

The Wizard and the Lion

by

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Based on the true story of
J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis

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EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - DAY

An ornately dressed soldier plays a trumpet. He is joined by many others along the entry way to Buckingham Palace. An outdoor banquet is taking place and a gentleman in his sixties sits next to a middle-aged woman wearing a tiara. There is applause for something said by the EMCEE and then we can understand his words.

EMCEE

. . . "The Lord of the Rings" has surpassed all previous records for sales in Europe--and the United States.

(applause)

Many have called this work by Professor J. R. R. Tolkien the novel of the century . . .

GIRL

Mr. Tolkien?

A young GIRL, 14, approaches Tolkien at his table.

EMCEE

. . . a veteran of World War One and a professor of philology . . .

She wears a frilly dress appropriate for an awards banquet and holds a pen and a copy of "The Lord of the Rings" which she lays in front of him.

GIRL

I've read "The Hobbit" as well, and all of the "Chronicles of Narnia", by Mr. C. S. Lewis. I understand you two were the best of friends.

Tolkien, about to sign the book, looks up at the mention of Lewis but shows no expression.

GIRL (CONT'D)

(with enthusiasm)

Is that right, Mr. Tolkien, were you and Mr. Lewis the best of friends?

Tolkien stares at her, but distantly, with perhaps even the hint of a frown. He then stares at the finely scripted "T" on the spine of the book.

GIRL (CONT'D)

Mr. Tolkien . . . Mr. Tolkien?

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE OF FRANCE - DAY

World War One soldiers march as they sing their tunes: "A Long Way to Tipperary," and "Keep the Home Fires Burning" along with "Where do we go from here, Boys" and "Oh, How I hate to get up in the Morning!" The male chorus continues as the screen shows informal scenes of soldiers. You can sense the friendship and bonds formed from their smiles and warm interaction, even physical affection.

EXT. WAR TRENCH - DAWN

MONTAGE:

1. As we hear "Oh, How I Hate to get up in the Morning," soldiers sleep all along the trench, some sitting in the mud, but one is already up, using what little light is available to write on a scrap of paper on which is also drawn some mythical characters.
2. After the second verse, "Some day I'm going to murder the bugler," the bugler does indeed wake them up, but Tolkien keeps writing. The rest of his papers are stored in a small chest with "Tolkien" painted on the top. The "T" has the same fine script that was on the book Tolkien stared at earlier.
3. The same "T" is being painted on the small chest by a man while a young boy, age 4, watches with delight.
4. Explosions, mud and chaos. Apparently, this is taking place in the trench, and at least two or three soldiers are clearly killed by the shells.
5. But mixed in with the montage of chaos: a BOY, age 12, shouts "Must she die?" and another BOY, age 4, yells, "He's not dead!"

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - BEDROOM - DAWN

RONALD TOLKIEN, early middle age, tosses and turns on his bed.

TOLKIEN

(murmuring)

He's not dead. He's not dead.

He opens his eyes, realizing he's dreaming.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - MORNING

In his pajamas, Tolkien looks over many scattered pages of a hefty manuscript, making a couple of corrections and additions. He is frustrated and unsettled by the process.

EDITH TOLKIEN looks in the doorway and gives him a look of "Well?". He looks at his watch on the table and quickly rustles up a portion of the scattered pages and puts them in a leather satchel. The top page has "Silmarillion" handwritten in stylish, artistic script.

INT. TOLKIEN BATHROOM - MORNING

Tolkien takes a stroke or two as he shaves.

INT. TOLKIEN LIVING ROOM - MORNING

He throws a couple of logs in the fireplace, fully dressed, though half his face is still lathered.

He enters the kitchen where two boys are eating. Edith dips her finger in the lather and shows it to him. He heads back upstairs.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - HALLWAY

The boys walk out the door and Tolkien looks at Edith.

TOLKIEN

Coming?

She shakes her head and indicates that her head is hurting. Tolkien, who is irritated, grabs three muffins on the counter and turns to follow the boys out the door.

EXT. BANBURY STREET - MORNING

Tolkien rides a bicycle with his black robe flowing behind and boys following on their bikes. He waves at the mailman who waves back while sidestepping two robed dons walking brusquely in the opposite direction.

TOLKIEN

G'morning Ralieg.

A sign on the street says "Major Road Ahead." Tolkien reaches in the basket on his bike and tosses a muffin to one son, who catches it and smiles, then to the other son. At a stop, Tolkien tries to light his pipe. As they turn the corner there is another sign saying "Bill Stickers."

They enter the gates to St. Aloysius Church.

INT. ST. ALOYSIUS CHURCH - MORNING

Tolkien sits in church, again feeling frustrated. The priest is incensing the altar and saying

PRIEST

Accendat in nobis Dominus ignem sui
amoris, et flammam aeternae
caritatiatis. Amen.

INT. ST. ALOYSIUS CHURCH - NEXT TO ALTAR

Tolkien kneels to receive the mass as his boys do the same.
As the priest serves the boys and then Tolkien, he quickly
says each time

PRIEST

Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Cristi
custodiat animam tuam in vitam
aeternam. Amen.

When he is served, Tolkien's expression changes to one of
peace and satisfaction.

EXT. BANBURY STREET - MORNING

They come back out the church gates. Tolkien rides to the
right and the boys to the left.

EXT. PEMBROKE COLLEGE - GATE - MORNING

Tolkien steps into his college and stops to light his pipe
and talk to the porter.

TOLKIEN

Much traffic this morning, Collin?

COLLIN

Several dons. Arrived earlier than
usual.

TOLKIEN

(checks his watch)
I'll be late to my own meeting.

He hands a muffin to Collin who grins as Tolkien rushes
off. Two dons bustle through the gate without
acknowledging the porter.

INT. PEMBROKE COLLEGE - TOLKIEN'S ROOMS - DAY

Several dons (professors) surround a long, oak table, most
of them robed, including Tolkien. They hold papers with
strange writing. GRINSTEAD struggles to translate.

GRINSTEAD

Day-lin . . .

TOLKIEN

Dway-lin. The Icelandic poets used fascinating names for their dwarves.

GRINSTEAD

Thor . . .

(looks up at
colleagues)

What's the point? Plowing through thousand-year-old Norse documents. The modern world needs modern literature.

SINGLETON

(reminding)

We agreed to read some before cutting it from the curriculum.

GRINSTEAD

(sighs)

Thor-in . . . Can . . .

TOLKIEN

Gan . . . Gandalf. Gand--or, magic wand--and elf . . .

He stares into the distance midsentence, as he is prone to do.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

(amused)

A kind of sorcerer elf. . . German textual criticism shows comparisons of the Elder Edda and other ancient manuscripts . . .

While Tolkien is talking, Singleton sees some books on a coffee table nearby, one of which is colorful and oversized, entitled "Norse Fairy Tales."

SINGLETON

(holding up book)

Tolkien, is this how you hone your scholarship?

(looks at other books)

Or do you just read this for pleasure?

The table laughs heartily. Tolkien grabs the book and puts it away.

TOLKIEN

My son left that here.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOMS - DAY

A middle aged Oxford professor is lecturing.

LECTURER

Several new writers grasp the gravity of the future. Younger talents like Wolfe, Pound, Hemingway--who are not afraid to discuss modern sexuality, death, and suicide.

He has a poor delivery and is not particularly interested in entertaining the students, who are clearly bored.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

Tolkien works at his desk downstairs. Scribbled papers are everywhere along with hand drawn maps and illustrations. He stows all sorts of writings and manuscripts in drawers, cabinets, and various cubbyholes with little organization. Dictionaries and lexicons and ancient texts line the crowded space or lay on his desk with the papers. He has a chart in front of him that says, "Elven Calender."

TOLKIEN

Ah, 13 moons that year.

He crosses out 12 and writes 13. He looks at a small chest on his desk that has "Tolkien" painted on top of it in nice, stylish script, with the same decorative "T" from earlier. He pats the chest with satisfaction and pride. A child cries upstairs and he looks up.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

He sits on the bed of his son, CHRISTOPHER, age 9, and closes the fairy book we saw earlier.

CHRISTOPHER

(at the end of a
crying spell)

Can you leave your book here?

TOLKIEN

I need it, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER

Tell us one of yours, Daddy.

MICHAEL, age 11, pulls covers over his head, wanting to sleep.

TOLKIEN

Okay. There once was a man named .
. . Bill Stickers . . .

And he had a friend . . . named . . .
 . Major Road Ahead . . .

CHRISTOPHER
 That's silly. Tell another one.

Michael stirs again.

TOLKIEN
 A Father Christmas story?

Christopher shakes his head.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
 Okay. Hmmm. In a hole in the
 ground there lived a hobbit.

Christopher is amused. Michael sits up suddenly.

MICHAEL
 What's a hobbit?

TOLKIEN
 I don't know. We shall have to find
 out.

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE GROUNDS - DAY

C. S. Lewis ("Jack") and student JAMES BIDDLE ascend the stone stairs towards Lewis's rooms. Lewis is always smoking (pipes or cigarettes) unless he is eating or on a several mile walk. He is early middle age, like Tolkien, though may appear slightly bigger and older and is less concerned about his dress and appearance.

LEWIS
 No. Flawed again. Men live in a crowd nowadays. Caucus has replaced friendship. Get it into your head, Biddle--the modern world is desperately too serious.

A don, PENNINGTON, approaches them in the outside hall.

PENNINGTON
 Pick on someone your own age.

