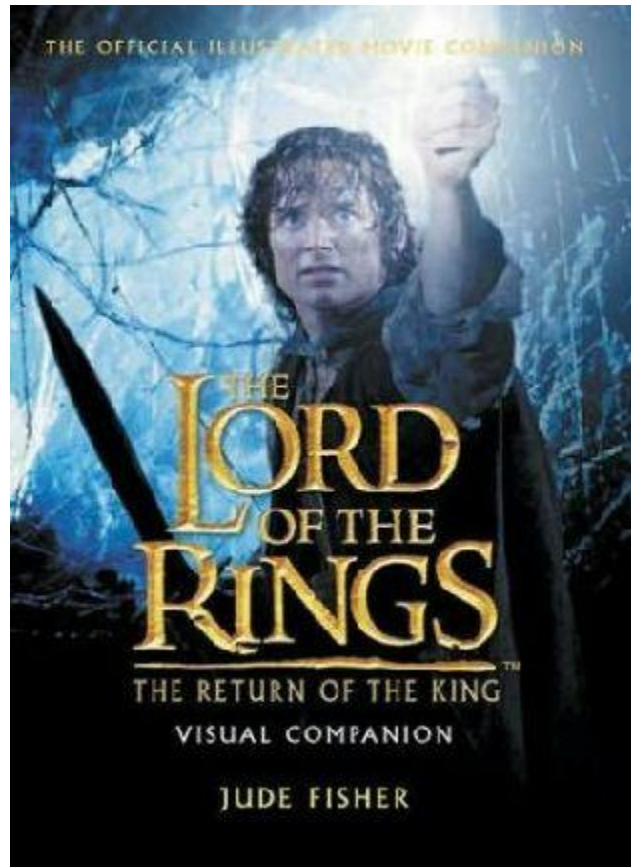


A Summary of The Lord of the Rings Trilogy Part III The Return of the King



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New York: Ballantine Books, 1965

ISBN: 0-345-27260-9

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About the Author

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa in 1892. He returned to England early in his childhood along with his mother and his brother. His father was supposed to follow them directly. However, Arthur Tolkien died of rheumatic fever in South Africa.

The Tolkiens settled in Birmingham where his mother converted to Catholicism; an action which had a great impact on Tolkien. The family became close to their Parish Priest, Father Francis Morgan, and he helped the Tolkiens through many hard times. Tolkien's mother passed away in 1904 when Tolkien was 12 years old at which time Father Morgan became his guardian. After two attempts, Tolkien earned a scholarship to Oxford in 1911 where he joined Exeter College, and majored in philology. Tolkien married Edith Bratt in 1916 with whom he had four children. He served as a second lieutenant in the Lancashire Fusiliers in WWI, caught trench fever in France in 1917, and was sent back to England to recover. He never returned to the front.

In 1925 Tolkien published a translation "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and Pearle". This publication brought him notice at Oxford where he was offered the professorship of Anglo-Saxon. Tolkien published "The Hobbit" in 1936. In the late 1930's Tolkien began writing the "Lord of the Rings" which took him more than a decade to complete. The trilogy was published in England 1954. Tolkien's wife Edith died in 1971; he followed her shortly thereafter, dying of Pneumonia in 1973. Tolkien's son Christopher has compiled and published many of his father's works, he has also written a companion book to his father's work.

General Overview

The hobbit Frodo Baggins is taking The Ring to Mordor to be destroyed along with his friend and gardener Sam. The wizard Gandalf, along with Pippin who has recently been made an Esquire of Gondor, directs the battle against the troops of Sauron. Gimli the dwarf and Legolas the elf are firmly at the side of Aragorn who has returned to Gondor to fight the power of evil and reclaim the kingship left so many dark ages ago by the scions of his house.

