faramir! Boromir would never have committed the same mistake!

Gandalf No, Denethor, only evil needs the ring, for it can only be used for evil means. Haven't you learned that yet, who are so wise?

Denethor But it would have been needed as a weapon against evil! Nothing can stop Sauron now and his hysterical madness to wish to destroy the entire world just to be able to control it! As if ruins and smoke and fire and dead bodies were worth controlling and ruling! But he with his orcs has fixed it in his mind to extirpate all things human, good and lovely, and we can't stop him!

Faramir I will ride out and stop him, father, with all the remaining riders of Gondor and Rohan for the defence of all things human, good and lovely, even if it will be the last act of my life!

Denethor You wouldn't have needed to if you had brought the ring or Frodo with you!

Faramir So that you could have become another mad Sauron, father?

Denethor Avaunt! Gather your troupes, and prepare for the last fight of Gondor!

Faramir I hope you will welcome me back after the battle.

Denethor That depends on in what condition you will return! (*Faramir leaves with his men.*)

You haven't answered my question, Gandalf scarecrow. Why are not your friends with you? Where are the victors from Gorge Helm? Where is Aragorn Legolas and Gimli with the last hobbit?

Pippin Merry is in good hands with princess Eowyn. They will probably be here in good time for the battle.

Gandalf Aragorn counselled by the elves is looking for reinforcements. Legolas and Gimli are with him. They will probably be here in time for the battle.

Denethor "Probably," you say! All you can bring is bad news! Get away! Make yourself useful in town! Inspect the fortifications, strengthen the morals of the generals if you can, for that would be needed, but stay away from my door! My son Boromir is dead, and my son Faramir has failed me!

(Gandalf sees there is nothing he can do.)

Gandalf Come, Pippin, Let's go.

Denethor No, leave the little one here. He might cheer me up. You must know many stories from the northern countries, my little friend. Stay here, and tell me about ancient times and distant places, as far away from reality as possible.

Pippin Then I must tell you about Rivendell and Lothloria.

Denethor Yes, please, do. I need something else to think of than the destruction of the world that we are facing.

(Gandalf leaves. Pippin remains with Denethor.)

Pippin Stay, Gandalf!

Denethor You are not afraid of me, are you, little Pippin?

Pippin What have I to be afraid of? I am a hobbit from the Shire who has nothing whatsoever to do with the world power and order.

Denethor That's exactly why I can put up with you for a change. I have had too much to do with the world power and order and therefore can't bear with any man who is involved in its hopeless mess. Tell me now what you see down in the plains, how the world is going to perdition.

Pippin (hesitant at first) The darkness is spreading, and the forces and powers of Mordor are coming crawling over the plains from all directions in the north and east with burning torches.

Denethor They bring of course both trolls and machines, battering rams and storm ladders, attack towers and other mischief. How many are they?

Pippin At least ten thousand.

Denethor And we are hardly a thousand. So we have no chance. Has my son Faramir gone out to meet the enemy?

Pippin It's a proud but tragic sight. The noblest warriors of Gondor in shining armour on the most splendid horses of Gondor, some hundreds against ten thousand, a suicidal attack if any...

Denethor I ordered it and am responsible for it. Tell me how it goes. Are they dying to the last man?

Pippin But they are fighting like tigers, and the orc masses are folding away. But they are too many, and Faramir and his riders are too few, so even if they butcher twenty orcs each they have no chance. Now the attack is failing and drowning in the overwhelming darkness of supremacy. I can hardly see them any longer. Now they turn back. A third of them must have fallen, but at least a thousand orcs remain slaughtered on the battlefield of Pelennor.

Denethor Can you see Faramir?

Pippin Four of the knights are carrying a wounded colonel. It could be their leader. He could be Faramir.

Denethor Then he is dead. The matter is closed. I will bury my sons and sacrifice myself on their funeral pyre, for no father could survive all his sons.