LEWIS
 You're just in time for the next generation's arguments on social progress.

BIDDLE
 Thinks he's right because I quoted from "The Waste Land" and he recited the next twenty lines.

Lewis opens his door but they remain standing in front of it.

PENNINGTON

Ah, T. S. Eliot.

BIDDLE

(nods)

He got lucky. I mean, we've all memorized a few poems.

Lewis shrugs, then cracks a half-smile.

LEWIS

Pick a number between one and forty.

(to Pennington)

I shouldn't do this.

BIDDLE

Thirty.

LEWIS

Pick two more, smaller numbers.

BIDDLE

Five and twelve.

LEWIS

Go to shelf number 30 and get the twelfth book on the fifth shelf.

By their expressions, Pennington and Biddle are intrigued by the game. Biddle heads inside.

PENNINGTON

Eliot joined the church of England! The thought of a man that intelligent, sitting by the fire, believing in God. It's almost obscene.

LEWIS

I don't buy that anymore, although I use to be quite angry at God for not existing.

PENNINGTON

Good God, Lewis.

LEWIS

Not the Christian version. But, God, yes.

PENNINGTON

Just like Voltaire said—or was it Freud?— "If God didn't exist, we would need to invent him.

LEWIS

Freud's right. We ARE shaped by our fathers. But the man's not simply a scientist anymore, he's a mystic for modernism.

PENNINGTON

A hero indeed.

LEWIS

So you can shift the blame, I suppose. In fact, if Freud didn't exist, modern man would need to invent him."

Biddle appears with a book which he blocks from Lewis's view.

BIDDLE

Twelfth book, fifth shelf.

LEWIS

One more large number.

BIDDLE

Page seventy-five?

(Lewis nods)

First line. "And if I said, "Hope thou in God, my soul very properly disobeyed me . . . "

Lewis glances at Pennington because of the appropriately ironic quote.

LEWIS

" . . . my soul disobeyed because that dearest friend my soul had lost was an actual man. Nothing but tears were sweet to me and they took my friend's place in my heart's desire." St. Augustine's Confessions, Book IV.

Biddle lays the book down, shakes his head and leaves.

PENNINGTON

Prepare for an interesting semester, son.

LEWIS

I'm off to bed.

He bows slightly to Pennington.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

I've got a chance in the morning to read the Icelandic texts in the originals, led by that rather odd Anglo Saxon professor . . . Tolkien.

INT. LEWIS'S ROOMS - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lewis enters his bedroom and lays a number of scholarly books on his bed stand, then sits in his bedroom chair, turns on the light, and pulls out a colorful book to read: Grimms Fairy Tales.

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE - GROUNDS - MORNING

Lewis traverses the vast campus, alone, then walks up

EXT. THE HIGH STREET - MORNING

As he passes the University Chapel on his way to

INT. PEMBROKE COLLEGE - TOLKIEN'S ROOMS - MORNING

Dons surround a table again. Lewis is not robed, but most of them are. As Tolkien translates, the professors listen casually, but Lewis is fascinated.

TOLKIEN

" . . . The trickster Loki was pleased at the site of Odin who was wounded by a spear and hung from the sacred tree for nine days . . . "

(looks up and comments)

Some of you may know "Odin" as "Woden"

(continues translating)

". . . Yes, the greatest of the gods, and father to Thor, god of thunder, hung in great pain, but on the ninth night he deciphered the magical runes, cut the limb, and returned to life."

He looks up and pauses.

GRINSTEAD

It's 11 am, gentlemen. Time for some brandy.

The suggestion is met with enthusiasm as they move to the other side of the room for drinks, but Lewis is chagrined. He heads over to chat with Tolkien, who is swiftd away by others.

INT. TOLKIEN'S ROOMS - SIDEBOARD - MORNING

Lewis and Singleton fix drinks.

LEWIS

Cutting these sagas would be a mistake.

SINGLETON

It's the boring part of the course.

LEWIS

Have some imagination. Granted, rationality and imagination should be kept distinct . . .

Grinstead is watching Lewis, and CAMPBELL, an elderly don, notices.

CAMPBELL

I wouldn't engage him. Some think he's the best logician in Oxford.

Grinstead ignores the comment.

GRINSTEAD

Lewis, it's time we moved past the Renaissance.

LEWIS

There never was a Renaissance. The Christian and Pagan Age have far more in common with each other than with modern atheists.

GRINSTEAD

Most reasonable people enjoy the 20th century, the road of progress.

He gives Singleton a knowing look.

LEWIS

A war road that led to millions getting slaughtered. If you are on the wrong road, going backward is the quickest way to success.

Singleton

What about the discovery in the paper today?

LEWIS

I only look at the crossword.

SINGLETON

A scientist in Vienna will use reproductive glands from apes to reinvigorate older men. Remarkable, isn't it?

LEWIS

You mean, unnatural?

GRINSTEAD

The scientist is part of nature. As a philosopher, I can attach no meaning to your objection.

LEWIS

I think any philosopher since Aristotle would understand.

Grinstead

We're way past Aristotle. Think of the possibilities. You'll be an old man yourself one day.

LEWIS

I'd rather be an old man than a young monkey.

Campbell sees Tolkien and brings him over to introduce him to Lewis, but Singleton interrupts.

SINGLETON

(to Lewis)

Back on point. These ancient gods are of no relevance to us today.

TOLKIEN

Today? What is today?

The men look at him. Another PROFESSOR is pulling him away again.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

(as he leaves)

It's Wednesday. Woden's Day, and tomorrow is Thor's day.

Lewis enjoys the comment and looks down at the coffee table, where he sees part of a colorful book.

PROFESSOR

(to everyone)

Let's thank Tolkien for the meeting and the spirits.

A round of "here here!" and "thank you" from the crowd.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

As we dismiss,
(sings)

"Where to we go from here boys . . ."

The whole crowd responds enthusiastically to the second half of the line (many are veterans) and some lift their drinks.

GROUP

" . . . Where do we go from here.
Paddy's neck was in a wreck but
still he had no fear . . ."

As the song continues, Lewis looks again at the colorful book on the coffee table, moves the other books to find "Norse Fairy Tales" with the subtitle: "Odin and Loki." Campbell sees him looking over at Tolkien across the room.

CAMPBELL

He's fluent in several ancient
languages, many forgotten, and all
the classics. Most talented
linguist we've had in some time.

Lewis moves again toward Tolkien, but he walks out the door with the other professors. Disappointed, Lewis goes back to the table to get his papers and robe.

EXT. PEMBROKE COLLEGE - HALLWAY

SINGLETON

I just don't see it, Tolkien.

Tolkien is deeply disappointed but says nothing, and walks back to his door in a huff. Lewis is coming out with just as much energy and the two, both robed and capped, stop face-to-face ever so briefly, step back suddenly, and quickly apologize with politeness.

Lewis is intrigued with Tolkien and wants to talk, but not Tolkien, who, after they stare at one another for another two seconds, squeezes by Lewis to get past.

TOLKIEN

Thank you. Excuse me.

He begins closing the door.

LEWIS

Thank you. Those texts were quite
fascinating.

Tolkien has the door half-closed, but is glad to hear a positive comment.

TOLKIEN

(through his pipe)

Too much fascination with the 19th century, which ought to be cut from the curriculum.

(looks away)

And Shakespeare . . . unjustly deified . . . and Dante is so petty

. . .

(looks at Lewis)
again)

Thank you.

He starts to close door the rest of the way.

LEWIS

I saw your book on Odin and Loki.
So you read the fairy tales?

TOLKIEN

That belongs to my son and . . .

LEWIS

I LOVE Loki! I have a great weakness for all fairy tales, but especially the Norse mythology.

Tolkien stops and stares at Lewis, then slowly reopens the door.

TOLKIEN

You too?

INT. TOLKIEN'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Tolkien and Lewis sit in comfortable chairs, near each other, by the fire. It is very late.

LEWIS

The nameless north, remote, severe.
The Vikings and their glory.

He stands to get a poker by the fireplace to stir the flames. On the mantle lays Tolkien's thick manuscript, halfway emerged from the leather satchel. Tolkien places it out of view before it can really be seen. Lewis is briefly curious, then turns his attention to a picture on the mantle of rugby players.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Close friends?

TOLKIEN

No.

Lewis sits back down with the picture and sees writing on it: "To John Ronald, with great LOVE , Rob." ("Love" is underlined twice).

LEWIS

I felt my first stab of joy
encountering the Norse god of
Spring:

"I heard a voice that cried,
Balder the beautiful
is dead,
is dead."

Tolkien listens, entranced. Then he recites in Anglo-Saxon.

TOLKIEN

"Eala Earendel engla boerhtast
ofer middangeard monnum sended."
(now translating)
Hail, Earendel, brightest of
angels, above middle earth, sent
unto men.

LEWIS

Cynewulf?

Tolkien nods. Offers to take the picture from Tolkien and places it on the mantle.

TOLKIEN

Read it as a young man. Fell under
its spell.

LEWIS

Who is Earendel?

TOLKIEN

The name stirred something deep
within me. Unraveling it--it would
take a book just to begin.

LEWIS

We have a group that reads original
works. Have you started something?

Tolkien looks briefly at the leather satchel, then gazes into the fire and shakes his head.

TOLKIEN

No.