Frodo and Sam pass through many travails and dangers pursuant to their errand, but in the end they triumph over evil and peace is restored to Middle Earth. Merry is made a knight of Rohan in the service of King Théoden and acquits himself well as does Éowyn the king's niece. In the defeat of Sauron and the return of the king a new age of the world is forged; the age of man. Gandalf and the elves have served their purpose, and they leave Middle Earth along with Bilbo the hobbit and with Frodo – who has endured too much in the service of good to remain – they head for the Grey Havens and peace. Sam marries and takes up residence at Bag End, and Aragorn rules as king with justice and grace. They have saved Middle Earth from evil, and in that saving they have also ended an age of beauty and grace. The war is won and Middle Earth is free of the tyranny of the Dark Lord, and now all races and all people must set about the task of rebuilding their world and dwelling in the privilege and responsibility of freedom.

Book V

Chapter 1: Minas Tirith

Gandalf and Pippin ride for Gondor at full speed; as they near the city Gandalf notices that the beacon fires of Gondor have been lit to call their allies to their aid. The two riders come to the seven tiered city of Minas Tirith and are admitted to the presence of Denethor, Steward of Gondor and father of Boromir and Faramir. Gandalf warns Pippin to say nothing of The Ring or Frodo's errand and above all to stay silent concerning Aragorn – who is the rightful heir of the throne of Gondor.

They find Denethor sitting with Boromir's broken horn on his lap lamenting the mission his son undertook when he went to Rivendell. Pippin offers his service to Gondor and Denethor accepts it and bids him tell of Boromir's death. Pippin tells the Steward all that he knows, and eventually is released to the care of one of the city guards.

The hobbit is shown around the city by the guard Beregond who tells Pippin some of the history of Gondor and its great city. Pippin spends a pleasant day with Beregond and his young son and goes to bed contented.

Chapter 2: The Passing of the Grey Company

Aragorn's kin, the Rangers, join Aragorn and Théoden's party in Rohan. The Rangers, or Dúnedain, tell Aragorn to remember the Paths of the Dead, and all who hear tremble at the name. Théoden invites Merry to ride with him and Merry offers fealty to the king of Rohan. Théoden takes Merry into service and into his household. The paths of the company part, for Aragorn decides to travel the Paths of the Dead and Théoden travels to meet the muster of Rohan. The Dúnedain, Legolas and Gimli ride with Aragorn, but Merry stays at the side of his new liege lord.

Aragorn tells Gimli and Legolas the history of the Paths of the Dead, and how a race of mountain men refused to fulfill a vow made to Isildur so Isildur cursed them and laid a geis on them which forced them to remain on Middle Earth until they have fulfilled their vow. The party comes to the place where the muster of Rohan is meeting and there they are met by Éowyn who hears of their errand and begs to join them. Aragorn refuses her request reminding her that she was charged by Théoden to rule in his stead until his return. Aragorn rides from the mustering place and leads his party underneath a mountain where he calls upon the dead to discharge their oaths, and the dead follow him.

Chapter 3: The Muster of Rohan

Merry rides with Théoden and his men to the mustering sight of Rohan. Éowyn greets her brother Éomer and her uncle clad as a warrior. She tells Théoden that Aragorn indeed journeyed to the path of the Dead with his companions. The Rohirrim believe Isildur's heir and all his

company lost to them and they are grieved. A messenger arrives from Gondor and asks the aid of Rohan in the name of Denethor, Steward of Gondor. Théoden promises to come to Gondor's aid and join in the coming battle for Minas Tirith.

Théoden tells Merry that he intends to leave the hobbit behind when they ride to Gondor; Merry is outraged and determined to go to battle. A strange rider approaches him as the army is moving out and offers to take him under a cloak. Together they ride to Gondor.

Chapter 4: The Siege of Gondor

In Minas Tirith Pippin is made Esquire of the Steward's Chambers, but the duties seem frivolous to him and he is tired of waiting for the hammer blow of war to fall. Faramir arrives at Minas Tirith with his men pursued by black riders on winged mounts. Faramir tells his father, in the presence of Gandalf and Pippin, how he met with Frodo on the borders of Mordor and speeded him on his journey. Denethor rebukes his son for not taking The Ring and bringing it to the Steward. He tells Faramir that he wishes he had died instead of Boromir. Gandalf chides Denethor for his cruelty and naiveté, and Faramir leaves again to defend the city of Osgiliath.