Pippin But now something is happening! The riders of Rohan! It must be them! At last!

Denethor Where do you see them?

Pippin It's a new dashing shining force of brilliant riders on the world's most slender horses in much greater numbers and force than the squadron of Faramir! It's the riders of Rohan!

Denethor They are coming too late.

Pippin It is never too late! The whole army of Mordor is quaking and falling back! The riders of Rohan are scattering their formations! They are fleeing!

Denethor The night isn't over yet. Still the battle is not won. Minas Tirith is still under deadly threat. (*A terrible blow shakes the castle.*)

Pippin What was that?

Denethor They have reached the city gate and blown it up. Now not even the riders of Rohan can save Minas Tirith any longer. Gandalf himself is as powerless as Saruman. Only the ring holds the power, and the ring is in the hands of Mordor... I might as well go to prepare the funeral pyre of my sons, so that we may complete that ceremony before the orcs come here and disturb us...

Pippin Another sight!

Denethor What now?

Pippin Ships are coming sailing up the Anduin!

Denethor What kind of sails?

Pippin Black sails. But there are many ships and well armed and equipped for battle. They most certainly bring reinforcements.

Denethor Not to us in that case. If the sails are black, it's the corsairs of Umbar who come to support the orcs.

Pippin (dejected) That's how it seems. The entire orc army is cheering. The endless sea of monsters and orcs are filled with a new initiative and starts resisting the riders of Rohan. But what is happening now?

Denethor That's what I am asking you.

Pippin The leading ship is unfolding a large banner. It is not the sign of Mordor but of Gondor.

Denethor How do you know?

Pippin Look for yourself! A white tree with seven stars above it and a crown over it all!

Denethor Could it be true?

Pippin And the darkness is waning! It cannot resist the day! The entire orc army is suddenly panicking!

Denethor Could it be true? Would the king be returning to Gondor? Then I could end my days in honour after having seen the dawn of my king. But who is he?

Pippin Now they are storming ashore! The orcs are running away like demented chickens in all directions, it's just to cut them all down like crippled lemmings! They have no chance! The day is ours! Victory is here!

Faramir (wounded, enters supported by Gandalf) Father, have you seen? It's the king! He has returned after several ages!

Denethor It actually doesn't look any better. But who is he? From whence does he come?

Gandalf I am afraid, Denethor, that I am responsible for this who suppressed the good news since you only expected bad ones. The king who has returned is known to many of us as Aragorn, the Strider from the north.

Denethor And he is the heir of Isildur, who cut off Sauron's arm with the ring?

Gandalf He is the only heir. *(to Pippin)* And he has come back with Legolas and Gimli and several hundreds of other indispensable immortal warriors.

Denethor The main thing is that my son is alive. Come into my arms, my son. *(embraces Faramir)* How is it with you?

Faramir Just an arrow through the shoulder. Nothing to worry about.

Denethor So we may really live? Gondor has defeated Mordor? The light has overcome the darkness?

Gandalf There is no darkness without light, Denethor. Light always conquers in the end.

Denethor For once, Gandalf, you haven't brought bad news. And I can at last resign the heavy responsibility for the government of Gondor, for now I see with my own eyes by the victory he is leading with his light down there in the plain that our king has returned. For the first time I can believe in victory over darkness, Mordor and Sauron.

Gandalf The day has only begun, and much remains before we reach the noon. We still have two hobbits left in Mordor and an even worse army of orcs by the north black gate.

Denethor Don't start all that now again. This day is a victory, and nothing can overshadow it!

(puts his arm around Gandalf. They all leave together in cordial intimacy.)

Act V scene 1. The tower chamber in a dreary castle.
Frodo lies unconscious on an operating table.

orc 1 Get your dirty paws out of here! I was the one who found him!

orc 2 We share alike, Lurchslurch, don't we? I saw him first!