We hear "Keep the Home Fires Burning" as the screen fades on the fire to

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

Men hovering around fires on the battlefield as the song continues. Gunfire and cannon are in the background and one bomb explodes in the foreground as a lion emerges from the flames and heads directly toward the camera until the close up shows a ferocious mouth and roar.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lewis jerks up in his bed, frightened.

INT. EASTGATE PUB - MORNING

Close up on Lewis with a similar frown.

LEWIS

I don't get you, Tolkiers. You think you can just tie it all together so neatly with Christianity?

Tolkien shrugs.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

I'm a theist. I believe in God now. But Christ? A sacrificed, bloody god, resurrecting to redeem the world? I think you're the only intelligent man I know who buys it.

A waitress comes up.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Two pints. Guinness.

TOLKIEN

Intelligent? . . . Not enough to write anything. How's your medieval book coming?

LEWIS

Avoiding the argument?

TOLKIEN

Arguments don't help. Will you read your book to your group?

LEWIS

The Inklings? Not this week. Not sure what they'd think--a very unusual cast of characters.

(beat)

I'm headed home to Ulster.

TOLKIEN

Northern Ireland? Can you be seen here with a Catholic?

LEWIS

I've been warned never to trust papists or philologists. You're both.

(beat)

My father's fallen ill. It could be a matter of days.

Tolkien is deeply moved, somewhat embarrassed, and doesn't know what to say.

TOLKIEN

I'm . . . I'm so sorry.

(beat)

Jack . . . Have you ever needed to make a confession?

The waitress returns.

WAITRESS

Two pints.

They awkwardly fish for change. Tolkien pulls out some papers. Lewis is ready to hear more.

TOLKIEN

(hurriedly)

I brought some Cynewulf poetry. I think you'll love it.

LEWIS

(shrugs in resignation)

Okay.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Tolkien is reading to his two boys from a manuscript as ELAINE, a student in her mid 20s, listens from the couch.

TOLKIEN

"Don't be a fool, Bilbo Baggins!' He said to himself. 'Thinking of dragons and all that outlandish nonsense at your age!' So he put on an apron, lit fires, boiled water and washed up."

EDITH appears in the hallway, ready to go out.

EDITH

Thanks for watching the children.

ELAINE

Oh, of course.
(to Tolkien)
I love that hobbit story.

TOLKIEN

(as he joins Edith)
Take it home with you.

He hands her the manuscript.

ELAINE

Shall I bring it to class?

Tolkien gestures to say "whatever."

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - EVENING

Lewis and Tolkien sit by the fire.

LEWIS

I was so ungrateful all those
years. But now it's done. Dear old
dad. We did have some wonderful
talks at the end.

(with irony)

I even said a prayer over him.

Tolkien sits holding his leather satchel with both arms.
It takes all his energy to fight back tears. He stands and
pulls a thick manuscript out of the satchel and hands it to
Lewis.

TOLKIEN

You're the only one who knows about
it.

He leaves abruptly as Lewis ponders the man's very strange
behavior.

INT. EASTGATE PUB - EVENING

Tolkien waits in the pub booth impatiently. Lewis is late.
He finally arrives with Tolkien's manuscript in hand, but
is stopped by the publican, KARL, just before sitting down.
Tolkien is frustrated.

KARL

Sorry to hear about your dad, Jack.

LEWIS

Thank you, Karl. All well with you?

Tolkien shows more frustration.

KARL

Very much so.

Lewis takes a seat.

LEWIS

Sorry about that. I was helping my brother Warnie. He's moved back to town.

(as he takes out
manuscript)

Well, I read it all.

Tolkien is desperate to hear the verdict. Lewis proceeds in a businesslike manner.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

This line here: "The peerless Silmarils; and three/alone." I've changed that to "The Silmarils; the shiners three."

Tolkien does his best to cover his great frustration and also offense.

TOLKIEN

That's awful. Frightful 18th century.

LEWIS

Oh.

(beat)

So the silmarils are three great jewels, and this cycle of tales captures several ages, back to creation?

Tolkien nods with uncertainty.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

And all these maps.

(shuffles through the
papers)

Nargothrond, the city of Orcs.

TOLKIEN

Elves.

LEWIS

Right, elves.

(wistfully)

And Luthien the elven maiden, loved by Beren, a mortal man . . . And the poem of Turin the dragon slayer.

(lowers his voice)

Tollers, it's brilliant. Not because I know you.

That's irrelevant. The sense of reality, the mythical value. And no taint of allegory. I didn't dare believe such writing could exist.

Tolkien nods his head in deep appreciation, breathing heavily from a sense of relief.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
(a bit irritated)
Why didn't you tell me about this?

Tolkien doesn't answer, just shakes his head.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
How long have you been working on it?

TOLKIEN
Fifteen years.

Lewis gives him a piercing stare, expecting an answer. Tolkien closes his eyes in pain. Flashes of the earlier montage appear, with soldiers, shell explosions, a boy, age 12, saying "Must she die?" and a boy, age 4, yelling "He's not dead." Tolkien finally looks up, tearful.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
I had two best friends. In college. We believed the world needed a great mythology--to overcome the despair of our times. We vowed to create it together. One was killed in the war, the other wounded badly--like you were, Jack.

LEWIS
Go on.

TOLKIEN
But he didn't make it. Stayed alive long enough to write. To say it's up to me. "John Ronald Tolkien, you must pen the world-changing mythology."

He shakes his head with a derisive laugh.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
Such grandiose ambitions, once upon a time. It's highly embarrassing, even to admit it.

He looks up at Lewis warily.

LEWIS
Grandiose, indeed.

He stands.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Karl?

The bartender is a few feet away.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Buy a round of drinks for everyone.
Sir Ronald Tolkien is going to
change the world.

A few light cheers of thank you. Lewis turns back to Tolkien, motions for him to stand and toast their glasses.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

I will make certain of it.

They toast and take a drink. Tolkien is slightly embarrassed but clearly grateful.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

(quietly, to Tolkien)
I have my own confession to make.

Tolkien raises an eyebrow.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Let's take a walk.

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE - ADDISON'S WALK - NIGHT

They stroll with their pipes by the River Cherwell (a wide creek) with large trees overhanging the broad dirt path.

TOLKIEN

You have such a passion for these myths of a dying god--like Balder and Odin, or Adonis. Yet when you hear about Jesus dying and rising, you'll have none of it.

LEWIS

They're all myths. Beautiful, but lies. Lies breathed through silver.

TOLKIEN

No.

(he stops and faces
Lewis)
They are NOT lies.

EXT. PATH TOWARD ADDISON'S GATE

They are walking again toward a bench next to Addison's gate. Only one great tree lies in the background, leaving the rest of the starry sky in view.

TOLKIEN

You say "star" and you think you know what that means. A scientific understanding. But those who first named them believed they were alive, bursts of angelic light, sprinkling magic upon the earth, and dancing to an eternal music.

They sit down on the bench, facing the gate and tree behind it.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

You use the word 'tree' today, but the ancients saw a giant with godlike strength. The whole world was elf-patterned and myth-woven.

Tolkien lights his pipe briefly, but Lewis simply stares at the sky.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Those pagan stories of a dying and rising god exist for good reason, Jack. They knew--intuitively, artistically--that the Creator himself had done so. Christ IS a myth, but he is the true myth.

The wind blows suddenly, strongly, and they both take in the grandeur of the moment. It dies down just as quickly.

LEWIS

Here is my confession. Since I've been here, I haven't found someone . . . to relate to. Intelligent? Some. But serious minded, passionate for truth, speaks my own language?

He shakes his head, still smoking and looking at the stars.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

I've been lonely, Ronald. I was once an atheist, but I've actually prayed for a friend, a partner of the heart--and the soul.

He turns to Tolkien and holds out his hand.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Well?

Tolkien, pipe in mouth, is moved, surprised and uncomfortable. But then he removes his pipe with his left hand and grasps the one offered by Lewis. The smoke from the two men exhaling pours onto the embraced hands.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A phonograph plays "Where do we go from here boys . . ." and then a hand pulls up the needle. Tolkien, who glances out the front window to see who's coming, finishes the last line with enthusiasm.

TOLKIEN

"Oh boy, oh Joy, where do we go from here?"

Lewis enjoys the short performance. The front door opens and Edith enters carrying a bag of groceries.

EDITH

For you.

She hands Tolkien a letter. Lewis stands to greet her.

LEWIS

(stands)
Mrs. Tolkien.

She barely acknowledges him and enters the kitchen. Lewis gives Tolkien a "What did I do?" look.

TOLKIEN

Don't worry about it.

LEWIS

(starting to walk
into the kitchen)
But if I offended her . . .

TOLKIEN

Jack. Sit down. It doesn't matter what you do, if someone won't forgive. She was an orphan. I don't think she's ever gotten past it.

He fiddles with the letter in his hand.

LEWIS

From a publisher?

Tolkien nods.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Open it!

He does so, and is disappointed.

TOLKIEN

Third rejection in a month. They don't even want to see the manuscript.

Lewis is at a loss for words. They commiserate briefly.

LEWIS

I do know some men who are connected to publishers.
(a ray of hope)
The Inklings--they'll love it!

He thinks again, and gives the unaware Tolkien a sideways look of concern.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - NIGHT

Eight men sit informally in the living room section of Lewis's room--a sunken floor with various armchairs and couches and a fireplace is central to the setting. None are robed. Nearly all of them smoke, and billows of smoke and a cloud usually hovers over all Inklings meetings. All of them are drinking something. A sideboard provides all kinds of whiskey, gin, sherry, port, rum, tea, coffee etc. and a keg of beer sits on a small table near the sideboard. The high ceiling architecture of the great room is wonderful, but the furnishings clearly belong to a bachelor.

