

## *The (True) Lord of the Ring*

So the hobbits eventually came back to the Shire, having been forewarned at Bree that it had changed, and not for the better. And what they discovered is that it certainly *had* in fact changed, only it would seem transmogrified, assaulted, *worsened*, only by those who were so fearful that all change is bad they would willfully ignore that as different as it had become, and as irreverent as this change stood to long-held custom, what they saw was undeniably overall *better*.

Yes, many of the trees were uprooted, and not that there wasn't some misery in this — as all of them so loved trees — but what were these still easily sprung things to what actually had been planted all throughout the Shire, some in their place, in such ingenious design! Sam had marveled at great big Oliphants, monstrosities of the animal world, and he had to admit that the new brick buildings and factories and administrative buildings that had sprung up were in their own sense monstrosities of types of buildings he knew of, and just as dazzling, not only daunting, for it. And the people hadn't become the slaves to industry he had been warned about, but all of a sudden had awakened out of long-held patterns and become unpredictable. You never knew whether the next villager you met, who had been a baker or a farmer, and from whom you could predict the same for the successive generations that would follow them, would still be involved in this role or have branched off into some other career, as previously rare inner-change was actually occurring all the time, in response to newly arisen possibilities.

As the adventuring hobbits told their adventure stories to everyone they met, all were delighted to hear the marvelous tales. But they noticed a distinct lack of envy and awe, for their own lives had become adventures of their own sorts, which involved constant self-activation. Indeed, in seeing Frodo's weariness and permanent maiming, and the other hobbits' still-evident — in being evidently disappointed in not being looked upon in their return as hobbit princes — ongoing immaturity, those whom they told their tales to actually wondered if traveling all across the world was in

fact as conducive to change as what proved true for themselves, by just staying in place.

The hobbits came to meet the one heralded as mostly responsible for all this change, and they discovered it was — *Saruman!* The hobbits were incredulous! How could the villain of villains, have created all this *goodness*? Saruman replied that, “it sure wasn’t easy, with hobbits being so fearful of any kind of change happening in the Shire and all. But all that was really required was for someone to come amongst them who didn’t just want to take amusement in them, but rather actually really wanted something for their true benefit, to challenge them, and make them better. This I did, persistently and over a longish period of time, and eventually more of them were realizing that they to some extent had been forcing themselves to pretend that they had been living the ideal life only because defying this pretence would have them fearing some great punishment for breaching, dun dun dun, Natural Order.”

“I’ll tell you, it all would have been a lot easier if I had not just my talent to inspire trust even in dubious tasks — the possession of my ‘sugar tongue,’ as some have called it, in an effort to misshapen what is indisputably but a legitimate skill and power — but the power of the Ring, which would have expanded my ability to gain trust exponentially.”

“Yes, the Ring, the very power you were all told could only be corrupting, the Ring the very powerful might first put to considerable good use but which eventually would drown them through egoistic pursuits and pool them into Sauron — that was always untrue. It wasn’t that it often didn’t destroy its users this way, but that it *needn’t* always have done so. And the reason no one ever discovered this truth is because too many seized on its first few examples of misuse to proclaim a universal, for it fit their own fears that anyone’s own massive expansion in abilities, done without respect for whether or not they had been granted by ‘legitimate’ authority, must inherently be a form of heinous overreach.”

“Recall back. Someone in your own troop was uncovering some of this dissonant truth for himself. Recall, specifically, Sam, who made use of the Ring for a rather longish periods of time, right before where the warping influence of the Ring was strongest, right before the great Mt. Doom, and at a time when Sauron had finally

achieved his full might and was in the process of ‘conveying’ it to the world. He knew he should have had just done something to ever-reprimand himself of, if ever he was fortunate enough to recover from falling so deeply under its spell, and that in point of fact it didn’t happen — all that he was told would surely happen *immediately* after making this kind of momentous goof, wasn’t much happening at all! He pulled off the Ring just as much to momentarily try and keep faith at what proved a false truth, and all those whom he respected who had upheld it, than from keeping the Ring from possessing him. For at some level he knew he had just caught out a massive lie.”