1 You shitty stinker, you just befoul him! Everything you touch goes dirty and slimy, so when you are finished with him there will be nothing left of him but rotting rags of carcass parts!

2 He is mine, and that's that!

3 Don't forget me! I must have my part as well!

1 You squinting bug, go home to your snake pit, or I will kick you down to hell!

4 We must all share alike. It's the law. Our plunder must be equal.

1 We have a problem, Gurglestench! We are too many orcs of the same prey!

2 Go to hell, you stinking devils, or I will let you have it!

3 As if we hadn't got it already, you drivelling scumbag of decay!

1 There has to be some order here, you farting toad stinkers, if we are to dissect a living human creep here!

4 Who is quarrelling with who, you monsters of miscarriage?

2 Enough, you abyssal worms, or I will hit you hard!

3 Don't you imagine you are better than the rest of us orcs just for having taken a human creep alive!

2 Would you have preferred to have him slit up at once, so you could have the rest of his carcass?

4 You don't want to share, you toothless vultures!

1 Shut up, you farting loudmouths! Give us a chance to concentrate! We have to examine our catch first!

2 Yes, but get started then at last, you mouldy gadfly!

3 You can't even cut up a corpse decently

4 Shut up! Give the shaky idiots a chance!

1 Let's see! What do we have here? Only torn clothes! But what is this? (*undresses Frodo to reveal his waistcoat woven in silver by elves.*)

3 You Gurgleburp, he has found something.

4 Then we have a right to our share, Belchcan!

2 A real moon mithril shirt!

1 It is mine! It is mine!

2 No, it is mine! It is mine!

3 Come on, Gurgleburp. There is enough spoils to share.

4 You said it, Belchcan!

(*1 and 2 fight. 3 and 4 attack them.*)

2 Give me the shirt!

1 It is mine!

3 It is ours!

4 We have the right to share!

(*They fight.*)

Sam (turns up, out of reach and hearing) Here they are, the miserable freaks. So this is where they brought him, and they have almost flayed him alive, the bastards! But let them fight and put an end to each other! I can wait.

2 Have you had enough, you pile of stinking vermin?

1 You have no business here, you snotty maggots! You are to keep watch!

4 We have the right to our share, you pussy bandits!

2 Shut up, you stinking devil! (*pierces him*)

1 One less.

3 You have no right to steal everything alone, you corpse bugger!

1 Don't I? (*pierces him*)

2 Two less.

1 So, Gurglestench, will you at last allow me to dissect him?

2 You shall not have everything yourself, you sausage worm!

1 Will you have it all then, you snutbag?

2 I have the right to my share, you dripping fleshbum!

1 That's what also Gurgleburp and Belchcan said.

2 Are you stupid or what?

(*They fight.*)

Sam (watches them) Let them fight, Frodo, and then I will rerscue you.

1 You cursed slush monster, what would you pick up a fight for?

2 Who started quarrelling with who, you elephant of only foot sweat!

1 You always have to poke your nose in it, you moulding antbear!

2 Are you dumb or what? (*They fight.*)

1 Gurgle! Gurgle!

2 Ouch! Burp! Roar!

(They fight with roaring guttural and other inhuman sounds, until 1 pierces 2)

1 At last! Now we can start dissecting the brat!

Sam No, you don't, over my dead body!

1 Another!

Sam And alive! You don't touch Frodo!

1 You minion! Go home to mother!

Sam She isn't there!

1 Who then gave you that toy sword?

Sam It's a sword for dwarfs to kill orcs with!

1 You are so ridiculous that you make me crack up, you laughable small fry!

Sam And you, stinking arse hole, belongs in the drains!

1 That's where I told you to go home to mother.

Sam She isn't there!

1 Go home then!

Sam Do it yourself, you phoney bastard!

1 No one calls me a phoney!

Sam I just did!

1 Come on then, you creep, and let me massacre you!

Sam The best massacre is the last!

