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Legolas, Master Archer

Legendary Creature — Elf Archer

Whenever you cast a spell that targets Legolas, Master Archer, put a +1/+1 counter on Legolas.

Whenever you cast a spell that targets a creature you don't control, Legolas deals damage equal to its power to up to one target creature.

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Reach

MINIK MAYER

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING





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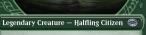
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If one or more tokens would be created under your control, those tokens plus an additional Food token are created instead. Sacrifice three Foods: Draw a card. 2/3 U 0315 LTR • EN PANA



Samwise Gamge

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dary Creature — Halfling Peasant 🦃











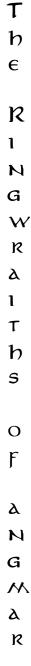














When Nazgul enters the battlefield, the Ring tempts you. Whenever the Ring tempts you, put a +1/+1 counter on each Wraith you control. A deck can have up to nine cards named Nazgul. 1/2 © MEE 11 & © 202 U 0725 LTR • EN PNINO IS

2 😤 Nazgûl 100 Creature - Wraith Knight Deathtouch When Nazgûl enters the battlefield, the Ring tempts you. Whenever the Ring tempts you, put a +1/+1 counter on each Wraith you control. A deck can have up to nine cards named Vazoù 1/2 U 0730 LTR • EN PLORENZO MA © MEE ™ & © 20



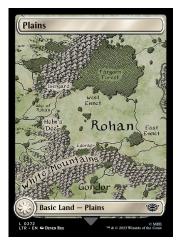


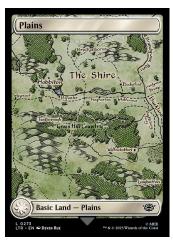


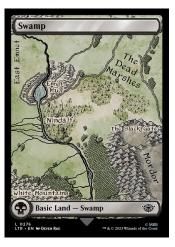


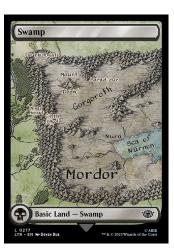


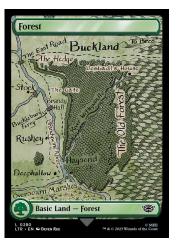






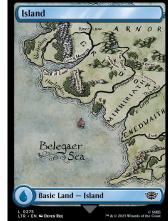


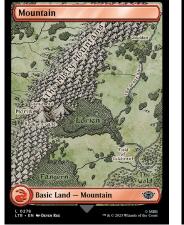




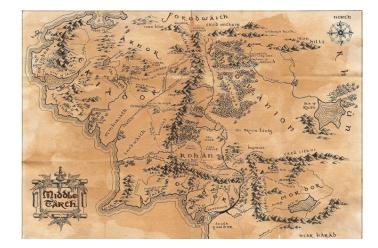




















Bilbo Baggins, a remarkably old and eccentric hobbit, throws a spectacular all-day party to celebrate his 111th birthday and his cousin Frodo's 33rd. Although old, Bilbo has the appearance and energy of someone half his age, while Frodo is now legally able to inherit Bilbo's estate. During his afterdinner speech, Bilbo announces that he is leaving, slips on his magic ring, and disappears in front of his guests' astonished eyes. Back in his hobbit hole, Bag End, he meets with his old friend the wizard Gandalf, and they discuss his plan to leave everything — including the ring — to Frodo. Bilbo becomes agitated and suspicious, and he nearly keeps the ring, but he finally leaves it behind. After he commits to the decision, he feels relieved, as though a heavy burden has been lifted.

Frodo, who knew the plan, settles in to live respectably. For seventeen years, little happens except that Frodo does not age, much like his vanished cousin. Travelers' stories of danger beyond the Shire start to arrive, followed soon by Gandalf. he has come to realize that Frodo's ring is, in fact, the One Ring, created long ago by the Dark Lord Sauron. Sauron is unspeakably evil, and he needs to recover the Ring in order to enslave all the peoples of Middleearth. he has learned from Gollum that the Ring has been found, and he has begun to search for it. Frodo must leave the Shire soon, before Sauron finds him, to keep the Ring safe.

Frodo promises Gandalf that he will leave no later than autumn, and the wizard promises to return to accompany him to Rivendell. To misdirect any pursuit, Frodo pretends to move to the country. Accompanied by Sam Gamgee, his friend and gardener, and his cousin Pippin Took, Frodo sets off walking cross-country. Along the way, they repeatedly encounter one or more frightening strangers: large men wearing black cloaks and riding large black horses, whose presence instills fear in anyone who sees them. Gach time, Frodo feels an almost irresistible urge to put on the Ring to hide from them. One of these Black Riders nearly finds them hiding along the roadside, but is scared off by the arrival of a party of elves who give the hobbits shelter for the night. Dogged by the Black Riders on their trail, the hobbits get Farmer Maggot to smuggle them to the ferry across the Brandywine River. Safe for the moment in his new house at Crickhollow, Frodo breaks the news to his close friends Merry and Pippin that he will be leaving the Shire first thing in the morning. They insist on accompanying him, having long suspected his plans. hoping to lose the pursuit by avoiding the Road, they set off for the Old Forest, an ancient woodland with a sinister reputation on the border of the Shire.

The hobbits find the Old Forest unsettling. As Merry explains, the trees of the Forest are more alive—or aware—than normal trees. They watch intruders, sometimes dropping branches on them or even grabbing them with roots, and do not like people much. The paths of the Forest are constantly changing, and the hobbits find themselves guided to the heart of the Forest, the valley of the Withywindle. There they find themselves unnaturally sleepy, and they lay down to rest near a giant willow tree. Sam saves Frodo when the tree uses a root to try to drown him, but they are unable to save Merry and Pippin who have been swallowed by cracks in its trunk. When they run calling for help, they find a strange man dressed in blue with yellow boots. he introduces himself as Tom Bombadil, and he breaks frequently into nonsense—singing, but he saves Merry and Pippin from Old Man Willow. As night falls, he leads them to his house on the border of the Old Forest.