Gandalf receives ill tidings of the battle for Osgiliath and rides to the aid of Faramir. He returns with many injured men and the news that the Dark Lord's armies are being led by the Lord of the Nazgûl. Faramir rides at the head of Osgiliath's fleeing army, but they are again pursued by Black Riders in the sky. The cavalry of Minas Tirith rides out upon the field to their rescue, but not before Faramir is severely hurt. It is feared that Faramir's wound will prove mortal and the city of Minas Tirith is laid under siege by the hordes of Morgul. Hope begins to slip away from the people of Gondor, for they have had no news of aid.

The hordes break through the first ring of Minas Tirith, Denethor refuses to leave the tower in which he is keeping his wounded son, and Gandalf takes command of the armies of Gondor. Denethor has Faramir brought to the tombs of his fathers and calls for wood and oil to make a pyre for himself and his injured son. Pippin hastens to find Gandalf and put a stop to Denethor's mad suicide. The hobbit finds Gandalf engaged with barring the second gate of Minas Tirith to the Lord of the Nazgûl. The battle is going poorly and almost they believe in Gondor that all is lost. Day finally breaks and they hear the horns of Rohan.

Chapter 5: The Ride of the Rohirrim

The wild men who dwell in the woods bordering Gondor and Rohan volunteer to lead the Rohirrim by secret paths to the city of Minas Tirith. The wild men lead true and the Riders come out in front of the besieging army undetected. The Rohirrim burst into war song and slay their enemies as they sing. The tide of the battle begins to turn, and Merry is in the thick of it with his companion.

Chapter 6: The Battle of the Pelennor Fields

The Lord of the Nazgûl hears the horns of Rohan and flies from the gates of Minas Tirith to join the field. He brings down Théoden King with his great black mace. Merry and the Rider stand between the fallen king and the Lord of the Nazgûl. The Nazgûl bids them stand aside for he can be killed by no man; but the Rider only laughs and reveals herself to be no man, but Éowyn niece to the king. Éowyn kills the winged steed of the Lord of the Nazgûl, and with Merry's help she kills the Lord as well. Éowyn and Merry are both wounded by the Nazgûl, and she lies down beside her dying uncle King of the Mark.

Théoden dies on the field of battle and the standard of Rohan is taken up by his nephew Éomer. Éowyn is taken to the Houses of Healing and Rohan joins with Gondor. Aragorn arrives on the field with his army of spirits and they cause great destruction within the dark hordes.

Chapter 7: The Pyre of Denethor

Pippin tells Gandalf of Denethor's intention to burn himself and his son alive and Gandalf sets out for the tombs. They arrive to find servants brandishing torches kept at bay by the faithful guard Beregond. Gandalf confronts Denethor, who then takes from his robes a Palantír – the agent of his corruption – grabs a torch from one of the servants and burns himself alive. Gandalf is struck with grief and disgust, but comforted by the rescuing of Faramir whom they take to the Houses of Healing. Beregond stays beside Faramir while he lies in a black sleep and will not leave him.

Chapter 8: The Houses of Healing

Pippin finds Merry in the streets of Minas Tirith blinded by grief for Théoden and unable to use his right arm which he stabbed the Lord of the Nazgûl with. Pippin takes him to the Houses of Healing. A sickness called the Black Shadow is upon all in the Houses of Healing who have taken wounds from the Nazgûl. Faramir, Éowyn, and Merry all fall into its clutches, and nothing is found to cure it.

Aragorn approaches Minas Tirith with his standard furled so as not to anger Denethor before meeting him. He enters the city as a Ranger and goes straight to the Houses of Healing. There he calls Faramir back from the Black Shadow and all know him for the King returned, for in Gondor it is said that the hands of the King are the hands of a healer. Aragorn also heals Éowyn, who immediately tells Éomer to make Merry a knight of Rohan in return for his valiant deeds. Aragorn then heals Merry who asks for supper and a pipe straight off.

Chapter 9: The Last Debate

Legolas and Gimli enter Minas Tirith with Aragorn's Rangers. Gimli says that when the war is over and Aragorn is king he will offer him the service of the dwarves to rebuild and beautify the streets of Minas Tirith. Legolas says that he will ask the elves to come and plant gardens and

growing things throughout the city, but the war is not over, and the two companions find Merry and Pippin in the Houses of Healing and the friends exchange their stories. Meanwhile Aragorn and Gandalf along with many other leaders decide that in ten days time they will lead out a small army from Gondor and attack the Black Gate of Mordor to draw Sauron's attention from Frodo and Sam.