Lewis sits in an armchair. He bangs his glass with a spoon to break the chatter. Warnie points to Lewis's cigarette ash that's about to fall.

LEWIS

It's good for the carpet, Warnie.

He flicks it on the floor and gets a round of chuckles and rolled eyes.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Well, has nobody got anything to read us?
(after the silence)
Very well. I have a special treat for us.

This brings looks of "should be interesting."

LEWIS (CONT'D)

As we shall enjoy the magic of the Fairy Tale.

WAIN

Oh, great. I detest fairy tales.

A couple of snickers. No one disagrees. Tolkien looks down and Lewis glances at him with a bit of alarm.

LEWIS

What do you mean, you don't like fairy tales?

BARFIELD

(enjoying the banter)
I believe he said "detest."

WAIN

(to Barfield)
Thank you.

The men have moved into a rapid-fire game of debate, clearly a routine practice between them.

DYSON

(to Lewis)
Don't put words in his mouth. A man has the right to like what he likes, Jack. I'm not so fond of them myself.

LEWIS

Well, if it's because you think they are for children, that's only recent. Fairy stories have been taken as serious material--for adults--for millennia.

WAIN

Not now. They don't deal with the reality of our times.

BARFIELD

In fairness to Jack, good scholarship demands the study of mythology.

WAIN

For the historian, scientific analysis. Of course.

HAVARD

Perhaps he's saying, as Christians, we don't need any more accusations of being irrelevant.

COGHILL

You call "Jack and the Beanstalk" irrelevant?

LEWIS

You all are missing it. Myth transcends thought.

Some ideas are so big, even Oxford professors can't absorb them. That is why God revealed himself to us in story.

DYSON

(stands for drama)

Once upon a time, God created the heavens and the earth. Does have a nice ring to it.

WARNIE

So, more Christian stories, like "Pilgrim's Progress"?

TOLKIEN

That's allegory. I despise allegory wherever I smell it.

The men notice Tolkien briefly and ignore him.

WARNIE

Pilgrim's Progress is a damn popular book.

DYSON

Some have a life-long appetite for juvenile trash.

LEWIS

No, no, no. Not allegory. In allegory you sell your birthright for a pot of message. In myth, there are unending layers of meaning. Abstract reasoning is actually less capable of capturing reality than a story.

WAIN

You're an incurable romantic.

TOLKIEN

It IS interesting that the word "spell" means both telling a story AND casting a power over someone. Might this account for the power in the gospels?

The men, who are arguing quickly and breathlessly this entire time, do ever so briefly note this interesting comment by Tolkien.

COGHILL

God can do what he wants. But should WE dwell on fairies in the 20th century?

WAIN

The task of the writer is to lay bare the human heart, not to spin fanciful webs. Myth is escapism.

There is a pause. Lewis, glancing at Tolkien, is clearly frustrated.

TOLKIEN

Escapism. What kind of people get the most worked up over someone escaping?

The crowd waits for the answer.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

(leers at Wain)

Jailers!

The comment brings a few laughs and smiles to all. DYSON stands and shadow boxes two punches, both with appropriate guttural sounds.

DYSON

Ah, a jab, and a hard right--from the man here on the left!

(beat)

And by the way, who ARE you, sir?

LEWIS

I would have introduced him, but for the bloodletting.

(motions to Tolkien)

Ronald Tolkien, professor of Anglo Saxon at Pembroke.

A nice, formal welcome from the group, an ironic contrast.

BARFIELD

Tolkien . . . Anyone know what that means?

FOX

Haven't heard it before.

LEWIS

(to Tolkien)

Name guessing. It's a game here

(standing, to group)

We should do some reading. Tolkien has written a grand mythology.

The men realize their strident comments on myth were directed at the visitor.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

He's a man of great genius,

TOLKIEN

Jack, please.

LEWIS

The creative mind of a lion.

WARNIE

Shall we look up Tolkien in the
"Oxford Dictionary of Names"?

TOLKIEN

You won't find it there.

BARFIELD

Hmmmm. The indefinable man.

TOLKIEN

It's German.

DYSON

Well I understand that! Damn the
Germans. I detest everything
German.

The comment brings a roar of agreement. Lewis has a "here
we go again" look.

TOLKIEN

I dare say every one in here is
German.

The men scoff at the idea.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

If, that is, a name defines you.

DYSON

Hugo Dyson, sir. I am quite
English.

TOLKIEN

As am I. Hugo, however, comes from
the Germanic word "hug," meaning
"heart."

DYSON and the others are impressed.

DYSON

I AM all heart.

BARFIELD

Let's see how well he can do.
(points to Wain)
Arnold Wain.

TOLKIEN

Arnold. Brave as an eagle. From Teutonic "eirn" eagle and "wald" power.

Wain indicates Tolkien is accurate. Applause from the group (or a light cheer, as most are occupied with smoke and drink).

BARFIELD

Dr. Humphrey Havard.

Havard gives him an amused look.

BARFIELD (CONT'D)

I mean, Robert Havard.
(look of "not sure why
I did that.")
My doctor's named Humphrey.

DYSON

No, Humphrey. I like that. Humphrey you shall be!

TOLKIEN

Havard. Port of Le Havre. From the Normans who were originally German.

A few cheers.

COGHILL

Neville Coghill. I am extremely English, thank you.

TOLKIEN

Spring Cottage. Cog "cottage" is English, but heald, meaning, Spring, is Norse. And of course all of Scandinavia is Germanic.

Along with cheers, DYSON and now Havard jump up to do more boxing moves on each other. Lewis gives a "boys will be boys" look.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Even the English are German. England comes from the tribe of Angles, who migrated from Southern Germany. In fact, you'd be hard-pressed to find a western nation without a German name.

HAVARD

France.

TOLKIEN

The Franks, my dear Humphrey,
(gives DYSON a wink)
originally lived near the Rhine.

DYSON

(stands)
America, from the discoverer
Amerigo Vespucci. That, my friend,
is Italian.

COGHILL

(imitating an
announcer)
Mr. Tolkien is on the ropes.

Cheers from the men. Tolkien gets taken into the tom
foolery and stands and points back with drama.

TOLKIEN

Amerigo, from the Spanish Enrico,
from the English "Henry" from the
German "Haim-Ric" meaning "power
house."

He delivers the last phrase with his own mock punch.
Coghill darts over to give DYSON a fake punch and he
staggers backward into his chair, knocked out. The men are
screaming with delight and Lewis is amazed at how well it
is all going.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Now, either of our Ulstermen Lewis
brothers could have scored some
points. Ireland is not German but
from the pre-celtic Goddess Eiru.

LEWIS

But what does Eiru mean?

Lewis thinks he'll finally stump him, and the gallery perks
up.

TOLKIEN

It's disputed. From a race of
prehistoric giants. Probably an
earth goddess.

Lewis frowns, he didn't stump him.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

And "Lewis" comes from "Lugh." the
Irish god of brightness.

LEWIS

(triumphantly)
Finally stumped you, Tollers. My
ancestry is Welsh, not Irish.

TOLKIEN

Ah, then it's the Germanic "Ludwig" "war-fame", but you aren't fighting so famously nor are you that bright.

The men love it and cheer. One starts chanting "Tolkien, Tolkien" and others join in while DYSON and Coghill grab an arm on each side and lift it like he's won the heavyweight crown. The cheers die down, and Lewis laughs and heads to the sidebar.

DYSON

Where are you going?

LEWIS

To get a drink. We're done.

COGHILL

What about Tollers' story?

DYSON

That's right, the fairy tale.

LEWIS

You detest them.

WAIN

(with glee)

Don't put words in his mouth.

Lewis, though pleased, smirks at the hypocrisy.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - NIGHT

TOLKIEN

(reading)

" . . . There were voices on the fells/and the sound of ghostly bells/And a march of shadow-people o'er the height./In the mountains by the shore/In forgotten Aryador.

It is hard to tell how the Inklings feel about the reading, but at least one Inkling is fighting off sleep. Tolkien looks at Lewis to see if he should continue.

WARNIE

It's got an interesting feel. But I don't really understand it.

DYSON

When does the story start?

LEWIS

It's about the shadow people. They're elves.

(thinks its obvious)
 A decline of prehistoric, even
 prefallen peoples, like Eiru.
 Forgotten "Aryadore" is a
 derivative.

They give Lewis a blank stare.

TOLKIEN
 I think everyone should have a
 drink.

WARNIE
 He IS a genius!

They head to the sideboard for refreshment.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - SIDEBOARD

Lewis and Tolkien congregate together over drinks.

LEWIS
 (to Tolkien)
 They don't get it. But if we keep
 reading to them, they'll catch on.
 (conversely)
 It looks like you made some new
 friends.

Tolkien agrees, but only as a consolation prize.

TOLKIEN
 I've wasted the last 15 years. I'll
 never get published.

INT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB - DAY

The Inklings gather in the back room of the pub and Havard
 holds up a book.

HAVARD
 Finally published!

Cheers and applause from the group. A close up on the book
 show the title "A Pilgrim's Regress" by C. S. Lewis. He
 gets a few slaps on the back, and we see Tolkien, doing his
 best to be happy for Jack.

WARNIE
 Well, pass it over here, Humphrey.
 You're a useless quack.