The house of Tom Bombadil provides warmth and shelter after the frightening experience with the Old Forest. When Frodo lets Bombadil take the Ring, Tom causes it to vanish rather than the other way around. Annoyed, Frodo puts it on, but Tom remains unaffected and tells him to stop playing. Tom sends the hobbits north along the Barrowdowns, but they quickly lose their bearings when fog rolls in. A wight captures Frodo, and he wakes to find himself inside the barrow where the wight is preparing to kill his unconscious friends. Terrified and desperate, Frodo draws upon unexpected resources, attacking the wight and singing a charm Tom had given the hobbits. Tom breaks open the barrow and gives each hobbit a knife from the wight's hoard then leads them safely to the Road.

When they reach *The Inn of the Prancing Pony*, Frodo uses the name Underhill as a disguise, following Gandalf's advice. Enjoying himself in the common room, Frodo draws unwanted attention when he inadvertently puts on the Ring and vanishes in front of the crowd. Strider the Ranger, who seems to know Frodo's true identity and what he carries, follows them back to their room, where he warns the hobbits that the Black Riders will soon hear of Frodo's stunt, and offers to go with them as a wilderness guide.













While the hobbits are still contemplating his offer, put off by his scruffy appearance, Butterbur the innkeeper arrives with a letter from Gandalf that should have been sent weeks earlier. The letter urges Frodo to leave the Shire immediately and identifies Strider as a friend to be trusted. Merry suddenly bursts in with news that a Black Rider is in town. They decide not to sleep in their rooms that night.

That night, Black Riders simultaneously attack Frodo's house in Buckland and ransack his inn room at Bree. In the morning, the hobbits discover that all the horses have been driven out of the stable. They manage to buy a halfstarved pony, whom Sam immediately calls Bill, to carry supplies, and they set off with Strider. After traveling through marshlands and hills, they come to the ruined watchtower on Weathertop. Strider finds evidence that Gandalf may have been there before them, but he is not certain.

That night, five Black Riders attack their camp on the hillside. As they approach, Frodo feels compelled to put on the Ring. Unable to resist, he puts it on and finds himself able to see the Riders clearly. The Ringwraiths appear to be men, robed and armed with silver knives. Frodo calls the name of Elbereth and strikes at their leader, but he is stabbed in the shoulder. Struck by a deathly enchantment as well as the blade, he barely manages to remove the Ring before he faints.

With Frodo wounded, the Black Riders allow themselves to be driven off. Strider treats the injury with *athelas*, a plant considered a weed by most but having healing properties. he knows that Frodo must be taken to Rivendell as quickly as possible, because the blade which injured him carries an evil enchantment that only Elrond can dispel, but they still have two weeks to travel. Even with Frodo riding the pony, he becomes weaker each day. Finally they return to the Road, where they meet Elorfindel, an elf-lord sent to search for them. As they approach the Ford of Bruinen at the boundary of Rivendell, five Riders appear close behind them while four others try to cut off Frodo's escape.

Frodo passes the Ford barely ahead of the Nine. They call out for his surrender, and he feels the compulsion of their wills against his own. Nevertheless, he defies them, and they urge their horses into the water. A magical flood rises against this invasion of Elrond's territory, and Frodo watches as it carries the Riders away even as he falls into unconsciousness Frodo wakes in a strange bed, feeling much better. Gandalf, who has been sitting with Frodo, explains that he had been imprisoned, but refuses to elaborate until Frodo is fully recovered. Gandalf also identifies the Black Riders as the Nazgûl, or Ringwraiths. Although not destroyed by the flood, they have been crippled. Frodo reunites with his companions, and he soon discovers that Bilbo lives in Elrond's house. Bilbo asks to see the Ring, but before Frodo's eyes, the old hobbit seems to transform into a nasty, greedy creature. Frodo hides the Ring away, and the moment passes.

The following day, Glrond calls a Council to decide what should be done about the Ring. First they review its history, from its forging to its loss in the Great River Anduin. Boromir, son of the Steward of Gondor, recounts his dream of *Isildur's Bane*, which he now learns is the Ring, and Aragorn reveals himself as Isildur's heir, the rightful king of Gondor. After Bilbo and Frodo recount their own experiences with the Ring, Gandalf rises to fill in the gap between the Ring's loss and its reappearance in Bilbo's possession. he explains how Gollum found the Ring, and that when he finally emerged to search for it, he found his way to Mordor, where he revealed the Ring's new bearer to Sauron. The Gnemy immediately dispatched the Nine to search for it. Meanwhile, Gandalf went to consult Saruman the White, who attempted to convince Gandalf to ally with the Gnemy, waiting patiently to overthrow him and take his place. Saruman then imprisoned Gandalf when he refused, who escaped with the help of the eagles. This betrayal shocks many, as Saruman had been their strongest ally.

Although Boromír wants to use the Ring as a weapon, Gandalf and Elrond know that the Ring will corrupt anyone who uses it. Even if Sauron were destroyed, the new wielder of the Ring would become as evil, if not more so, and the threat would remain. The only choice is to send a small group secretly into Mordor, to cast the Ring back into the fires of Mount Doom where it was forged. They hope Sauron will not expect this, nor will he notice a handful of people when whole armies are moving. Although terribly afraid, Frodo volunteers to take the Ring. A company of nine people, to match the Nine Ringwraiths, is selected for the task: Frodo, Gandalf, Aragorn, Boromír, Legolas the elf, Gimli the dwarf, along with Sam, Merry, and Pippin, become the Fellowship of the Ring.

Before they depart, Bilbo gives Frodo his elven sword, Sting, and a mailshirt made of mithril, the lightest and strongest metal in Middle-earth. The elves also reforge Narsil, so that Aragorn can carry the blade against the Gnemy.













The Fellowship begins the journey southward, but before they reach the mountain, flocks of birds appear scouting the landscape, spies of either Sauron or Saruman. A blizzard that strikes while they are on a mountain path forces them to turn back before the snow buries them or they freeze to death. As they descend, an attack by vicious wargs convinces them that they need to find a more sheltered path. They resolve to traverse the Mines of Moría, which once housed the greatest dwarven civilízation but are now overrun by orcs and foul creatures.