1 Exactly what I mean!

Sam Come on, you corpse bugger!

1 You obnoxious flea, come here and let me pierce you!

Sam You shaggy skeleton, you can't even frighten a stinkbug with all your ugliness!

1 Are you calling me ugly, you infernal brat of shit!

Sam Ugliest in the world, you pile of filth!

1 You are a mean shitbag indeed, you crawler of shit!

Sam And you are incompetent even as a scarecrow.

1 No one is coming here to insult me!

Sam That's just what I am doing!

1 Now I have had enough!

Sam Give up then, you blathering dunghill!

1 A real Uruk-Hai never gives up!

Sam What did you call yourself? A lurk-guy?

1 The name was Lurchslurch Canpiss!

Sam It suits your monstrous failure!

1 Now I have had enough!

Sam Come on then! Neither I have got the whole day!

1 You shitty coward, you are the one who never gets started!

Sam You talk like you fight, you rotting bag of bones!

1 Now I have had enough!

Sam You are repeating yourself! Try something else!

1 Like what?

Sam Look behind you!

1 *(looks behind)* For what?

Sam *(pierces him with his tiny dwarf sword)* Did you fall for that old trick?

1 Ouch! *(goes down)*

Sam Frodo! Frodo! *(hurries up to him)*

Frodo *(awakes drowsily)* What happened? Where am I?

Sam Orcs found you when you fought the spider monster, which had stung you lifeless! The orcs brought you here!

Frodo Sam! Am I happy to see you!

Sam What do you think I am then? *(They fall happily into each other's arms.)*

Frodo! What hells we have passed through! And what hells we still have to pass through!

Frodo Did the orcs take the ring?

Sam No, Frodo, I have it. But we have to hurry away from here. There might be more orcs.

Frodo Did you take it away from me?

Sam Frodo, that spider monster caught you from behind! It baked you into a cocoon of webs! I couldn't get any life into you! I thought you were dead! So I took the ring just for its own security to, in case it came to the worst, carry it myself to the volcano over there. But then I heard the orcs taking care of you and that you weren't dead, so I turned back to get you along with me. The orcs have been fighting over you ever since.

Frodo So that's why there are so many dead orcs lying round here.

Sam Yes. I was not the one who killed them.

Frodo Except the last one, but he seems to be still alive.

Sam But there isn't much left of him. Let's hurry on before he calls for reinforcements!

Frodo The ring, Sam. I am the ring-bearer.

Sam Yes, Frodo, you are. *(takes off the ring in its chain and hangs it around Frodo again)*

Frodo Now we can go on together. *(They hurry out.)*

orc 1 Ouch!

(Suddenly a great darkness falls on the scene, and a great thump is heard and a piercing scream.) Nazgul!

Bel-Phegor *(comes rushing in)* What has happened here?

orc Spies!

Bel-Phegor How many?

orc Two small ones.

Bel-Phegor Children?

orc Almost.

Bel-Phegor *(beholds the dead or halfdead groaning orcs)* Did they do this?

orc No. We fought over the little one's clothes.
Bel-Phegor Did you find anything?
orch An elf shirt.
Bel-Phegor Was that all?
orc Yes.
Bel-Phegor No jewellery? No ring?
orc No, master. Just pretty clothes.
Bel-Phegor You imbecile incompetent freaks! (*advances and buries his long sword in him, then hurries out in haste.*)
orc Ouch! Yes, master! (*dies*)

Scene 2. Barad-Dûr.