DYSON
 Useless quack. I like that. The
 U.Q.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - NIGHT

An Inklings meeting.

LEWIS

God is mythopathic. Meaning, he creates stories--with real people. As Ronald explains, when we create our own worlds we are most clearly reflecting the image of God.

TOLKIEN

(nods)
Subcreation.

LEWIS

Imaginative worlds are regions of the spirit. Accordingly, I have begun a science fantasy. I'm entering into subcreation, the highest calling of man.

WAIN

Highest calling?

Lewis and Tolkien stick to their guns.

LEWIS

Does no one have anything to read us?

(beat)
Well, then, another round from our subcreation genius.

Lewis nods to Tolkien. Coghill rolls his eyes at Lewis, a little tired of the genius moniker.

LATER:

TOLKIEN

(reading)
" . . . Again she fled but swiftly he came. Tinuviel! Tinuviel! He called her by her Elvish name; And there she halted listening. . "

This time the men are more interested, somewhat enchanted.

FOX

What is this Elvish name? Anglo Saxon?

TOLKIEN

(nearly offended)
Certainly not. It's elven. The Sindaren language.

WARNIE

Elven? You made it up?

TOLKIEN

You really need the high elven tongue to grasp the full meaning.

The men are not sure what to make of it all.

LEWIS

Sindarin and Quenye, two elven languages. He's written dictionaries, the whole works.

WARNIE

How many languages have you invented?

TOLKIEN

Thirteen.

The men are stunned, and look at Lewis, who smiles with vindication. But Tolkien is a bit nervous.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

It's not uncommon. Children invent languages all the time.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - SIDEBAR - NIGHT

Tolkien, Lewis, and Barfield are talking.

BARFIELD

And these languages enhance the mythology?

TOLKIEN

Mythology is not a disease of language. It's the other way around.

LEWIS

(explaining)

He invented the languages first. But in order to explain how they evolved, he needed to invent a mythology.

BARFIELD

Amazing.

LEWIS

In Latin, the word spiritus means wind and spirit and breath. The earliest people saw wind as spirit, or, literally, as a god breathing upon the earth.

BARFIELD

Language resulting from mythology.
 (to Tolkien)
 My law practice is in London. I
 know a publisher there who would
 love your work. Allen & Unwin.

TOLKIEN

(brightening)
 I've got a graduate student
 translating "Beowulf" for them.

BARFIELD

I'll send a letter--see if they'll
 request a manuscript.

Tolkien and Lewis exchange hopeful glances.

EXT. ST. ALDANE'S STREET - DAY

Tolkien, Lewis, and Barfield outside the post office.
 Tolkien slides his thick manuscript into an envelope
 addressed to "Allen & Unwin Publishers" and places it in
 the bin, then shakes Barfield's hand in appreciation.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tolkien sits down at a small desk and turns on the light
 while his wife is sleeping.

EDITH

Where have you been?

TOLKIEN

Inklings.

EDITH

The only person you have time for
 is Jack Lewis.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Knocking. Tolkien heads to the side door (his office is
 more like an attached garage) and lets in his mailman
 friend.

RALIEGH

Got a big delivery today.

We see him place a thick package on the edge of Tolkien's
 desk. Close up shot shows it to be from "Allen & Unwin
 Publishers."

TOLKIEN

(mumbles)

Thank you, Raleigh.

He fingers the package without opening it or picking it up, then shakes his head sadly.

EDITH

(opens door)

Any mail for me?

Tolkien indicates no. She sees the package.

TOLKIEN

They returned the manuscript.

EDITH

You never have time for me. When you ARE here, you're somewhere else. You're wasting your life on that thing.

She exits, and he stays in his chair, leaning slightly forward, and holds his pipe with both hands.

EXT. ALLEN & UNWIN PUBLISHERS - DAY

The sign on the outside shows the firm's name.

INT. ALLEN & UNWIN PUBLISHERS - DAY

STANLEY UNWIN sits at his desk. He is late middle-age with greying goatee. A female staff member opens the door.

UNWIN

I want to move quickly on this Oxford project. Great potential. Have you contacted Professor . . uh . . . ?

WOMAN

Tolkien. It's in the mail. I'm several days ahead of you.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - EVENING

Tolkien remains in the same position as before. Then looks at his watch, gets up to leave, stops, turns around, stares at the package, then picks it up. He holds it, then puts it in his satchel, and heads out.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - NIGHT

Tolkien enters, the first to arrive at that night's Inklings, and greets Lewis, shaking hands and laying his satchel down on a table. He starts to pull it out to show to Lewis, whose attention is diverted by FOX entering, whom he greets as well. Tolkien sets the package back in the satchel.

LATER:

The Inklings are in their places. A discussion is already in progress.

LEWIS

Love was central to the mind of the Middle Ages.

WARNIE

(looking at book
cover by C.S. Lewis)
"The Allegory of Love"

COGHILL

The Alligator of Love. That's beautiful.

LEWIS

What's interesting, they viewed love almost exclusively in male to male terms. Romantic love--or Eros as the Greeks called it--was in the background.

Tolkien (a good artist) draws a picture while Lewis talks.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Of course, this was Christ's greatest commandment to us.

HAVARD

"All men will know you are my disciples by how you love one another."

LEWIS

Precisely. That applies to Eros, certainly. But might friendship be an even higher ideal?

Tolkien's drawing is taking shape, two knights grasping hands.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Actually, I have a challenge for us. This is probably a good time.

I think we should grow up a little bit--as a group of men--and view ourselves as more than just clubby companions, but rather as deep friends, loving each other.

DYSON wants to crack a joke, but Coghill gives him a stern look of "not now."

LEWIS (CONT'D)
Ronald and I have made such a pledge,

Tolkien indicates it's true.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
to ask ourselves "what does it mean to love each other--as Christ calls us to love?"

Lewis, sensing sarcasm, looks up at DYSON and Coghill. DYSON gives him the "go ahead, I'll be serious" look. The group is choosing to consider Lewis's thoughtful words.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
In eros, two look into each other's eyes. In friendship love, two stand side-by-side and look at a common goal. In Eros, we have naked bodies, but in friendship, naked personalities.

Apparently, this is just too much for the boys. DYSON has jumped onto one knee in front of Coghill and they are dramatically clasping hands.

DYSON
I do so desire your naked personality.

A burst of laughter from everyone. Even Lewis smiles. It's what he'd expect from the gang. He gives a look of "fine, I'll quit."

DYSON (CONT'D)
I'm sorry Jack. No, do go on.

Lewis gives a "right, sure" expression.

DYSON (CONT'D)
No, I really mean it. I want to hear more. That was really good, it's just that it's also . . . Very funny.

LEWIS
Well, isn't that the point?
(he's not offended)

If grown men talk about love it's immediately about homosexuality. Jesus had a special disciple whom he loved. But now men can't talk about love without hearing wisecracks.

FOX
(mimicking the critics)
Love HAS to be about sex.

LEWIS
And of course that's rubbish. Few in the modern world can comprehend a selfless, loving friendship because few have experienced true, pure, intimate, masculine love.

At the last phrase, which he says with passion, Lewis lays his hand down lovingly on top of the hand of Warnie (on his right), who jerks his hand away in terror and disgust. The crowd roars in laughter and DYSON screams with mock anger and delight at the hypocrisy of Lewis, who sits back down and smokes his pipe with glee.

BARFIELD
This view of love in the Middle Ages may get you in trouble.

LEWIS
I did have one student who complained about the concept. Called it a vast medieval erection.

WARNIE
Speaking of, do you think these shorter skirts make girls look taller?

COGHILL
They certainly make the men look longer.

A round of chuckles and a moment of silence.

WAIN
Jack, I appreciate the words . . . and your challenge. Things have been difficult at home. Details aren't necessary. But it's been a struggle.

A palpable silence and seriousness hits the room.

WAIN (CONT'D)
This group has meant everything.

Everyone is quiet a few seconds. DYSON reaches over and gives Wain a pat on the knee.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - SIDEBOARD - NIGHT

Tolkien and Barfield talk as DYSON stands in the periphery. Tolkien reaches down and pulls out the package from his satchel although Barfield doesn't see it.

TOLKIEN

Have you heard anything from Allen
& Unwin?

BARFIELD

About your manuscript? No, but I
would assume they love it.

DYSON overhears.

DYSON

If they HAVE your manuscript, you
want a letter back. If you get a
thick package, you're done. I've
gotten plenty of thick packages.

BARFIELD

You haven't heard anything yet?

Tolkien shakes his head and discretely places the package back in his satchel.

EXT. ST. GILES AVENUE - DAY

Tolkien and Lewis are exiting the Eagle and Child pub. A young clerk from the bookstore next door walks out to interrupt them.

CLERK

Mr. Lewis.

He points to the sidewalk window, with Lewis's book prominently displayed: "Out of the Silent Planet." The two men look at it.

TOLKIEN

Congratulations, Jack.

LEWIS

It should be your mythology.

They continue walking down the street.

TOLKIEN

It's only human to be a little
jealous. But it's subcreation,
Jack. Hope for a world starved for
meaning.

Tolkien puts his arm around Jack briefly and pats his
shoulder.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

It doesn't matter who's writing it.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOMS - DAY

Lewis is lecturing to a crowd of 100 or more. He is
articulate and polished and keeps the attention of the
audience.

LEWIS

As myth transcends thought, so
incarnation transcends myth. Like
the Eucharist, myth connects the
concrete and immaterial worlds. In
fact, Tolkien calls the joyful
moment of a story the
"eucatastrophe."