The entrance to Moria is nearly blocked by a noxious lake, but the group manages to reach the doors. Gandalf's spells fail to open the doors, until a question from Merry suggests the password. As the group enters, a long tentacle comes up from the water and grabs Frodo by the ankle. he manages to get free, but twenty more tentacles pull the doors down, trapping the party within. Troubled that Frodo was attacked first but otherwise unperturbed, Gandalf takes the lead.

When they pause at a crossway, Pippin drops a stone down a well. The sound echoes, and is answered by the noise of hammers. Frodo hears quiet footfalls behind them, and glowing eyes appear watching them when they rest. Still, nothing approaches the party directly before they reach the other side. A shaft of light leads them to the tomb of Balin, one of Gimli's kin who recently sought to reclaim Moria. A record-book found in the tomb reveals that the dwarves were attacked by orcs and slain. As the group prepares to leave, orcs attack the chamber of the tomb. Although they manage to fight them off, a huge orc-chieftain spears Frodo. To everyone's surprise and relief, Bilbo's mailshirt saves his life.

The Fellowship flees to the Bridge of Khazad-Dûm, a narrow span across an abyss and the last obstacle before the main gate. As the party runs across, Gandalf turns to face a new terror that approaches: a Balrog. It is a dreadful spirit of shadow and flame, Durin's Bane, the evil that caused the downfall of Moria. Gandalf holds off the Balrog, and then collapses the bridge to hurl it into the depths. Just as he turns away, the Balrog's flaming whip uncurls and pulls Gandalf down, as well. Weeping, the remainder of the Fellowship flees, escaping from the mines into the light of early afternoon.

Unable to stop for their grief because they know that orcs will soon pursue them, the remaining members of the Fellowship race away from Moria. Only pausing long enough to tend the injuries of Frodo and Sam, they reach the elven woods of Lothlórien that night. Although the elves of Lothlórien are mistrustful, especially of the dwarf, they admit the Fellowship into their protected land. Word of Gandalfs fall deeply troubles the Lord and Lady of the Wood. Lady Galadriel observes that the quest hangs in the balance, but it may still succeed if the remaining eight remain faithful. Her gaze affects them all deeply, and she seems to offer each a choice to abandon the quest in exchange for their heart's desire. Frodo and Boromir seem most affected, but neither will explain what she offered him.

The elves offer shelter, healing, and advice to the Fellowship, and they linger in the timeless beauty of the elven realm. When Frodo becomes restless, he and Bam encounter Galadriel. Bhe offers them a vision from her mirror, which can show the past, the present, or the uncertain future. When Bam looks, he first sees Frodo lying pale and lifeless, then he sees the felling of trees in the Bhire and the destruction of his own home. Galadriel warns him that his vision was of the future, and any attempt to prevent it might actually bring it to pass. Frodo's vision shows first a man like Gandalf, then Bilbo, and then a series of unexplained images. Buddenly the mirror goes dark, and he sees the Eye of Bauron searching for him. he looks away just in time. Impressed by Galadriel's power, Frodo offers to give her the Ring. Borely tempted, she resists and accepts that her fate will be to diminish and leave Middle-earth.

The entire Fellowship resolves to continue beyond Lothlórien, but they are divided as to what direction they should take. Boromir plans to return to his home in Minas Tirith, and many would prefer that destination to Mordor. Aragorn had planned to go to Gondor himself, but he hesitates to choose between his own desire and the need of the Ringbearer.

The elves outfit boats to navigate the Great River, but this only delays the decision. The Fellowship receive elven cloaks, which change color to match their surroundings, coils of elven rope, and lembas, a highly nourishing food for travel. Galadriel bestows gifts upon each member of the company. To Aragorn, she gives a sheath for his reforged sword as well as a green elfstone as a token from Arwen, his love. Boromir receives a belt of gold, and Merry and Pippin get silver belts. Legolas's short bow is replaced with a longbow of the Galadrim. To Bam, in recognition that he is a gardener, she gives a small box filled with enchanted earth from her own orchard and the seed of a mallorn tree. Bhe does not know what to give Gimli, because the elves and dwarves have been unfriendly for many years, and he hesitantly asks for a strand of her hair. Bhe gives him three. Lastly, she gives Frodo a small phial that shines with the light of Gärendil's star, to shine for him "in dark places, when all other lights go out."













For several days, the company travels downstream through barren countryside. One evening, \mathfrak{S} am describes a strange sight — a log with eyes that seems to be following them. he and Frodo suspect it is Gollum, who has been following them since Moria, and Aragorn soon confirms their guess, but they are unable to catch him. A party of orcs attacks them near the rapids of \mathfrak{S} arn Gebir without causing significant damage, but they are accompanied by a great flying creature that inflicts terror on all beneath its shadow. Legolas shoots the creature with the bow of the Galadrim and it falls, but now the party knows that the Black Riders have taken to the air.

After passing the Argonath, enormous statues carved from the cliffs themselves that mark the ancient boundary of Gondor, the party comes to a lake and the shores of Amon hen, the hill of Sight, where they must decide which way to take. Frodo cannot choose, and asks for an hour alone to consider his options. Boromir secretly follows him and tries to convince him to take the Ring to Minas Tirith. Boromir's words reveal that he desires to wield the Ring himself, and he attempts to take it from Frodo. Frightened, the hobbit puts on the Ring and runs to the top of the hill, where he finds a stone seat. From that spot, he magically perceives the movement of armies and the smoke of battle throughout Middle-earth. As with Galadriel's mirror, he is nearly seen by Sauron, but a voice warns him to remove the Ring just in time. Aware of the danger and knowing that the madness that took Boromir will gradually reach all the other members of the Fellowship, he resolves to go to Mordor alone.

When the other members of the Fellowship realize that Boromir has gone, they separate and begin to search for him and Frodo. Aragorn runs toward the Seat, but Sam realizes what Frodo will decide to do and returns to the shore. he catches Frodo trying to slip away in one of the boats, and insists on going with him. They cross the lake and set off together toward Mordor. Although Aragorn finds tracks that show Frodo headed downhill, he decides to go to the Seeing Seat rather than follow. Before he can see anything significant, he hears Boromir's horn and the sound of orcs. Aragorn finds Boromir dying from the wounds of many orc-arrows. Boromir confesses that he tried to take the Ring from Frodo and that Merry and Pippin have been captured by the orcs. Legolas and Gimli help Aragorn array Boromir in a boat for a funeral, and they discover that the orcs come from both Sauron and Saruman. Aragorn decides to let the Ringbearer go, while the remaining three members of the Fellowship will pursue Merry and Pippin's captors. Taking only essential equipment, they begin running after the orcs.