Sauron False alarm again! False spies everywhere! I rule a sea of idiots, and they just keep bungling everything all the time, fighting each other, fight to their deaths for nothing for the pleasure of eating each other, bringing on chaos, creating havoc in the lines, miss all that's important, quarrel unto damnation and only make a mess of it! Shall I then fill up the world with these cruel ugly maniacs, who only are good for spreading terror and killing all sense and life and finally each other? Yes, I have to go all the way and finish what I started. Nothing can save the world, for I decided to ravish it once and for all, and I have to stand for the completion of my enterprise. Gandalf and the free world stand no chance. We have to crush them once and for all. Their victory over Saruman, that worthless fool, at Gorge Helm, Isengard and Minas Tirith, is of no significance, for now Mordor will spew out all their loaded forces through the northern gate of Mordor Morannon, where the collected armies of Gondor, Rohan and Eriador stupidly have gathered to be crushed all together. What fools these defenders of goodness and freedom all are in their noblest naivety of simplicity!

(*enter Bel-Phegor.*)

Bel-Phegor? Back again? More false alarms?
Bel-Phegor For once there was no false alarm.
Sauron Did you get them?
Bel-Phegor They captured a hobbit in Kirith Ungol.
Sauron Which one of them? Where is the ring? Was it the right person? Surely they took care of every detail in the hobbit's equipment and on his body?
Bel-Phegor They found a precious mailshirt on him of purest moonmithril silver manufactured by the dwarfs.
Sauron It was the right one! Did they find the ring?
Bel-Phegor No, stupidly they started fighting over the shirt.
Sauron And?
Bel-Phegor It ended up the usual way, when orcs quarrel, argue, and fight each other. They killed each other.

Sauron And the hobbit?

Bel-Phegor He consequently got away.

Sauron Haven't you found him?

Bel-Phegor We have ransacked all Mordor most meticulously. All we found was Gollum.

Sauron Gollum is on their tracks! If we have Gollum, we have them!

Bel-Phegor But Gollum keeps sneaking away all the time, he is detested even by the orcs, and the general order is not to touch him.

Sauron Yes, for only he can find the hobbits, and they have the ring! But you catch the hobbits, and still you don't get the ring! Your orcs let them go and could only fight over their worthless clothes!

Bel-Phegor Nothing is more precious than mithril silver.

Sauron But they forget about the ring!

Bel-Phegor They know nothing about the ring. They only have orders to bring up everything.

Sauron That includes the ring! I need it! I can't win the war without it!

Bel-Phegor We are searching for it and the hobbits.

Sauron You found them but let them loose, while all your orcs just beat each other to death!

Bel-Phegor I am sorry.

Sauron You are worthless! You might be lying! You have taken the ring yourself!

Bel-Phegor I have not seen it.

Sauron I can no longer trust you, and I have to be sure! *(cuts his head off)*
 Incompetent devil! I have murdered the Nazgul colonel, the last of the nine initiated ringsmiths, but he was no longer needed. The world is in our control. One last battle at Morannon, and the free world will have no weapons left. All resistance is already broken, and I can people the world with my tyrants, trolls and monsters. But where is my ring? Where are the poor wanderers really carrying it?
(The earth starts shaking. Hollow thunder like before an earthquake.)
 What is happening? *(runs to a window. At a distance the Mount Doom volcano is seen to start an eruption.)* The Mount Doom! The volcano! They are there! The poor creatures! They have reached it! Gandalf's work! Of course! They intend to throw the ring into the volcano and thus ultimately destroy it! Damn! Damn! Damn!
(You see the eruption happening by the window, all is coloured red by the flames, deafening crash.)
 Sauron *(breaks down)* I am lost! This is the end of everything!
(The crash is brought to a maximum. Blackout. You hear everything break down.)



Scene 3. Minas Tirith.

Faramir (with wounded legs on a terrace with a view towards the east in beautiful weather)

This unbearable waiting! One week since the army marched off, and not a sign of life. Are they all lost? But then the country would have been overrun by orcs and black riders. Instead there is nothing but incertitude, while the world is holding its breath. But who is here if not the most beautiful of all patients?

Eowyn My lord, you are restlessly walking to and fro every day probably because of your worries.

Faramir Is there no reason? But you with your maimed arm should keep still.

Eowyn I suffer from the same worries as you.