“What Sam couldn’t fully admit to himself is that the reason the Ring didn’t take over him is that it actually *responds positively* to people who aren’t narcissistically intent on being big honchos, reified by the like of all the small peoples of Middle-earth — those it destroys, always. But those simply self-activating, which is exactly what Sam was up to while alone in Mordor, with Frodo, with his ostensible intrinsic ‘master,’ at the time currently senseless, it assists without blowback. One after another, Sam was making decisions, and the Ring read that as much as he was trying to persuade himself he was only doing it for Frodo, that some part of him was admitting he was doing it just as much for himself; *that it felt good.*”

“Yes, it felt good, self-activating, making his own impact on Middle-earth, as worthy as any other, and the Ring knew it has finally got the right kind of bearer. Not Isildur, who was a narcissist who aspired to and who became obligatory firmament of everyone’s necessary understanding of their world’s origins. Not Gollum, who had a multiple personality disorder, providing the Ring no clue as to whom exactly to work its influence on. Not Bilbo, who had the ill-luck of obtaining the Ring when the powers of the narrative universe were all bent on making it only an invisibility ring, as notable but also as innocuous as any other magically enhanced item. Not Boromir, who saw himself only as a part of the might of Gondor, and thus not actually truly invested in his own self. And not Frodo, who was such downcast gloom there was no material there to try to play to and lift up. But rather Sam, who couldn’t but help notice, as he went along on his adventures, that he was as capable and as appreciative of self-leadership as any, and who — unlike any other other than the legend, Tom Bombadil — could find himself humming tales and cheerful songs even in the

darkest of places. He was someone the environment would have to work hardest to draw against himself. Some part of him would never quail, and turn against what made him most happy. It thus only supported him, informing him of its ample abilities, despite its reputation as only a nasty bugger that would drag you Sauron's no-good way if ever you put it on so close to its maker."

"Now, about its maker. Yes, Sauron intended that all wills who long bore the Ring would turn to him. But sometimes what's intended one way, ends up veering another. And if this logic sounds foreign to you, it shouldn't, for it's something akin to the wisdom that that otherwise inane Gandalf is always saying — remember how he remarked on how Sauron's blanket of darkness was actually working against him, by serving as cover for the force opposed to him? Good; there's that, but the examples are in fact many. Sam at some level recalled this, as well as his Gaffer saying similar things, and so stayed in fidelity to newly awakened truth about the Ring that contrasted inversely with that previously known. It is owing to such that your quest was actually accomplished. That is, not as Bilbo is trying to ascribe it as having happened in his writings, as owing to Sam's humility and self-sacrifice. No, some part of him — even if not yet ample — had become ready to defy even Gandalf *for truth*. And for such Sauron met his better. And for long enough that he lost all."

The hobbits were aghast at Saruman's claims against Gandalf. Wasn't he, they asked, not exactly as Aragorn proclaimed him, the one principally responsible for stopping Sauron and saving Middle-earth?

Saruman acknowledged Gandalf was deserving of respect, but argued, "my point isn't that he is somehow useless, but that he did considerable harm in having the lot of you ready to proclaim him great regardless of how your journey finished up. You were willing to cloak and hide anything disagreeable about his actions, choices, behaviour, any mistake of his at all, and Gandalf didn't discourage you from this habit, a crime in a sense akin to the sort of unreality my servant Wormtongue was judged harshly for weaving."

"He took two of you along on the journey for reasons you know might have been amiss, might have been intrinsically wrong, but knew enough that he wanted his decision judged only as partaking in some kind of elusive wisdom that only the like of

great wizards have access to, that you willed yourself into misbelief so to reflect back what you knew he wanted to encounter from you.”

“Unruly needs? Yes. What is it when you include in your company the young, vulnerable and small that would never really be confident that they were on a journey they really should have been included on? Aren’t they perfect, weren’t *you*, Merry and Pippin, perfect as ‘carriers’ of everyone else’s fears, their sense of inadequacy, their humiliating inclination to soil themselves considering they might be pit against whole companies of Orcs, as well as trolls, dragons, and sea monsters, so they could go about absent any sense of themselves as other than fearless and mighty — as the strongest pieces at play on the board?”

“You were well along on your journey when I, though certainly gruffly — and I do apologize for that — nevertheless pointed out *the true fact* that you were but Gandalf’s *riffraff*, those tagging along side him, evidently lacking anything but sordid purpose for the company, if possessed of any true purpose at all. And *you* recognized this truth, for a moment, didn’t you? You repeated the words I used to assess you, later to Gandalf, perhaps to check to see if maybe in reality he secretly agreed. And how did he then counter your self-doubt? Did he point out to you the actions you performed that no one else could have managed, as he would have, legitimately, with the rest of your companions, indeed, never stopping, if his aim was to do justice to them, until his breath failed him and he collapsed in exhaustion? No, he said that if you had doubt as to your worth you should find respite knowing that Saruman’s mind, that my mind, was currently foremost on you — which, I’ll tell you, though I think you already knew it at the time, is fundamentally more a way of complimenting *me* rather than any of you. You are noteworthy, he is actually saying, because you caught the attention of someone indisputably so, and so are great in the way that heroic figures as well as nagging flea would have to be similarly ‘great,’ in that both can make claim to a great man’s attention. It amounts to nothing, in order words. How truly stupid had he so casually assumed you actually were?”