HE ORD OF THE RINGS

Soon the three hunters find several dead orcs, victims of an argument won by Saruman's servants. Later, they find hobbit tracks and an elven brooch. heartened by this, in four days, they run 135 miles until they encounter a troop of the horsemen of Rohan, led by Éomer. Tensions run high, because both the riders and the hunters are wary of the Enemy. Learning the identity of Aragorn, the heir of Isildur, as well as the hobbits, Éomer expresses amazement that creatures of legend have come to walk the earth. Satisfied that the companions are not a threat, he tells them that the Rohirrim destroyed the orcs but found no signs of the hobbits. The lends them two horses, and Aragorn and his friends continue to Fangorn Forest, where they find the remains of the orcs. Fangorn has a similar reputation to the Old Forest, but it is much larger and more dangerous. As they camp on the edge of the trees, an old man appears and scares off their horses, then vanishes.

After their capture, Merry and Pippin are first carried by the orcs and then forced to run. Although some of the orcs want to kill them, the leader, Uglúk, insists on taking them unharmed to Saruman in Isengard. A fight breaks out which the larger Isengarders win. Pippin takes advantage of a moment of confusion to run away from the main trail and drop his brooch, hoping to leave clear prints for Aragorn to follow. They are forced to run across the plains, but soon the orcs are harassed by armed horsemen who occasionally shoot stragglers. Just before the orcs reach the forest, the riders surround them and cut off escape.













In the night, the leader of the Mordor orcs carries the hobbits away from the main group of orcs to search for the Ring, but he is killed by a horseman's spear. When the battle begins, the hobbits hide in the forest. Wandering in the forest, the hobbits climb a small hill to get a better view of the area. There they meet Treebeard, a walking and talking stumpy oak tree. he is in fact an Ent, and he finds the hobbits puzzling, because he does not recognize their race. he asks for news of Gandalf and reveals that he dislikes Saruman's recent activities. When the hobbits ask what side he is on, Treebeard replies that he does not take sides, because no one takes his side, the side of nature. he takes Merry and Pippin to his home and feeds them Ent-draught, a drink that makes them grow like young trees. Treebeard explains Saruman to the hobbits, indicating that while he once was wise and learned, he has turned away from the natural world toward machines, even creating an unnatural crossbreed between orcs and men: the Uruk-hai. Treebeard calls an Entmoot to deal with Saruman, and after careful deliberation, the Ents march to war.

Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli follow hobbit tracks into Fangorn. They find the hill on which the hobbits met Treebeard, where they encounter an old man. Fearing he is Saruman, they attack him but he foils their attempts. It is not Saruman, however, but Gandalf returned and robed in white. He reassures them that Merry and Pippin are safe, and informs them that the four of them must go to Edoras, the capital of Rohan. He briefly recounts his struggle with the Balrog, which nearly killed him before he destroyed it. He has returned to lead the fight against Mordor. Summoning his own horse, Shadowfax, as well as their lost mounts, Gandalf leads them over the plains toward Edoras.

The guards of Edoras receive them suspiciously, having been warned by King Théoden's counselor, Wormtongue. At the doors of the king's hall, the wardens insist on taking their weapons. Théoden is an old man, attended by his beautiful niece Éowyn and Wormtongue, and he dislikes Gandalf. Undeterred, Gandalf reveals himself as Gandalf the White, and urges the king to throw off his weariness and take up his sword again. Éomer, who had been imprisoned, is released, and Wormtongue is sent back to his true master, Saruman. Realizing he has allowed events to pass him by, Théoden summons his army and rides to war, leaving Éowyn to rule.

The Ríders of Rohan depart for the Fords of Isen, while a great heaviness grows in the air. As they ride, Legolas perceíves a cloud rísing from Isengard but cannot explain it. Before they reach the ford, a messenger warns of a vast army on the way, so they turn aside to the fortress of helm's Deep. Gandalf rídes off alone to gather news and men while the army defends the fortress, which has never fallen. Thousands of orcs besiege the Deep. Aragorn and Éomer fight bravely at the gates, while Legolas and Gimli compete to see who can kill more orcs. The fighting is hard but not hopeless, until an explosion blows a hole in the wall and orcs overrun the defenses. Théoden resolves to make a desperate charge. As he rides out at dawn, the orc-host discovers a mysterious wood has sprung up behind them. Then Gandalf arrives with more men. Attacked from two sides, the orcs flee into the trees, never to be seen again.

With the battle ended, Gandalf leads Théoden, along with Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli, to Isengard. As they ride, Gimli describes the marvelous caves behind helm's Deep, and he agrees to visit Fangorn with Legolas if the elf will visit the caves. When Ents appear, Théoden marvels that children's stories have come to life. The trees depart helm's Deep and leave behind two mounds over the buried orcs. The king's party passes a pillar with a white hand, now thrown down, and are amazed to find the walls of Isengard in shambles. On a pile of rubble next to the gate, they find Merry and Pippin eating, drinking wine, and smoking Longbottom Leaf from the Shire. The hobbits send Gandalf and Théoden on to Treebeard, but Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli stay to talk to their friends.

The Ents had attacked Isengard as soon as the army set out for helm's Deep, and Treebeard and the others quickly reduced the walls to rubble. From Orthanc, his tower, Saruman sent fires out of the ground to burn the Ents, but they diverted the river Isen and drowned the entire area. Saruman is now trapped in the tower, which the Ents cannot damage. Gandalf arrived in the night to ask for the trees to be sent to helm's Deep, much to the hobbits' surprise. The next day Wormtongue arrived, dismayed by the destruction, but Treebeard allowed him to join Saruman in the tower. Merry and Pippin found a stash of food and pipeweed in the guardhouse and took up their post to await the return of Gandalf with the king.