Faramir You, such a lovely woman, should never have ridden out into such a nasty battle.

Eowyn I am a Valkyrie by nature, like all we female riders of Rohan. My beauty and womanhood does not exempt me from doing service in arms, especially not when both our countries are in danger.

Faramir You became the sign of victory for all of us. With you at the head, the forces of darkness had to fall flat to the ground.

Eowyn Yes, that's the nature of true womanhood. But we both know, that it was the arrival of Aragorn that determined the battle.

Faramir Yes, our finally restored king. But he left us again, and no one knows to where.

Eowyn We are both wounded, and only for that, we were not allowed to take part.

Faramir The incertitude is terrible. You had sincerely tender feelings for the irresistible Aragorn.

Eowyn Who did not? But I was not for him.

Faramir You mean it?

Eowyn Or else I would not say so.

Faramir You mean there is hope – for me?

Eowyn I believe, my good Faramir, that we are closer to each other than any of us can guess.

Faramir I worshipped you from the beginning not just for your beauty and your long blonde hair – keep it always free and let out, so that the sun itself may vie with its splendour and light – and not just for your magnificence as a rider; but most of all for remaining a woman under all this chivalrous armour with the warmest humble sincerity of softest sweetness.

Eowyn I can't help that I am a woman.

Faramir And can I help then that I love you?

Eowyn (closing in on him) We meet in the sign of Doomsday and are united in a moment when the fate of the entire world is hanging by a thin thread. So may we then not deny the love that we feel for each other, but instead use it to spite the world perdition?

Faramir Thus speaks a true Valkyrie.

(They embrace. Enter Pippin enthusiastically.)

Pippin They are coming! They are coming! The white army is returning! Oh, I am sorry! *(becomes aware of that he has intruded inconveniently)*

Faramir Is it true? Could it be true?

Pippin Look for yourself!

Faramir Little friend, you have better eyes than I. Yes, I see. They are coming riding. It must be a sign of victory. Alert the entire city! Make preparations for only joy and festivities! They have survived!

Eowyn It felt like a sigh of relief for all the world of liberation and ease, as if a volcano had lost its force, gone out and collapsed. The air seems more pure and fresh than for at least a century. Could it then be a transition to a new better world?

Faramir It doesn't look any worse.

Pippin Yes, it is Gandalf himself with Aragorn and Legolas and all their following! They have prevailed!

Faramir It's enough to make the whole world recover after a long time of a troublesome illness.

Denethor (enters) Do you see the sign of victory? At last there could be some order in our world again! It seems as if we had been victorious.

Faramir Yes, it seems as if we had prevailed with a vengeance. The returning army seems to be next to intact.

Denethor And the whole city is cheering. All are spontaneously preparing a feast of glory for our king to last for a long time.

Faramir (with his arm around Eowyn) You will remain our regent, father, for my destiny is calling me to Rohan.

Denethor You don't mean to say...

Faramir Yes, that Rohan has conquered me. I am abducted with my soul and will probably remain spirited away by my lady for the rest of my life.

Denethor My son, that will only double and exalt the entire festivity.

A herold King Aragorn and Gandalf with following!

(Enter all: Aragorn with Gandalf, Legolas and Gimli, Frodo, Sam and Merry with an impressing following.)

Aragorn It is all over. Sauron is fallen. Never again will the powers of darkness be able to overwhelm the world, for by the help of these brave hobbits the power of the ring is finally broken.

Pippin Sam and Frodo! At last! That was about time! I have missed you! You can't imagine how we have kept worrying about you!

Sam All in vain, Pippin.

Pippin How did you get the ring down the crater?

Frodo Gollum helped us. We would never have made it without him.

Pippin And where is Gollum?

Gandalf He pleased to follow his ring, for it was his.

Sam He did not want to lose it.

Pippin So he lost his bet on losing it.

Sam Yes, he bit it off.

