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In the Frank Capra classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*, we hear these simple yet profound words: "No man is poor who has friends." Indeed, friendship is a deep form of love. It is what truly makes a man rich—rich in the things that matter. No man can live without love and friendship. The human being is a social creature. We were made to help one another. We are all brothers.

Use your imagination and take a trip with me to Middle-earth. There we see great friendship (and love). This is especially true of the hobbits. We start at Bag End in Hobbiton, which is the part of the Shire where Bilbo and Frodo live. Now the first stop is Crickhollow (still part of the Shire), where Frodo learns that his hobbit-friends will never abandon him.

"But it does not seem that I can trust anyone," said Frodo.



Sam looked at him unhappily. "It all depends on what you want," put in Merry. "You can trust us to stick with you through thick and thin--to the bitter end. And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours--closer than you keep it yourself. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word. We are your *friends*, Frodo" [J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) 118].

Now, let's go to the Barrow Downs. Frodo and his friends Sam, Merry, and Pippin are trapped by a Barrow-wight who intends to kill them, offering them as human sacrifice to the Dark Lord. As they are tied up, Frodo thinks about using the Ring to disappear and escape, leaving his friends behind in the evil clutches of the Barrow-wight.

He thought of himself running free over the grass, grieving for Merry, and Sam, and Pippin, but free and alive himself. Gandalf would admit that there had been nothing else he could do. But the courage that had been awakened in him was now too strong: he could not leave his *friends* so easily" (*Ibid*, 160).

Frodo bravely slashes at and injures the Wight with a short sword, and a fierce struggle ensues. Things might have gone poorly for Frodo and his friends had he not remembered to call Tom Bombadil. The song of Bombadil resounds throughout the land, and Bombadil appears and banishes the Barrow-wight. And thus continues the journey of the Fellowship that was "eternally bound by friendship and love" (Frodo Baggins in the movie *The Return of the King*).

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