After lunch, the friends join Gandalf and Théoden to confront Garuman. Gandalf warns them that Garuman's voice can enchant, so they must be wary. Garuman appears in a robe of rainbow colors, and he speaks so reasonably and fairly that everyone feels sorry for him, forgetting that he attacked first. The watchers expect Théoden to side with Garuman, but the king resists the spell. Gandalf offers Garuman a chance to repent and go free, but the wizard's pride refuses. Gandalf breaks his staff and with it the spell of his voice. Wormtongue throws a crystal ball at Garuman's head, missing completely, which Pippin fetches before it rolls into the water. Gandalf quickly takes it, remarking that the stone is probably the most valuable item in Orthanc.













On the ride back to Edoras, Pippin becomes obsessed with looking again at the stone from Isengard. he steals it from Gandalf that night and uncovers it. When he cries out and collapses, Gandalf revives him and interrogates him. The stone, known as a *palantir*, allows communication across distances, and Pippin found himself speaking to the Dark Lord himself. Fortunately, Sauron did not learn of Frodo's quest because he assumed that Pippin is the Ringbearer and is imprisoned in Orthanc. Gandalf leaves the stone with Aragorn and rides immediately with Pippin to Minas Tirith.

Frodo and 9am find themselves lost in the rocky hills west of the river. They know Gollum is following, and the hobbits barely manage to capture and bind the wiry creature. 9urprisingly, Frodo pities Gollum. Gollum agrees to guide Frodo and 9am to the Black Gate, and he swears by the Ring to obey its master. Frodo accepts the promise, knowing that the Ring will hold him to it. happy to be released, Gollum begins to go by his true name, 9méagol, and seems eager to please Frodo. 9am remains suspicious.

Gollum leads them from the hills into the Dead Marshes, a haunted swamp. A Nazgûl passes overhead, nearly paralyzing Gollum with fear, but the three travelers find their way through to the ashy wasteland beyond. During a daytime rest, Sam overhears Gollum talking to himself, torn between his desire for the Ring and his promise to obey Frodo. For the moment the promise wins, but Gollum has begun to imagine ways to get the Ring and become its master, letting him obey the word of his promise, if not its spirit.

At the Black Gate, Frodo and Sam realize the hopelessness of their quest. The Gate looms above them, manned by countless watchful orcs, with no way to approach unseen. Gollum begs them not to enter, and he reveals that there is another way, extremely difficult and dangerous, but safer. In the mountains above Minas Morgul, the home of the Ringwraiths, a narrow path leads by many stairs over the mountains and into Mordor itself. Sam mistrusts any suggestion from Gollum, but Frodo chooses to accept his help.

The countryside as they journey south becomes green and pleasant, blooming with herbs and flowers, although marked by signs of disease. Gollum goes hunting during their midday rest, returning with rabbits. Gollum would rather eat them raw and leaves rather than watch Sam spoil the meat by cooking it. The fire attracts men of Gondor, who hold Frodo and Sam captive. They are part of a company ambushing Sauron's forces, led by Faramír. The hobbits witness the ambush, and Sam is thrilled to see an oliphaunt. After the battle, Faramír finds Frodo's explanations unsatisfying. When Frodo tells him to ask Boromír, Faramír reveals that Boromír, his brother, is dead. Nevertheless, Faramír takes Frodo and Sam to his hidden base, henneth Annûn, and along the way tells Frodo that he knows that the hobbit did not part well with Boromír, and that he now carries an item of great importance to the Gnemy. Not knowing what it is, Faramír swears that he would not pick up the Ring if it lay in the road. Sam accidentally reveals that Frodo's burden is the Ring, but Faramír stands by his word, making no attempt to take it.

In the night, Faramír wakes Frodo and shows him Gollum fishing in the sacred pool of henneth Annûn. Frodo begs that Gollum's life be spared, and Faramír agrees if Frodo will help the Gondoríans to capture him. Frodo does so, but Gollum feels betrayed; his fragile trust is broken. Faramír warns the hobbits against following Gollum, but he cannot offer any alternative. Frodo resolves to continue.

Although still fearful, Faramir does his best to help Frodo and Sam. he gives them food for the journey, as well as good walking staves, and he advises them that the water of Morgul Vale is poisonous. While they continue along the southern road, a stifling brown cloud spreads from Mordor, hiding the dawn and making even noon seem like evening. At one point, while the hobbits rest, Gollum disappears for several hours without an explanation. After three days, they reach a crossroads marked by the statue of an ancient king. Although the statue's head has been replaced by a rock painted with the Gye of Sauron, Frodo discovers the king's head at the side of the road, crowned with blooming flowers. A ray of sunlight escapes from the west at the edge of the dreadful cloud, and then the sun sets and pitch-black darkness falls.

With the turn toward Mordor, Frodo finds the burden of the Ring much heavier, a weight dragging him down. They are forced to use the main road into Morgul Vale, leading straight toward the terrifying city of the Ringwraiths. Compelled by a force beyond himself, Frodo hurries along the road toward the city. Sam catches him just before he reaches an exposed bridge and they turn aside to a hidden path. Frodo feels the Ring resist, pulling him backward. Before they go far on the path, the towers of the city flash with lightning, and an enormous army emerges from the gates, led by a Black Rider, the Witchking himself. The Wraith pauses on the bridge, and Frodo feels the overwhelming command to put on the Ring. Although his own will denies the command, he watches his hand reach for the Ring. he forces himself to grasp instead the phial of Galadriel, and the urge passes. Soon the Witchking moves on, and the hobbits resume their climb.













The path proceeds by a series of treacherous staircases along high cliffs, so steep that the hobbits have to crawl. After hours of exhausting climbing, they reach the top of the stairs and find a place to rest before they attempt the final tunnel. Frodo and Sam discuss their predicament, realizing that they have become part of one of the great stories that never really end. While they talk, Gollum disappears, and when he returns he finds them sleeping peacefully. A look of longing reveals that he is truly an old, lonely hobbit who should be pitied rather than hated. Sam wakes, and the moment passes. Frodo offers to let Gollum leave, now that they are within sight of the pass, but he insists on staying at least until they pass the tunnel.