Aragorn You may go on talking later, hobbits. We have much to organise. Faramir, I can see that you have taken care of mistress Eowyn.

Faramir No, she has taken care of me.

Aragorn It's the same thing. Just as well. It is perfectly suitable, since it will contribute to the unification of Gondor, Numenor and Rohan in a new and better age of light and clarity without the disturbances of dark elements and sabotage.

Gandalf We expect presently an arrival of the heads of Loria and Rivendell in a new council, Elrond's second, to build a future for our humanity and without orcs.

Aragorn You have been the leader of this, Gandalf, who has carried the initiative through all trials and crises to this unique and wonderful result.

Gandalf I only did what I could, which was the best I could. Even in the worst adversity you can always make the best of it. But our greatest gratitude should be exclusively directed to Sam and Frodo, without whose contribution everything would have failed and the world lost.

Frodo Thank Gollum.

Gandalf He is dead.

Sam We will have to do some justice in a song about the whole thing.

Frodo We will make old Bilbo our critical auditor and assistant as a reader.

Pippin That would surely suit him perfectly, the old incorrigible poet!

Gandalf That will be your concern to sort out all truth from fantasy, if it is at all possible. We have to prepare the council for the future of the world.

Legolas It will be the last time for us elves to give you humans a hand.
Gandalf Do you plan to resign?
Legolas No, just to create new worlds, new nature and form future environments for the continued development of life.
Gandalf Your foresight always reach longer than what humans can think or even imagine.
Legolas That's why we exist. That people deny us is their stupidity and limitation. We still remain and live regardless of them and do our duties and what is necessary for the continuity of life in spite of their sabotage and stupid invention of evil.
Gandalf That you never grow tired of our stupid humanity.
Legolas That people never tire of their own stupidity.-
Denethor King Theoden of Rohan is waiting to welcome the whole company to his banquet to honour our peace and new world, a feast that will become permanent.
Aragorn We must not let him wait. Let me escort you, prince Faramir and lady Eowyn, for we also have to celebrate you.
Eowyn Just don't tell me, king Aragorn, that you intend to remain a bachelor.
Aragorn Lady Arwen is expected here with Elrond and Galadriel. Already long before I saw you, lady Eowyn, my heart and soul was in Arwen's hands.
Eowyn That pleases me, for without womanhood, manhood falls short.
Aragorn You are certain to be good friends.

(enter Theoden and Eomer.)

King Theoden! I thought you had already ridden home to Rohan!

Theoden Noble Aragorn, our highest king of honour, I am actually on my way there, since we have urgent business to clear up in the entire country after the subversive turbulences of this period of unrest; but on our way to the north we encountered a remarkable company, which made us change our minds to instead come here after you as their vanguard.

Aragorn What kind of company might you mean?

Eomer They are with us, and they are coming here.

(enter the entire elven court with Elrond, Arwen and Galadriel with many others.)

Galadriel Greetings, king, victor and final prince of peace of the entire world!

Aragorn You are already here! What joy, o father Elrond! And with lady Arwen!

Elrond There was nothing more to wait for when we saw the clouds disperse over Mordor. Yes, Gandalf knows that well enough, that it was all predetermined. It couldn't have worked out otherwise. Arwen did not wish to wait. So she is here.

Aragorn (kneels to Elrond) My father, I have won the royal crown of Arnor, Numenor and Gondor. Have I by that also won the lady Arwen, whom I have always loved and who always loved me?

Elrond You have done that indeed and with honour. When you grew up with us in secret as a child and Sauron ransacked the entire world for the heir of Isildur, and I saw how you and my daughter found a dangerous affection for each other, I already sensed the entire development of events, and because of that I was hard on

you, but I was only being realistic. In the name of honesty I had to present you with the entire situation, and I concealed nothing from Arwen.