“A man who doesn’t truly believe what he tells another he thinks of him will reveal his true feelings in time. And in fact it didn’t take long, not much after his arrival into Gondor, when he identified you both as ‘pawns’ in a battle where the rest

of the board — the knights, the bishops, the kings and queens — were at play. That was something else you ruminated on, disquietly fussed over, his labeling you disagreeably as *pawns*. And even as you, Merry, were subsequently called ‘great’ by him for stabbing the Nazgul King, weren’t you actually doing nothing more than what every other pawn that actually belonged on the board would do in your place? You displayed no more than the ability to follow through on an intention, something the warrior citizens of Gondor deemed as differentiating, not the great from the ordinary, but only the adult from the child. What was notable about you, then, as someone who still belonged on the board, if barely, was that you were easier than any other piece present to pass over in mistake; another compliment which works against itself in that it points out that in every other situation in combat those who forsook you for another opponent deemed more dangerous, would have been absolutely right in doing so. You are valiant and exceptional for a hobbit, but of no more combat prowess than any Gondor warrior’s ten-year-old son, like Beregond’s son, Birgil, whom you were bid to hang around with so as not find yourself awkwardly in the way — another of Gandalf’s revealing lavishing of ‘kindnesses.’”

“Merry, you helped take down the greatest danger on the battlefield, and Pippin, you later killed a troll-chieftain. But wouldn’t you say that these great kills were fairly little more worthy of brag than a peasant’s shooting an arrow awry into the wind, but scoring a fatal hit on a king at battle nevertheless? The greatest drifted into your kill-zone, no more than that — a credit to fate and luck, rather than yourself. It is what everyone who was there would know as the truth, if you ever tried to hoist your accomplishment to their diminishment, and also what you’d at some level know about yourself, if you bragged about your feat to those who weren’t.”

“You both went along on this journey constantly thinking on whether you would do anything worthy of its own chapter in a written account of the adventure. When you did something on your own which was enterprising enough that it might have distinguished you from all others of your kin if they’d been in your place, but which was still nevertheless, ineffective — namely, your trying to deceive your Orc captors by impersonating Gollum so to somehow get them to untie your bonds — you hoped *that* would suffice. It felt meager, and you knew it when you were ruminating

over it at the time; more like something that for inclusion would still require much pleading and begging. And yet you knew, rightly, that it was your best representation of yourselves where you both couldn't necessarily have been replaced by any other hobbit with the same pluck you possessed to go on an adventure. And at the finish, you went back to the Shire — don't not admit it! — hoping that being amongst people who ostensibly had done nothing would make what little you secretly felt you had done, acquire better backgrounding.”

“You also hoped it would make up for the fact that you were evidently carried along, seized as necessary for the quest, over even additional Elf-lords, when these rare breeds were fortuitously actually at hand, because every venturing company into unknown terrain requires more than “armour,” “weapons,” and “horses,” more than equipage and accents, but also a host for the company's excreta — a *“toilet.”* They pissed, shit and barfed all their own vulnerability, their own terrors and fears of inadequacy, into you, to mask from themselves that they actually felt all of that too. And they could deny the displacement — because *weren't you always* self-evidently weak and vulnerable? Absolutely so! *No projection therefore had ever taken place!*, they to themselves decided. And when you reflected back to them, with your long remaining feeling inadequate, even as the journey was very far along on route, that you sensed you were being used, their “eye” focused on you long enough only to bottle you back up. Without you, all that can be said, is the great may have had to *themselves* suffer a sense of insufficiency that would have hampered them. Your role was only ever to be an excellent Company's *contrast*, everything it wanted to pretend it was immune to and that to the core of their constitution, it was not. *That* was the foresight Gandalf had as to your unique and special use for the Company. Not, that is, your being a bridge to already established friendship, which actually mattered little — for how long exactly before racial foes, Gimli and Legolas, were best of friends? A week? A day? Maybe not even?”

“Come, my young hobbits. Don't be afraid to revisit your past and even admit that what you're seeing happening here in this renewed Shire I've helped create is going to require your substantial catching up; that you've arrived from your adventures *behind*, not ahead, in life experience. You know that I won't flatter you to

keep you in a role that isn't for your own benefit. I'll challenge you to the end, provoking you to think about yourselves, about things that are still very lacking about you, so that you'll do the work of actually pointing these facts out to yourselves. With your own brave initiative you'll grow and eventually become very happy — though do watch out for the abandonment depression, which'll incur as you pass limits that will leave you absent some of your own former self-approval; it's a bit rocky. It's time, my friends, to finally get on with your lives rather than wasting it away on further idle 'adventuring.'