They reach the tunnel soon after, and it reeks of filth. Determined to go on, Frodo and Sam enter, gagging on the stench and blinded by its impenetrable darkness. They soon lose track of Gollum, and the atmosphere weighs on them so heavily they can barely force themselves to continue. They hear gurgling and hissing and realize that Gollum has led them into a trap. At Sam's urging, Frodo pulls out the phial of Galadriel, and its healing light reveals the source of the reek and the malice: the glittering eyes of an enormous spider, Shelob. She retreats from the light, and the hobbits find their way to an exit. Although it is blocked by Shelob's webs, Frodo hands Sam the phial and cuts them with his elven sword, Sting, allowing them to escape.

Frodo runs ahead, quickly outpacing Sam and the elven light, and Shelob strikes. She is an ancient evil, wanting only to devour everything, and Gollum made a pact with her to deliver the hobbits, hoping to find the Ring in their discarded clothing after she has eaten. Sam sees her coming, but Gollum grabs him from behind. By the time Sam fights off the treacherous Gollum, who escapes back into the tunnel, Shelob has stung Frodo and is wrapping him in her webs. Taking up Frodo's fallen elven sword, Sam attacks Shelob. At first she barely notices, but he slices off one of her claws and stabs out an eye. Angered, she tries to smother him with her own weight. With the last of his strength, Sam holds Sting above his head. While he could not injure Shelob much on his own, her own strength and weight drive the sword deep into her belly. Combined with the light of Galadriel, the damage is sufficient to drive Shelob away.







After she is gone, Sam tries to revive Frodo, but he appears dead. At first Sam despairs, even considering suicide, but his hobbit-sense surfaces and he decides to continue the quest. he carefully arranges Frodo's body, leaving his sword to replace Sting. Then he takes the Ring from around Frodo's neck, also keeping the phial of Galadriel. Still reluctant to leave, Sam goes to the top of the pass. The sound of orc-voices causes him to put on the Ring. Instead of feeling invisible, he feels terribly exposed to the Gye of Sauron, but the orcs do not see him as they approach Frodo's body. There they meet another group of orcs coming up from the tunnel. Sam learns from their conversation that Frodo is not dead, but before he can do anything, the orcs take Frodo prisoner and carry him into their tower. The doors shut before Sam can reach them, and he is left alone outside, with Frodo a prisoner of the enemy.

THE FORD OF THE RINGS THE REFURN OF THE RINGS

Gandalf and Pippin ride Shadowfax through the night, pausing only briefly to rest. They are now heading for Minas Tirith, the capital of Gondor, and three days have passed since Pippin looked into the *palantir*. As they ride, warning beacons call Rohan to aid the city. They enter the city near dawn and make their way through its seven gates and circles to the White Tower and the seat of Denethor, Steward of Gondor. Denethor quizzes Pippin closely about his son Boromir's death, and Pippin pledges himself to the old man's service in Boromir's memory. After they are done, Gandalf and Denethor exchange words, revealing a tension between them that Pippin only half understands. When Denethor gives them leave, Gandalf goes to gather news and take part in councils of war, while Pippin meets Beregond, a fellow-guardsman, to learn about his new duties and the city. Pippin spends his afternoon in the company of Beregond's son Bergil, watching as reinforcements arrive at the city gates — always welcome, but fewer than the city needs.

Merry, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli leave Isengard with Théoden soon after Gandalf and Pippin depart. Shortly after they set out, a group of riders overtakes them. They are the Dúnedaín, Aragorn's people from the North, accompanied by the sons of Elrond, and they have answered a summons of Galadriel to help their chieftain. At helm's Deep again, Merry swears himself to the service of Théoden and joins his company. Aragorn, however, has used the *palantir*, taking control of it away from Sauron. his vision shows that he must take the Paths of the Dead, so he rídes to Dunharrow. Éowyn welcomes their news, but when she learns their intention to depart by the haunted path she becomes angry. She not only believes Aragorn is throwing away his life and the lives of his warriors when they are most needed, but she has also fallen in love with him. The Paths of the Dead begin at a stone door into the mountainside, and everyone who approaches feels the chill of death. As they travel through the tunnels, Gimli feels the dead following. Aragorn orders them to follow and as the heir of Isildur, he has the right to command their service. They emerge from the mountains in the south of Gondor, near the sea, and Aragorn leads his men and an army of the dead to war as the dark cloud from Mordor blocks out the sunlight.

Back in Dunharrow, Merry arrives with Théoden to gather as many Riders as can be found before riding on to Minas Tirith. There Éowyn tells them of Aragorn's path, and Théoden explains the legends of the haunted path to Merry. As they talk, a herald of Gondor arrives bearing a red arrow and begs for Rohan's aid. Théoden agrees to lead his men to Minas Tirith, although he warns that their numbers are few. The next morning has no dawn. The king releases Merry from service, telling him that he is too small to ride a horse into battle. A young rider called Dernhelm then offers to carry the hobbit secretly; to Merry, the rider looks like he wants to die.

Pippin spends most of his first day as a Tower Guard standing near Denethor while the steward talks to Gandalf and his other counselors. At sunset, Pippin watches a small group of horsemen try to reach the city while five winged Nazgûl attack them. Gandalf rides to their rescue, driving away the Black Riders, and then escorts Faramir into his father's presence. There he tells of his meeting with Frodo. Gandalf seems frightened by Frodo's chosen path, but Denethor is angry with Faramir and jealous of the respect his son gives the wizard. The next morning, the morning with no dawn, Denethor sends the exhausted Faramir back into the field. Goon, watchers on the city's walls can see and hear fighting and explosions. When the retreat reaches the city, they bring Faramir's unconscious body with them.













The city is soon surrounded and all the roads — including the one leading to Rohan — are blocked by the enemy, who begins lobbing missiles into the city. Some explode, while others are the heads of the men who have died on the battlefield. Combined with the terrible cries of the Nazgûl, these tactics soon paralyze the defenders. Through the siege, Denethor sits next to the dying Faramir, and Gandalf takes command of the city. When the assault on the gates begins, Denethor has his son carried to the tombs, where he plans to burn both of them alive before the city falls. Pippin races to find Gandalf, finding the wizard at the ruined gates of the city preparing to meet the Lord of the Nazgûl. Just as the Witchking prepares to strike, a cock crows and the horns of Rohan sound in the distance.