Chapter 10: The Black Gate Opens

Aragorn and Gandalf assemble the armies of the West and together with Pippin, Legolas, and Gimli they set out for Mordor. They are ambushed by a large company of Orcs on the road, but they defeat them soundly. The troops are not much cheered by this small victory for the Nazgûl hover over them every night. Some of the men become unable to move any closer to Mordor, their very beings rendered inert by fear. Aragorn pities these men and sends them back toward Minas Tirith with an errand to defend a small fort, and no dishonor.

The depleted army comes to the Black Gate of Mordor and is met by an ambassador of the enemy who calls himself the Mouth of Sauron. This messenger of evil taunts them by showing Sam's sword, Frodo's elven cloak, and the coat of mail that Bilbo gave to Frodo in Rivendell. He tells them of the capture of their spy and offers them his freedom in return for the fealty of the West.

Gandalf refuses his terms and the trap is sprung. The army of the West is surrounded on three sides by Orcs and Trolls with the Black Gate at their backs and the battle once more rages. Beregon is struck by a Troll and Pippin slays the huge beast before it can finish off his friend. The little hobbit becomes trapped under the huge body of his slain enemy and he is sure that all is lost; right before he loses consciousness he hears the men cry out that the Eagles are coming.

Book VI

Chapter 1: The Tower of Cirith Ungol

Sam is locked outside of the Orc stronghold in which Frodo is being kept and he begins to despair. The Ring, on a chain around his neck, seems to drag him down and tempt him to put it on and try to master it, but Sam resists its call. Suddenly he hears sounds of conflict from inside the Orc tower and he begins to feel better and think that perhaps there is a way he can rescue Frodo after all.

During the fight the Orcs begin to flee the tower, and Sam gains entrance to find that they have killed each other off almost entirely in a brawl over Frodo's mail coat. He makes his way to the very top of the tower, narrowly avoiding the only two Orcs left alive in that place. He finds Frodo in the topmost chamber just coming back to himself from Shelob's poison. Frodo does not know that Sam has The Ring and he breaks down in tears and confesses to Sam that the enemy has taken The Ring and their errand has failed. Sam produces The Ring and gives it to Frodo. The two hobbits dress themselves as Orcs and flee the foul stronghold of their enemies, but just

as they reach the door and pass through it a winged Nazgûl swoops down towards them from the sky.

Chapter 2: The Land of Shadow

The Nazgûl takes them for Orcs and alights on the tower while Frodo and Sam make their escape. The hobbits resume their weary trek with the Orc's clothing, which is too big for them and very heavy, becoming more and more difficult to bear. After many days they catch their first glimpse of Mount Doom where The Ring was forged and must be destroyed, and they are awestruck by its menace.

The hobbits come upon a second stronghold of Orcs, this time a small settlement, and hide just in time as two Orcs walk by. They overhear the Orcs discussing their fruitless hunt for the hobbits and for Gollum, who has escaped them once again. After some time Sam notices that Gollum is again dogging their footsteps, but Frodo seems strangely unconcerned with this.

In the dark of night a battalion of Orcs comes marching up the road as it runs through a cliff. There is nowhere for the hobbits to hide and they fear that all is lost. The Orcs mistake them for fellow soldiers in the dark and the terrified hobbits are forced to march amid the ranks of the enemy. The Orcs meet several more battalions at a crossroads and in the resultant confusion Frodo and Sam are able to slip away into the dark. Frodo is near dead from exhaustion and Sam is little better off. The two friends are terrified, footsore, and hungry and they worry for the fate of their friends and of their home.