Arwen Aragorn, we married as souls already when we played innocently together as children. Already then I gave myself up to you, and when you travelled the world for years as the Strider and investigated Isengard and Mordor, Moria and all the darkest secrets of the world, I was always with you. I was yours, although I knew there was the possibility that I would never own you but instead might always be losing you.

Aragorn You showed me the scenario of the destruction of myself and the world, father Elrond, and thereby you gave me something to fight for and a challenge for life. I never flinched from it. Yes, I did everything to overcome the power of evil in Mordor, and I knew I had no chance, that the destruction of the world was inevitable, that I could never win Arwen, and that I was sentenced to a vain struggle for life with the impotence of failure; until I met Gandalf, who had learned that a hobbit in the outskirts of the world had happened to come across the lord of rings. In that one moment the whole destiny of the world and my happiness were instantly turned, and for the first time I saw a possibility to reach and gain you, although you were an elf, lady Arwen, and I just an ordinary man.

Elrond You were brought up by us, you had your education from us, we reared you to become like one of us in the very hope that you of all beings might in spite of all redeem the world, you became one of us in everything except in your constitution. Only in the complete resurrection of Gondor and the glory of its king you could in spite of all reach the possibility to have an elf for your queen. All these impossible stillborn hopes you have fulfilled, and it is now the greatest joy, happiness and triumph of my life to at last allow you two to have each other.

Aragorn Father Elrond, this happiness implies that it is no longer necessary for your tribe of elves to go away and abandon our human world.

Elrond Also that was decided long in advance. Even if the world now in spite of all could become human and peopled with kind-hearted and beautiful beings, like all of you are who are present here, we must still be consistent and go west across the sea to new worlds to prepare for an insurance of the future. And it is equally predestined that our servant and magician Gandalf here will follow us together with Frodo, Legolas and Bilbo.

Frodo Is old Bilbo still alive?

Elrond Yes, he lives. He is tired and sleeps much but is well off in Rivendell.

Galadriel I will also follow you. We leave for the world a heritage of beauty, an example for a future humanity to try to follow, goodness and faith and beautiful tales and the two of you, king Aragorn and queen Arwen, as the most beautiful personages of that world and a moral dream ideal with your courts and countries of only stately noble knights, like Faramir and Eowyn here.

Sam So there will be just a lovely human world of blond and long-haired brilliant knights and virgins in perfect harmony completely without ugly monstrous orcs?

Galadriel Something in that way. We elves have done what we could and all our best and our duty. It remains now for us to embark on our next venture and proceed on the eternal spiritual process of creation.

Aragorn We need you, Galadriel.

Galadriel My king, not just man and woman, as our Eowyn stated here, necessarily need each other, but we all do, all that is alive, all and everything have to cooperate in order to survive. Even we have to survive, and we do that by always moving on.

Theoden So let us end this conference in mutual harmony and beauty to now concentrate on this double wedding celebration between king Aragorn and the elven king's daughter, and between Faramir and Eowyn, the son of Gondor and the daughter of Rohan.

Aragorn King Theoden has spoken!

Arwen I am yours forever, Aragorn, now at last.

Aragorn We must not postpone it any longer.

Pippin and Merry Now there will be parties and weddings so that all the Shire would envy us and long for us!

Sam We may soon go home, for the adventure is now over and done with.

Frodo And I will come along with you, if we just may pick up Bilbo on the way. Gandalf, will you follow us?

Gandalf Yes, I actually I do, for I have an errand on the way. I have one or two things to settle with Tom Bombadil.

Frodo The only one who was not affected by the ring!

Gandalf The only one who perhaps recognised the thing as a fake.

Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli and the hobbits, astonished) A fake??!!

Gandalf We cannot be too sure. But it's an issue between me and our friend Bombadil.

Galadriel We must not let the people wait any longer. Now for the wedding and the parties!

Pippin, Merry and Sam To the weddings and the parties!

(At last a festive decampment and dissolution in the lightest possible peace, beauty and harmony.)

The End.

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