Four days out from Dunharrow, Merry feels like an unwanted piece of luggage among the Rohirrim, who have camped while they decide what to do about the army that blocks their road. Ghân-buri-Ghân, a chieftain of the Wild Men, offers to guide them around the orcs by a hidden road. As they approach the battlefield the wind begins to change, and the light of dawn breaks through the edges of the Mordor cloud. A flash and explosion mark the downfall of the gates, but Théoden answers with the horns of Rohan, and they attack the unsuspecting enemy from behind, singing as they ride.

The Witchking of the Nazgûl vanishes from the city gates to meet Théoden's attack. When Théoden's horse panics and falls on his rider, only Dernhelm and Merry stay. The Witchking laughs, convinced that no man can kill him, but Dernhelm reveals himself as Éowyn, a woman. Merry strikes at the Wraith, and when it stumbles, Éowyn destroys him. Théoden passes, and Éomer leads the Rohirrim in a vengeful charge, not caring about strategy. Merry follows Théoden's and Éowyn's bodies into the city. Éowyn is still alive, and the Gondorians send her to the houses of healing. Meanwhile, the fighting before the city goes against Gondor when a fleet of black-sailed ships appears on the river. As hope dies, the lead ship unfurls a banner, revealing the tree of Gondor. Aragorn and his men come to shore, along with many fighters they have gathered in southern Gondor, and soon win the battle. Dippin begs Gandalf to save Faramir from Denethor's madness. In the mausoleum, they find Faramir laid on an unlit pyre, but Gandalf quickly removes him. The wizard reminds the steward that he should defend his city, but Denethor laughs. he reveals that he holds a *palantir*, and that it shows victory is impossible. he refuses to yield his power to Aragorn, and if he cannot rule Gondor himself in peace, he prefers death. he tries to stab Faramir, but when that fails he leaps onto the pyre and sets it alight. The horrified witnesses bear Faramir to the houses of healing.

Dippin leads Merry to the houses of healing. Aragorn enters the city secretly to tend the injured. When he revives Faramir, the new steward recognizes his king. Aragorn treats Éowyn's injuries, but he notes that her despair goes back far before her encounter with the Nazgûl. Finally, he wakes Merry to grief at the loss of Théoden, but not despair. The next day, Legolas and Gimli explain Aragorn's timely arrival. After leaving the Paths of the Dead, Aragorn used the army of ghosts to overcome the Corsairs of Umbar. Aragorn released the dead from their oath before sailing upriver with the armies of southern Gondor. A wind from the south blew away the darkness of Mordor and brought the ships to the battle just in time.

While the friends talk, Aragorn and Gandalf hold a council to decide their next actions. Gandalf confirms that they have no hope of winning the war against Sauron, which is why the Council of Elrond decided to destroy the Ring. Once it is gone, Sauron's power will be destroyed and the war will end. All that the forces of the West can do is try to distract the Enemy so that Frodo can complete his quest. Sauron expects and fears that they will use the Ring, so if they behave as though they have it he will strike at them rather than guard his own country. They decide to set out two days later for Mordor with an army of only seven thousand men.

Legolas and Gimli accompany Aragorn when the army leaves, and Pippin marches with the Guard of Minas Tirith, but Merry stays behind to heal. As they travel, heralds announce the return of the king. Nazgûl haunt their steps, and Aragorn allows the most frightened to turn aside. At the Black Gate, Gauron's evil herald shows them Frodo's mithril coat. he threatens years of torture and anguish for the spy if they do not agree to Gauron's terms. They refuse, and while the messenger races back to the Black Gate, the armies of Mordor surround Aragorn's small army. Pippin, at first despairing at the signs of Frodo's capture, hardens his resolve, and soon he kills a hill troll that falls on top of him. he thinks he hears voices announcing the arrival of the eagles, but he passes out before he finds out.













Sam awakens outside the underground gates of the Tower of Cirith Ungol, makes his way back out of the tunnel, and puts the Ring on again. The lure of power tempts him, but his love for Frodo and his own common sense outweigh the visions of the Ring. he realizes that if he wears the Ring inside Mordor, Sauron will immediately sense it and try to take it back. At the entrance to the fortress, he defeats a magical barrier with the phial of Galadriel. Although a warning sounds, he soon discovers that the orcs have killed each other. he finds Frodo stripped and beaten in the topmost chamber of the tower. Frodo fears that the orcs have taken the Ring and the quest has failed. When Sam reveals he took it for safety, for a moment Frodo sees him as an orc. Frodo warns his friend not to come between him and his burden again. They disguise themselves in orc clothing and leave the tower just before a Nazgûl arrives.

Traveling through the rough and waterless country of Mordor is very difficult for Frodo, and he quickly abandons his heavy orcish mailshirt. he is so tired that he cannot even remember the Shíre. As the hobbits struggle along, they hear the death cry of the Witchking, but it does little to raise their spirits. They learn from the overhead conversation of two orcs that Gollum still follows them. A troop of orcs catches them on the road, but they are mistaken for orcs themselves and forced to join the march until they can escape. Sam realizes that they will not have either the strength or the food to leave Mordor after destroying the Ring, but the realization only makes him more determined to see the quest to its end. Frodo grows steadily weaker, worn down by the physical and psychic burden of the Ring. Sam offers to take it once again, but Frodo nearly draws his sword on him. Instead, they cast off as much as they can spare, saving little more than food and their elven gifts. When they reach the mountain, Sam carries his master, unsure of where they are headed but knowing they must continue. They finally crawl onto Sauron's road from his fortress to the Gracks of Doom. For a moment the clouds break and they have a glimpse of the Gye of Sauron.

