
The Dunadan: Bilbo's Friend

A Monthly Reflection on Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*

One doesn't have to look very far in LOTR to find "friendship-events." Our last issue of *The Dunadan* told of the early consultation between two dear friends, Frodo and Gandalf. Yet to find this, we had to look no further than Book One, Chapter II: The Shadow of the Past. Now, lo and behold! In Book One, Chapter IV: A Short Cut to Mushrooms, we find our very next "friendship-incident." So let's take a step back just a minute.

Chapter III has been named "Three Is Company". The *company* consists of three hobbits: Frodo, his cousin Peregrin Took (known as "Pippin"), and Frodo's servant Samwise Gamgee (also known as "Sam"). On their way to Frodo's "new home" in Crick Hollow, while fleeing dastardly Black-Riders, the company decide to take a *short cut* and consequently they end up in Farmer Maggot's field of *mushrooms*. Hence the title of the Chapter IV: "A Short Cut to Mushrooms".

Now Farmer Maggot's field is the place from which Frodo and other hobbit children used to "procure" mushrooms. Clearly they did not have permission to do this, so when Frodo meets Farmer Maggot again, now thirty years later, and sees Maggot's dogs, he is terrified. Yet, as it turns out, Farmer Maggot helps the three hobbits escape the Black Riders just in time to find their good friend and cousin, Meriadoc Brandybuck (also known as "Merry"). Truly one can say of Farmer Maggot: He is a friend, and "a friend [who helps me when I am] in need is a friend in deed!"¹ Farmer Maggot did defend his property, as he had a natural right to; however, he did not hold a grudge against poor, foolish little hobbit kids, even after they have grown almost to adulthood. In Farmer Maggot, there is a two-fold lesson for us all: 1) Hobbits love mushrooms. 2) Forgive your brother for he knows not what he does; you'll be glad you did!



'...Thank you very much indeed for your kindness! I've been in terror of you and your dogs for over thirty years, Farmer Maggot, though you may laugh to hear it. It's a pity: for I've missed a good friend. And now I'm sorry to leave so soon. But I'll come back, perhaps, one day ...'

'You'll be welcome when you come,' said Maggot. 'But now I've a notion. It's near sundown already, and we are going to have our supper; for we mostly go to bed soon after the Sun. If you and Mr. Peregrin and all could stay and have a bite with us, we would be pleased!'

'And so should we!' said Frodo. 'But we must be going at once...'

'Ah, but wait a minute! ... I'll drive you to the Ferry. That will save you a good step, and it might also save you trouble of another sort.'²

¹ The movie does not portray Farmer Maggot as a man friendly to the hobbits. Tolkien does. That's just one of the many excellent reasons for reading the book.

² J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) 107.