(beat)

Have you read Professor Tolkien's
essay on Fairy Stories? Utterly
ground-breaking. He's writing his
own mythology--says every country
seems to have one but England.

INT. OXFORD LECTURE HALL - DAY

Tolkien is speaking to about 20 robed students. He is
choppy, hard to understand, but has interesting asides if
you can catch them.

TOLKIEN

If you constantly analyze Beowulf .
. . It IS the most ancient English
text . . . it's not a scientific
document, it's a grand story, and
too many "experts" lose their
literary soul.

(looks up)

Oh dear, I'm certainly boring you.
Let's get on with it.

He lays down his notes, steps aside from the lectern closer
to the students and begins a dramatic recitation of
"Beowulf".

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

"Hwaet! We Gardena in geardagum,
Peodcyninga, pym gefrunon,
hu da æpelingas ellen fremedon.
Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum

. . .

The students are surprised and pleased. The dramatic Tolkien is confident and smooth, entirely different from the lecturer.

Lewis enters the room from the back and enjoys watching his friend

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

. . . manna mildust ond mondwærust,
leodum lidost ond lofgeornost."

who gains a hearty ovation at the end. A few stand to applaud.

EXT. LECTURE ROOM HALLWAY - DAY

Lewis waits as Tolkien gathers his things to walk outside. Elaine is also departing in the other direction.

TOLKIEN

Jack, this is Elaine Grant, the one
translating Beowulf for Allen &
Unwin.

The two greet one another as they exit the building.

EXT. OXFORD CAMPUS - DAY

past the Bodleian Library buildings.

LEWIS

Haven't you heard from Allen &
Unwin yet?

TOLKIEN

It's not good.

LEWIS

What did they say?

TOLKIEN

The package is five inches thick.
They obviously returned the
manuscript.

LEWIS

(stops)
You haven't opened it?
(beat)

They may be asking for edits. We're going to your house, right now.

Tolkien consents. They continue walking and Lewis is happy with the prospect. The majestic steeple for University Chapel towers before them.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

They may not believe in God, but they've built him glorious monuments.

TOLKIEN

(without looking up)
They put a chicken on top.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CHAPEL STEEPLE - DAY

Close up of the cross at the apex topped by a weather vane.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

As they walk into the office.

TOLKIEN

. . . and when Chaucer mentions Wade's ship, Guingelot, the editor makes a footnote--says the legendary tale is too long and fabulous and well-known to mention. But WE know nothing about it. A lost legend.

Tolkien picks up a white bear rug as he talks and drapes himself with it.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

There's a costume party next week. We could go as Polar Bears from the Great North!

LEWIS

(laughing)
Definitely.

Lewis motions for them to sit down. The package remains on the desk in the same spot where the mailman initially placed it.

TOLKIEN

Earendal is just like that--a lost legend. Earendel, Eiru, Aryandale. . . The name means "shining ray," which most interpret as morningstar
. . .

Lewis is looking at the package.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

. . . but I take it to really mean
John the Baptist, the forerunner.
He's my patron saint. I've got a
special relationship to him . . .

LEWIS

(exasperated)
Patron saint? Open it!

Lewis points to the package. Tolkien is briefly offended,
and does not want to open the package, but gives in. He
scans the letter on top.

TOLKIEN

Rejected.

He throws the manuscript into the small chest on his desk
with "Tolkien" painted on it, legible and nicely crafted.
He slumps back into his chair holding his pipe. Lewis looks
at the letter.

LEWIS

We have passed on the Silmarillion
. . . needs to be better tied
together . . . a stronger storyline
. . .

He shakes his head, drained of optimism. Tolkien is clearly
down and we hear what's going on in his head--the sound of
the montage with shell explosions, the boy, age 4, shouting
"He's not dead!" and the 12-year-old saying, "Must she
die?"

TOLKIEN

My mother died when I was twelve.

LEWIS

Mine too. I was nine.

TOLKIEN

You told me.

Lewis notices another letter on the desk--it had been
underneath the larger package. It is from Allen & Unwin
Publishers.

LEWIS

Shall I open this?

Tolkien consents, barely paying attention.

TOLKIEN

(points to chest)
I watched my father paint that.

Lewis looks up at Tolkien, expecting to hear him say something personal about his father, but Tolkien says nothing else. Lewis goes back to the letter.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

My aunt said "Tolkien" means
"foolhardy." A knight who charged
the Turks was given the nickname.

LEWIS

(while reading)
Doesn't foolhardy mean brave?

TOLKIEN

Are they going to print the
Silmarillion?

LEWIS

(still reading)
No.
(looks up with broad
grin)
No!

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM

Edith sits on the couch and opens a package and pulls out a book. "The Hobbit" by J.R.R. Tolkien as we hear the male chorus of "Keep the Home Fires Burning."

MONTAGE:

1. Colleagues and friends congratulate Tolkien on his book,
2. Havard holds the book up high at the Eagle and Child for the Inklings to see,
3. The bookstore clerk waves at Tolkien as he walks by with "The Hobbit" displayed in the store window,
4. Tolkien and Lewis are dressed as Polar Bears as the door opens to the costume party they are attending,
5. Dyson and Coghill perform on stage as leads in a grand Shakespeare production as Lewis and Tolkien sit in the audience (the only ones not wearing black tie tux),
6. The Inklings in Lewis's room sing "Keep the Home Fires Burning" as Dyson and Coghill lead the charge,
7. Lewis and Tolkien walk down the hallway as the music fades.

EXT. PEMBROKE COLLEGE - HALLWAY

SINGLETON
(to Tolkien)
Congratulations.

Campbell
I do love your little Hobbit book.

Tolkien shakes hands and smiles graciously, then he and Lewis enter his door.

INT. PEMBROKE COLLEGE - TOLKIEN ROOMS

Tolkien shuts door the brusquely, and immediately says.

TOLKIEN
(mockingly)
"I love your little Hobbit. I love your little Hobbit."
(beat)
I'm being patronized. It was a fun story for my children. But the Silmarils are in my heart.

LEWIS
If the Hobbit does well, they'll publish the Silmarillion.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

A newspaper clipping can be seen on the counter with a picture of Elaine entitled "Student Saves Abandoned Manuscript" while Edith cuts out another article and places it on top: "The Hobbit wins New York Herald Tribune's Best Juvenile Book." Tolkien sits dejectedly at the kitchen table in the background.

EDITH
Why can't you be happy? You've written an award-winning book?

TOLKIEN
They rejected MY book. Again. Even after the award. No Silmarillion. They want a new hobbit book.

EDITH
That sounds sweet.

TOLKIEN
I need to publish something serious.

EDITH

You haven't even finished the Silmarillion. And it's a fairy tale, too.

TOLKIEN

Fairy tales CAN be serious, even frightening. Not hobbits.

INT. EASTGATE PUB - MORNING

Tolkien is reading to Lewis.

TOLKIEN

" . . . The Morgul-lord and his black riders have come forth. War is preparing!

LEWIS

This is Gandalf, to Frodo?

TOLKIEN

(nods, continues reading)

. . . The black riders are the ringwraiths, the Nine Servants of the Lord of the Rings. I did not know they had arisen again . . ."

LEWIS

Tollers.

Tolkien looks up from his papers.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

This is wonderfully dark. But it's no longer a children's story.

Tolkien agrees.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

You're turning the New Hobbit into the Silmarillion?

TOLKIEN

I'm adding bits and pieces.

LEWIS

(muses)

A Hobbit for adults.

TOLKIEN

You think Unwin will print it?

Lewis isn't sure.

LEWIS

I should show it to Charles, my friend in London, at Oxford University Press. Does Edith like it?

TOLKIEN

(rolls his eyes)

You're the one I share with, Jack. Our meetings here on Mondays are what keep me sane.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - NIGHT

LEWIS

Shall we hear more from Toller's New Hobbit?

COGHILL

Here, here!

TOLKIEN

A year of the New Hobbit. Shouldn't someone else read tonight?

WARNIE

I'm hooked. Will the elves save Frodo from the black riders?

The door opens and CHARLES WILLIAMS enters.

LEWIS

Charles! You made it.

Lewis helps him with his hat and coat.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, a few of you have met Charles Williams of London.

WILLIAMS

Now of Oxford.

LEWIS

Correct. You will all LOVE Charles, I promise. He is a literary genius, with the intellect of a lion.

Lewis is laying it on a bit heavy. The men have a "we'll see" look. Tolkien is a bit troubled by Lewis's use of the word "genius" and "lion."

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Lion, yes, Charles, read to us from your novel, "The Place of the Lion."

Tolkien, who was expecting to read from the New Hobbit book, conceals his disappointment.

LATER:

WILLIAMS

(reading)

"Much was possible to a man in solitude, but some things were possible only to a man in companionship."

(looks up)

I wrote this with men like you in mind. I've spent time with Hugo and Warnie

(acknowledges them both)

in London. Superb representatives of the Inklings. Full of love, but also great wit and logic.

LEWIS

"O Sir, we quarrel in print, by the book, as you have books for good manners."

Williams suggests he continue the quote, but Lewis can't remember it.

WILLIAMS

(trying to help Lewis)

"I will name you the degrees . . ."

DYSON

Can someone here outquote Jack?

LEWIS

(smiling)

I'm afraid so. Go on, Mr. Shakespeare.