Frodo collapses, convinced they have been seen, but 9am again picks him up to continue. Before 9am can move, Gollum attacks in an attempt to take the Ring from Frodo but throws Gollum off. 9am offers to kill Gollum, but after Frodo leaves, 9am pities the debased creature too much to kill him and orders him away instead. 9am follows his master, unaware that Gollum continues to follow, maddened by his lust for the Ring. Sam enters a chamber in the mountain where he sees Frodo, but rather than cast the Ring into the fire, as he always intended, Frodo claims it for his own. Sam is knocked down by Gollum, who attacks the invisible Frodo, while Sauron realizes what is happening and sends the Nazgûl to the mountain. Sam sees Gollum bite an invisible hand, and Frodo reappears clutching at his missing finger. Gollum dances a mad celebration, but he stumbles and falls into the fire. The Ring is consumed. The mountain erupts. The Nazgûl vanish in flames. Sauron's fortress collapses. Sam and Frodo huddle on the mountainside, waiting for the lava to sweep them away. Frodo is himself again

At the battle before the Black Gate, Gandalf announces the coming of the eagles. Given as they join the fight, the entire army of Mordor hesitates, and the Nazgûl flee. The gate collapses, and Gandalf announces that Frodo has completed the quest. The Mordor army flees, and Gandalf leaves the battle with the eagles to rescue Sam and Frodo from Mount Doom.

Sam wakes in a soft bed next to Frodo, whose right hand is missing a finger. Gandalf leads them to the king, where an army greets them with cheers and praise. Aragorn himself gets up from his throne and bows to them, seating them in his place. There is a great celebration feast, where they see Legolas and Gimli, and Merry and Pippin serve as squires at the head table. The four hobbits learn of each other's adventures, including how Gimli pulled Pippin from under a dead troll, and they rest and recover in Ithilien before returning to Minas Tirith.

Meanwhile, although restless, Eowyn allows Faramir to keep her in the houses of healing, walking in the gardens, watching the east, and wondering what will happen. One day, the wind is cold and a dark shadow seems to rise up from Mordor and reach toward them. For a moment they are terribly afraid, then the wind blows away the shadow. In that moment of joy, Faramir kisses Éowyn, and soon an eagle delivers the news of victory. A few days later, she accepts the steward's love and agrees to marry him. When Aragorn returns to the city, Faramir brings him his crown, and Frodo places it on his head. Some time later, Gandalf tells Aragorn that the power of the Rings has ended and the elves and wizards will depart Middle-earth. Aragorn finds a seedling of the White Tree of Gondor, a sign that his reign is blessed and his line will continue. At Midsummer, the sign is fulfilled when Galadriel and Elrond escort Arwen Evenstar to the city to be his bride.













Eventually, Frodo and his companions decide to return home. Arwen gives Frodo her place on the ships that carry the elves to the Undying Lands beyond Middle-earth, should he find the memory of his journey unbearable. Accompanied by all their friends and the elves of Lothlórien and Rivendell, the hobbits begin the leisurely journey home. First, they travel to Rohan, where Éomer and Éowyn give Merry an ancient horn, whose sounding is said to hearten friends and frighten enemies. At Isengard, they learn that Treebeard has let the greatly diminished Saruman go, along with Wormtongue. As the group travels north, they come upon Saruman himself, traveling like a beggar with Wormtongue. Gandalf offers him a last chance, which he spurns. he exchanges a last spiteful word with the hobbits, warning them the Shire will be less welcoming than they expect. When they reach Rivendell, they tell Bilbo their story and relax for a while, bus soon their thoughts turn again to the Shire. Bilbo gives Frodo his book and notes, and, finally, the four hobbits begin the last stage of their journey, joined only by Gandalf.

On the anniversary of his stabbing at Weathertop, Frodo is troubled by the pain of his old wound, and passing the hill a few days later also bothers him. When they reach Bree, they find the once friendly town heavily armed. Although reassured at news of the king's return and nearly speechless at the idea that Strider is the king, Butterbur at the Prancing Pony has local troubles to worry about. Bandits have been attacking travelers, and trade from the Shire has come to a standstill. The hobbits are surprised to discover that in the innkeeper's eyes they look formidable in their armor and swords. The next day, they go on, wondering what has gone wrong in the Shire. When they reach the Barrowdowns, Gandalf leaves them to visit Tom Bombadil after he expresses confidence that they will be able to handle the Shire's problems. Only the four hobbit-friends remain when they reach the Brandywine Bridge.

They find the gate locked and a new ugly guardhouse built on the far side, and Merry and Pippin scale the gate to get in. A man comes out to quell the ruckus, but he runs away rather than deal with armed and determined resistance. The travelers soon learn that Lotho Sackville-Baggins has brought evil men into the Shire to intimidate the hobbits, ruling by a combination of force and fear. Many trees have been cut down and hobbits have been turned out of their homes, while factories have been built that pollute the environment. The four friends lead a rebellion, then find Saruman, still accompanied by Wormtongue, living in Bag Gnd. The fallen wizard has masterminded this destruction of the Shire in the months they have lingered along the road. Frodo spares his life, but Wormtongue kills his master and is then killed himself by the hobbits.

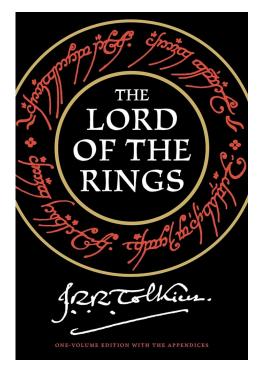






The devastation of the Shire is terrible for the hobbits. As Sam exclaims, "This is worse than Mordor!" After Saruman and his henchmen are killed or driven out, the hobbits set to repairing the damage. The new factories and buildings are torn down, many of the destroyed homes are restored, and Sam uses the gift of earth from Galadriel's garden to restore the land. She also gave him a mallorn seed, and he plants it where the great tree had stood for Bilbo's birthday party. The next year proves the most bountiful in anyone's memory.

Merry and Pippin live together at Crickhollow, becoming the most glamorous hobbits in the Shire. Sam marries Rose Cotton and moves into Bag End with Frodo. But Frodo remains haunted by the memories of his ordeal, falling ill on the anniversary of the Ring's destruction and again on the anniversary of Weathertop. When Frodo finishes his book, he gives it to Sam and asks his friend to join him on one last journey. They go to meet Galadriel and Elrond, with Bilbo himself, and journey to the Gray havens. There they find Gandalf waiting for them. Frodo has decided to leave Middle-earth with the elves. Merry and Pippin arrive to say goodbye and ride home with Sam. Sam returns home to his wife and daughter, settles in, and says simply, "Well, Im back."









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