Chapter 3: Mount Doom

Looking out over the bleak landscape of Mordor and remembering The Shire, Sam's despair turns to determination unbreakable in its strength. He rouses Frodo and the two carry on towards Mount Doom and the end of their errand. The weight of The Ring becomes nearly unbearable to Frodo as they draw nearer the place of its forging and Sam offers to carry it for him. Frodo becomes instantly enraged and lashes out at Sam calling him a thief, but he manages to recover himself. The hobbits are both stunned by the hold The Ring has on Frodo, but they carry on. They are forced to shed the heavy Orc clothing and almost everything in their packs to lighten the load they bear. They have little food, less water, and no hope; nevertheless, they carry on towards Mount Doom.

Frodo's strength finally gives out entirely and Sam carries him up the slopes of the mountain. When he finally reaches the last path Gollum returns. Gollum attacks Sam and demands The Ring Sam falls and Gollum and Frodo fight for possession of The Ring. Frodo bests Gollum and heads for the Cracks of Doom while Sam watches over the pitiful creature. Sam takes pity on Gollum and allows him to trot back down the mountain. Sam follows Frodo into the mountain and catches up with him at the Cracks of Doom.

The Ring has worked its evil in Frodo and he tells Sam that he will not destroy it and puts it on vanishing from sight. Gollum leaps from the shadows and falls upon Frodo who suddenly

becomes visible again. Gollum has torn off Frodo's finger and The Ring with it. As the little creature dances with glee he steps too close and falls into the abyss. Gollum and The Ring are devoured by the Cracks of Doom.

Chapter 4: The Field of Cormallen

The Eagles, led by Gwaihir Skyking, reach the foundering armies of the West and drive the Nazgûl back into shadow. At that very moment a tremor runs through the hordes of the enemy and the force of Sauron's will leaves them and they are afraid. The commanders of the West bid their troops stand and the Earth begins to shake and tremble. The Black Gate falls and Gandalf knows that Frodo and Sam have succeeded and The Ring is destroyed. A great shadow rises out of Mordor and leans towards the men of the West as if to strike, but it is scattered by a fresh breeze and Sauron is destroyed. The army of the Dark Lord flees in all directions.

Gandalf asks Gwaihir to bear him to Mount Doom with two of his swiftest Eagles and they set off. Frodo and Sam make it as far as the hill at the foot of Mount Doom and their strength at last fails and they lie upon the quaking Earth side by side. Gwaihir spots them from aloft and his two Eagles swoop down and gather up the sleeping hobbits and bear them to toward their friends. Sam awakens to find Gandalf, whom he thought dead, alive and watching over him. The old wizard tells Sam and Frodo that the king wishes to see them. They walk through the troops and the men of the West begin to sing chants of praise to the two little hobbits and the heroes blush red with embarrassment.

When they are brought to the presence of the king the hobbits run to him wreathed in smiles and Aragorn greets them upon his knees and sets them on his throne where they are celebrated by all with songs of thanks and praise. The hobbits are clad in fine clothes and served food and wine by a knight of Rohan and an esquire of Gondor whom they recognize as Merry and Pippin. Sam and Frodo find their rest early and are at last able to sleep without fear.

Chapter 5: The Steward and the King

In Minas Tirith the air is tense for there has been no news of the battle at the Black Gate and Éowyn, confined to the Houses of Healing by order of Aragorn, is restless and seeks occupation. She is brought by the warden of the Houses of Healing to Faramir, who is also convalescing. She asks Faramir to release her and allow her to ride out to join Aragorn in battle, but he denies her request and instead grants her the run of his gardens until her time in the healerie is over and she is well. He asks for her company to pass the time, and she comes and speaks with him from time to time.

Faramir and Éowyn walk every day in the gardens and at last, after seven days, they are brought tidings of victory by an Eagle, but Éowyn is sad still for Aragorn sent her no message. Faramir eases her heart and she comes to realize that it is he whom she now cares for and the two agree to marry. The Steward of Gondor and the princess of the Rohirrim set about readying the city for the return of the king.

The king arrives at the head of the armies of the West and is welcomed by Faramir and Éowyn. Faramir offers Aragorn the crown of Gondor and Gandalf crowns him king. Aragorn gives Faramir the land of Ithilien to be his principedom and he departs for that place. Éomer and Éowyn ride back to Rohan to bury their fallen king. Gimli, Legolas, Merry, Pippin, Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, and Gandalf remain in Minas Tirith. Gandalf tells Aragorn that his time in Middle Earth is drawing to a close. On Midsummer's Eve Elrond and Arwen arrive with a party of elves, and on Midsummer's Day Arwen daughter of Elrond, and Aragorn king of Gondor are married.