WILLIAMS

(quickly and dramatically)

The first, the Retort Courteous; the second, the Quip Modest; the third, the Reply Churlish;

BARFIELD

The fourth?

WILLIAMS

The Reproof Valiant.

BARFIELD

The fifth?

WILLIAMS
The Countercheck Quarrelsome.

BARFIELD
Sixth?

WILLIAMS
The Lie with Circumstance.

BARFIELD
And seventh?

WILLIAMS
The Lie Direct.

Cheers and applause.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
All of you are excellent
dialecticians. But you are great
men because of your love for one
another. Jack's book on love is one
of the most important of our time.
(beat)
You are men of destiny. Every
moment we breathe is supernatural.
God is Love. God is here.

LEWIS
(prompting)
Co-inherence.

WILLIAMS
Jack refers to a concept I've
coined. Co-inherence. We are all
connected. No man is an island.
Every one of my actions, and my
thoughts, affects you, and yours
affect me.

Although it seems a little weird, The Inklings are enjoying
the talk because of all the affirmation, except for
Tolkien, who is wary.

LEWIS
Charles will be lecturing next
week. I used all my ingenuity to
get this great man in front of
Oxford.

INT. EXAMINATIONS ROOMS - EVENING

Williams is lecturing before a group of about 75 people,
mostly young women. Lewis and Tolkien are also there.

WILLIAMS

Yes, man is free. He is free to choose obedience. I suspect most of you are shocked that I would present to you a serious discussion on virginity, on chastity.

The students, especially the women, are certainly intrigued by his talk.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

It may appear almost like forbidden fruit, what your grandparents felt when discussing unchastity.

Laughter. He points to a young woman.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Yes, Celia.

CELIA

How would your teachings on Substitution relate?

WILLIAMS

Excellent. In my novel "Shadows of Ecstasy," the hero sees his beloved naked, but instead of aiming toward consummation, he redirects his desire to create inner power--to do good, and to love.

The students are greatly interested, as is Lewis. Tolkien is suspicious.

After Williams concludes, Lewis and Tolkien approach the lectern where Williams is surrounded by several students asking questions. One is struggling with an issue and he is consoling her and has her by the hand, counting each finger.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Now remember: Love--obey--pray--play

(he gets to last
finger)

And be intelligent.

TOLKIEN

(under his breath, to
himself)

Good God!

Williams is saying thank you to another young woman, bending her hand over and kissing it slightly. He calls back to the first woman who is walking away.

WILLIAMS
 God bless you, child.
 (lifts his arm high
 with a fist)
 Under the protection.

Tolkien continues to raise an eyebrow while Lewis is impressed with the loving actions.

EXT. OXFORD STREET - NIGHT

The three men walk up toward a row house front door and say goodnight. A young woman opens the door and yells to someone behind her.

ELLIE
 Katy! Charles is back.

WILLIAMS
 (to Lewis and
 Tolkien)
 Oh, let me introduce you to Ellie
 (another girl appears
 at the door)
 And sister Katy. I rent my room
 from their family.
 (to girls)
 You've heard me speak of Jack Lewis
 and Professor Tolkien.

ELLIE
 (an inviting smile)
 Why don't you join us? The
 "Household" is about to meet?

KATY
 (explaining, with a
 hint of mystery)
 The "Companions of the Co-
 Inherence."

WILLIAMS
 (to men, shrugging)
 Students from London.

INT. SPAULDING HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Fifteen students, mostly female, pack the living room. A candle burns in the center and Williams is seated as the key figure. Tolkien and Lewis are also there, a bit out of place. Lewis is intrigued but Tolkien is quite uncomfortable.

WILLIAMS

. . . The eternal dance. When you stare into the beauty of your beloved, God is being reflected. The entire universe is being explained.

The students are mesmerized.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Jack understands. Read his book on love. Not since Dante has someone captured the noble fusion of religion and passion. Our paths crossed by happenstance. I'm constantly impressed by the staff work of the Almighty.

A chuckle from the group.

TINA

I've been deeply hurt . . . by a lover. I've hated him, and said terrible things about him.

WILLIAMS

Hate can be transformed--back into love. Remember the practice of Substitution.

(looks at TOM)

You must take on the sufferings of Tina. Bear her burdens.

Tom nods with solemn commitment. Meanwhile, Tolkien is getting more and more uncomfortable, but Lewis is enchanted.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

(to Tina)

You. You shall write out the 52nd chapter of Isaiah. You shall do this as soon as you can. And you shall learn the first three verses by heart.

She nods, grateful for a path of penance.

TOLKIEN

I really must be going.

He stands, which interrupts the atmosphere briefly.

KATY

(to Williams)

Have you finished writing our play?

WILLIAMS

Almost, child.

Lewis gives Tolkien an "are you okay" look.

TOLKIEN
(as he leaves, just to
Lewis)
I'll talk to you Monday.

Tolkien exits.

Williams has moved to the couch next to THELMA, with a hand on both shoulders, holding her.

WILLIAMS
You are a divine creature in the
high pursuit of love.

She is nearly weeping, highly emotional. The others are deeply involved as well. Lewis is wide-eyed.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
I nearly adore you. In fact, I do.
But not to bow down and worship
Thelma, but rather love IN Thelma.

Lewis is still taken in, but these last comments do appear to nearly cross the line.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Edith and Tolkien are in the midst of an argument, angry but low enough not to be heard by the boys getting dressed.

TOLKIEN
Not this morning? You mean EVERY
morning.

EDITH
I'll deal with God my own way!

She rubs her throbbing head.

EDITH (CONT'D)
And what ever happened to once a
week?

TOLKIEN
You never go. I run a divided
family. No support with church. No
support with my career. Just a lot
of headaches.

The boys appear in the hallway.

INT. EASTGATE PUB - MORNING

LEWIS

He radiates love to everyone. He can't help that he's so popular.

TOLKIEN

Those two girls live alone. Their parents are in America.

LEWIS

Charles doesn't use his power that way. He could, obviously, if he wanted to. It's the new rebellion: love without sex.

Tolkien is dismayed at Lewis's gullibility.

TOLKIEN

Where's his wife?

LEWIS

She doesn't want to leave London. They're deeply in love.

TOLKIEN

Just ask Charles.

LEWIS

He's very devoted to the Church of England.

TOLKIEN

And? That's the problem. That's your problem, Jack. The Anglicans are founded on rebellion against the true church. No apostolic authority--you and Charles have no basis for what's right and wrong.

LEWIS

You can't believe that? Rome is the only true church?

There is a pause as Tolkien holds in his frustration.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Read me the New Hobbit changes. Are we officially calling it "The Lord of the Rings?"

Tolkien is pulling out his manuscript. Williams walks in the pub.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

There he is now.
(motions for him to
come over)

I invited him to join us this morning.

Lewis is enthusiastic. Tolkien disguises his anger and offense as cordial greetings are exchanged and Williams takes a seat across from Lewis, pushing Tolkien further into the booth.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Ronald was just arguing for apostolic succession. Says we Anglicans are rebels.

WILLIAMS

Interesting.

TOLKIEN

Catholics always know what they believe. We always know what the service will be, we know it will always be in Latin, we've had the same morality for two thousand years.

WILLIAMS

Ronald has a point.

LEWIS

How so?

WILLIAMS

I'm a fan of Byzantium. If you really want to be in the line of the apostles, the Eastern Church, the Greeks, will take you all the way back.

Tolkien is frustrated and Lewis senses the need to move on.

LEWIS

(to Williams)

Did you bring that brilliant essay on Shakespeare? You could read us some!

He looks at Tolkien to get him to encourage Charles to read. Tolkien nods and smiles.

LATER:

Williams is holding his papers but then looks up from them.

WILLIAMS

You know, so much of what I learned came from my father. We'd take long walks every day. He was my best friend.

Tolkien can't help but be slightly touched by this anecdote.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Tollers, the New Hobbit is sublime!
Jack lent me the transcript. Do you
know where the power comes from?

(looks at Lewis, then
at Tolkien)

The CENTER of the story is peace.
Yes, there are great exploits and
heroes. But we always want to
return to ordinary life, basic
pleasures--tea, beer, tobacco,
friendship--glorified by the
hobbits. A brilliant archetype.

LEWIS

(beaming)

He sees it.

Tolkien is outwardly appreciative.

INT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB

The Inklings are informally gathered in their back room.
Lewis and Williams are having their own conversation.
Tolkien is looking at them.

HAVARD

I've got you down for the trip.

Tolkien nods, still eyeing Lewis and Williams.

HAVARD (CONT'D)

Have you thought about Collins
House publishers?

TOLKIEN

(distantly)

I don't know if any publisher can
help me right now

(turns to Havard)

Would they publish the
Silmarillion?

HAVARD

One advantage. They're Catholic.

Tolkien mulls it over.

EXT. THAMES RIVER - DAY

The Inklings are on board a boat, large enough for them to
sit comfortably, or stand. Havard steers, they go slowly.

A chorus heartily sings "It's a Long Way to Tipperary."

It's a party, lots of smiles, and they are somehow negotiating their pipe smoking and beer drinking while dealing with the wind. Tolkien moves towards one side of the boat but Lewis and Williams are engaged in a conversation there, so he avoids them.

EXT. THAMES RIVER - EVENING

They pull up slowly toward a dock. The moon is out. A few of the men are finishing the song, slowly and nicely, with a harmony or two.

Inklings

" . . . it's a long way to Tipperar-
reeeee! It's a long way to go."

