
The Dunadan: Bilbo's Friend

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



Being the middle volume of the trilogy and therefore sandwiched in between *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Return of the King*, *The Two Towers* can easily be overlooked. That would be a shame, because it also is very good reading. What follows is just one of those passages that Tolkien fans just cannot afford to miss. It is rather striking.

Background: The Company (Fellowship) has left Rivendell. They head south toward Minas Tirith and then east --- to Mordor. At least they would have gone that way; however, the Balrog has lassoed Gandalf into the abyss of Moria, and Boromir the Valiant has been slain by the Uruk Hai. Thus the Nine Walkers are now seven. Frodo and Samwise have set out for Mordor by themselves. Merry and Pippin have been captured by the same Uruks who have slain Boromir. The rest of the Fellowship, that is, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli, have set out to find and rescue Merry and Pippin. They now know that the two hobbits (Merry and Pippin) escaped from the Uruks, who were later slain and burned by the Riders of Rohan. The threesome decides to enter the fabled and ominous Fangorn Forest.

With that the three hunters plunged into the forest of Fangorn. Legolas and Gimli left the tracking to Aragorn. ... So it was that he came upon the place where Merry and Pippin had drunk and bathed their feet. There, plain for all to see were the footprints of two hobbits, one somewhat smaller than the other.

'This is good tidings,' said Aragorn. 'Yet the marks are two days old. And it seems that at this point the hobbits left the water-side.'

'Then what shall we do now?' said Gimli. We cannot pursue them down the whole fastness of Fangorn. We have come ill-supplied. If we do not find them soon, we shall be of no use to them, *except to sit down beside them and show our friendship by starving together.*'

'If that indeed is all we can do, then we must do that, said Aragorn. 'Let us go on.'¹

In our fast-food society where everything—even friendship—seems based upon expediency or convenience, these words of Aragorn are quiet astounding. Perhaps they give us pause to think about what really is important in life and about how we treat one another.

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002) 494. Emphasis mine.