Chapter 6: Many Partings

Frodo tells Aragorn and Arwen that he wishes to return to The Shire and Arwen gives him a gem full of light and tells him to look into it whenever he faces darkness. The hobbits depart Minas Tirith with the elves, Legolas, Gimli, Aragorn and Arwen, and Gandalf. They travel to Rohan where they rest and are feasted by Éomer. Aragorn wishes Éowyn joy in her marriage and she is glad. Éowyn gifts Merry with a silver horn which is an heirloom of the kings of Rohan and the party journeys on toward Isengard.

When they reach Isengard they meet Treebeard at Orthanc he welcomes them and tells them that after the fall of Sauron he let Gríma Wormtongue and Saruman go free of their prison. Gimli and Legolas part company with their friends and ride to explore Fangorn forest. Aragorn reminds Pippin that he is still in service to Gondor and may yet be recalled and then he and Arwen depart for Gondor. The elves also take their leave and the dwindled company travels on to Rivendell. On the road they meet with Saruman and Gandalf offers him help, but he refuses it. Pippin gives the old man the last of his pipeweed from the Shire. The party arrives at Rivendell and Frodo and Bilbo are reunited. Bilbo gives his journals and papers to Frodo, a bag of gold to Sam, and two very nice pipes to Merry and Pippin. They take their leave after some days and start out at last for The Shire.

Chapter 7: Homeward Bound

Frodo's wound from Weathertop still pains him, and darkness plagues him, but he is glad to be going home. The company comes to the village of Bree and once again takes up residence at the Prancing Pony. They are greeted jubilantly by Barliman Butterbur, but his news is ill indeed. He tells them that all commerce between Bree and The Shire has been cut off for some little while and that the area is now full of brigands and thieves. They stay the night in Bree and set out on the following morning for The Shire. The hobbits are nervous to see their home and worried at the state they'll find it in after speaking with Barliman. Gandalf leaves them at the edge of The Shire and the hobbits proceed as they set out; four friends on the edge of their homeland.

Chapter 8: The Scouring of the Shire

The hobbits find that a wall and gate have been put up around The Shire and when they call for entrance they are denied. They climb the gate anyway and find that The Shire is in a shambles.

There is a new master at Bag End that people call The Chief and he has been presiding with great tyranny over all of the doings of hobbits and The Shire. After hearing that meals are now rationed and no traveling even between one house and the next is allowed by order of The Chief Merry, Pippin, Frodo, and Sam have had quite enough. The four warriors muster the hobbits and clear The Shire of the low lives infesting it. At last they come to Bag End to find that The Chief is none other than Saruman the traitorous wizard with his sidekick Gríma Wormtongue. Frodo orders wizard and lackey out of The Shire, but before Saruman can leave Gríma kills him and takes off running. Poor Gríma does not get far, but is shot with an arrow and dies. So the hobbits set about rebuilding The Shire.

Chapter 9: The Grey Havens

The gift that the Lady Galadriel gave to Sam, earth from her garden, helps to restore The Shire to its former glory in no time at all and soon things are much as they were. Frodo is back at Bag End and Sam has taken up forestry. Frodo falls ill from time to time, but for the most part he is well and happy. Sam marries Rosie Cotton and has a family and Merry and Pippin cavort about the place almost as they did as young hobbits. The years pass peacefully.

One year on his birthday Frodo asks Sam to take a short trip with him and Sam agrees. In the woods they meet with some elves – and much to Frodo's surprise, with Merry and Pippin who have followed them – Frodo joins the party of elves and Gandalf and finds Bilbo among them. The Ring Bearer is at last to have peace with the elves and his uncle Bilbo in the Grey Havens. He leaves Bag End and all of his possessions to Sam and Rosie, and sets out on his last journey. Merry, Pippin, and Sam weep to see him leave, but they know that he has endured too much to stay. The three friends head back to The Shire and a life of simple joys.

THE END