It is a calm beautiful night. They coast very slowly. Tolkien breaks the silence.

TOLKIEN

Hwaet!

When Tolkien says this word (as when he begins "Beowulf") it sounds very similar to "quiet."

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

We Inclinga on aerdagum
searopancolra snyttru gehierdon
para waes Hloduig sum, brad ond
beorhtword."

We only hear the first three or four words due to the chatter from the others.

DYSON

What's he saying?

BARFIELD

It's about the Inklings.

FOX

Anglo Saxon, I think.

DYSON

Well, translate it!

BARFIELD

Something about Lewis.

DYSON

An encrypted cursing of Jack?

BARFIELD

I can't hear with all your chatter.

Tolkien has stopped.

WILLIAMS

What does "Inklings" mean?

LEWIS

Well, as writers, we dabble in ink.
And, we have, perhaps, half a clue.

They pull up to the dock, tackling ropes and such ineffectively with pipes and beers in hand.

WARNIE

The U.Q. steers as well as an admiral.

TOLKIEN

That's it then. He's the Admiral.

LEWIS

(consulting a map)
The Pig and Whistle. Where is this place?

COGHILL

(to Havard)
Admiral?

DYSON

Will you please call him by his real name: Humphrey!

EXT. PIG AND WHISTLE BED AND BREAKFAST - NIGHT

They file in the door. A man with an eye patch looks at papers while Havard waits, then the man shakes his head.

DYSON

Don't cross the Admiral.

The man gives DYSON an irritated glance and heads to the back room.

TOLKIEN

Well, you see how he came by the patch.

INT. PIG AND WHISTLE - BEDROOMS - MORNING

Lewis, who shares a room with Williams, wakes groggily from his bed as we hear the song, "Oh, how I hate to get up in the morning."

He knocks on the door for the other men then opens the door and shakes a few Inklings.

They react unfavorably and by this time the second verse is being sung, "Some day I'm going to murder the bugler . . ."

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Montage:

1. The Inklings all walk briskly along the country lane with packs on their backs. Lewis and Warnie are in the front with Tolkien and Dyson taking up the rear.
2. Front shot of them all as they walk/march while singing "Oh, How I Hate to Get up in the Morning . . . "
3. It rains as they continue walking, and a couple of them start to straggle but Lewis goads them on, insisting that they continue to walk.
4. During later sunny weather, Tolkien straggles off to the side and picks up something off the ground.

LEWIS

C'mon Tollers. We have several more miles.

TOLKIEN

You're ruthless. Ruthless walkers.

He examines a chestnut he picked up, and Lewis gives up and motions to the others to stop and take a break. Tolkien walks up to them.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

The spanish chestnut. Castanea sativa. It's native to the Mediterranean. Imported by the Romans.

HAVARD

These days we get our flour from Canada or our wine from Australia. Oranges from Africa.

TOLKIEN

But it was rare a thousand years ago. Those people ate the countryside around them. The hills were literally a part of them. They saw nymphs in the fountains, in the woods.

LEWIS

Ah yes. Before modern man made things boring, corn and wine was always considered the body and blood of some dying and rising god.

Tolkien walks over to a tree and places his hands on it.

TOLKIEN

If you love a tree, it will talk to you.

He presses his ear on the trunk. The others shake their heads and smile.

FOX

Look down there.

He points to a lovely mill house by a stream with a small church nearby.

WARNIE

It would make the perfect home for the Inklings.

They all take in the view, silently consenting to the idealistic sentiment.

LATER:

A different view of countryside is in view as they walk and debate.

LEWIS

If you're trapped in the mountains, or on an Island, I can see it.

WARNIE

In extenuating circumstances, I grant that.

DYSON

What's that?

BARFIELD

Jack's arguing for cannibalism. I don't think anyone's disagreeing.

TOLKIEN

No. You can't do it. Ever.

WARNIE

Why?

TOLKIEN

The church says so.

LEWIS

Have some flexibility, Tollers.

TOLKIEN

Have some stability.

LEWIS

What about the Eucharist? The supreme example of eating flesh in extraordinary circumstances.

WILLIAMS

Fascinating.

Tolkien shakes his head in frustration and moves to the back of the pack.

EXT. THE ONE-EYED TUNA - EVENING

The entourage walks in the B&B for that night.

INT. THE ONE-EYED TUNA - NIGHT

The men sit in comfortable chairs around a fire, some putting their wet feet or socks up to the hearth. Warnie dumps out his bag.

WARNIE

Weighed down by all your books, Jack.

He thumbs through *Problem of Pain*, *Miracles*, *Mere Christianity*, *Beyond Personality*, and *Christian Behavior*, all by C.S. Lewis.

LATER:

Williams in the middle of discussing a topic.

WILLIAMS

. . . So you must always be willing to truly, sincerely, explore the opponents' arguments.

BARFIELD

And the ultimate opponent is . . . ?

WILLIAMS

The Devil.

WAIN

So that's why you've got all that black magic in your novels?

BARFIELD

You explore the mind of Satan?

WILLIAMS

Indeed.

(pulls out a paper)

Here's what HIS disciples would pray:

(V.O.)
 "Our Father, which wert in heaven
 O Hate! O Anguish of Joy!
 Make our hearts one with Thine
 To ravage and destroy."

Wain thinks Williams is strange and scary. The others are not sure. Lewis is intrigued but wary. Tolkien turns his head so as not to even address the matter.

LEWIS
 I've started a treatise on Love and
 Friendship.

WILLIAMS
 Bravo.

LATER:

LEWIS
 (reading)
 " . . . To love is to be
 vulnerable.

As he speaks, we see Tolkien sitting at his desk in his office looking at his scattered manuscript papers. Then he begins to gather them up.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 The only way to escape a broken
 heart is to share it with no one,
 not even an animal. Wrap it up
 carefully . . .

Now Tolkien takes the manuscript, wraps a rubber band around it, and places it carefully in an envelope.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 . . . And place it in the casket of
 your selfishness.

And then Tolkien places the envelope in the small chest on his desk (the one with "Tolkien" painted on top), closes the chest, and stares at it.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 But in that dark, motionless,
 airless coffin it will not break,
 but harden.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
 The alternative to vulnerability .
 . . Is damnation. The only place
 safe from heartbreak, is hell."

There is a poignant pause (they all like the reading, except Tolkien).

LEWIS (CONT'D)
Tollers, any more chapters for us?

He shakes his head.

WARNIE
It's been months!

TOLKIEN
Subcreation is hard work--for those of us who still write it.

Lewis overlooks the dig.

INT. UNIVERSITY CHURCH - NIGHT

A drama troupe is performing. Lewis, Williams, Warnie, and Tolkien, are in the audience.

KATY
(acting)
You have baptized the Christ, but you cannot wash my sins away.

TOM
Mary. Worry not about your sins. Evil, pain, even my ascetic past, can be engulfed and overwhelmed by our love.

The two embrace and kiss. Williams is excited about the play. Tolkien is expressionless. Lewis closes his eyes because this has gone too far.

WARNIE
My God!

He looks over to see if Charles heard him.

INT. EASTGATE PUB - MORNING

LEWIS
It was in poor taste.

Williams concedes, and appreciates the rebuke. Tolkien arrives.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
You're an hour late.

Tolkien says nothing and doesn't look happy.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Charles has helped me with a new book idea. A demon gets letters from his uncle who gives him tips on tempting.

Tolkien gives a facetious grunt.

TOLKIEN

Perfect.

LEWIS

When will this melancholy end? You haven't written a word in a year.

TOLKIEN

Some of us aren't so prolific.

LEWIS

(angry)

Snap out of it, Ronald!

(beat)

I'm sorry. Look, this concerns more than you. It concerns a hero. A hero's journey, a world starved for meaning. This century could one day be called the Age of Tolkien. Or, you could just let the century down. Let me down. Let your dead friends down.

Tolkien walks off. Lewis regrets the last phrase.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Edith is playing the piano as Tolkien comes in the front door quietly. She continues to play.

TOLKIEN

Remember when you used to dance for me in the woods, like an elven maiden?

EDITH

That was a long time ago.

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

TOLKIEN

You're still my Luthien.

She stops playing and touches his hand.

EDITH

(wryly)

I used to copy out your stories for you too.

(beat)
I don't want you to stop writing.

INT. ST. ALOYSIUS CHURCH - SIDE CHAPEL

Charles Williams kneels and a robed priest has his hand on his shoulder. Incense is flowing from a censor.

Priest
And who is this prayer for, my son?

WILLIAMS
Everyone that I love.

The priest nods and begins a Latin prayer.

Priest
Suscipe, sancete pater, omnipotens
aeterne Deus . . .

INT. LEWIS ROOMS-NIGHT

The Inklings are about to start a session. Williams is absent. Warnie whispers in Jack's ear.

WARNIE
I think Tollers brought his
manuscript!

LATER:

LEWIS
(reading)
"St. Augustine plunged into
depression when his intimate friend
Nebredius died.

During these next lines there are flashes to Williams prayer service where he names people as he kneels. But it does not keep us from understanding Lewis.

WILLIAMS
My wife . . . Ellie . . . Katy . . .

LEWIS
(V.O.)
. . . his advice is not to give
your heart to anything but God. But
we follow one who wept at the grave
of Lazarus.

WILLIAMS
Jack . . . Ronald . . .

Priest
 (in the background as
 Williams is giving
 names)
 . . . hanc immaculatam hostiam,
 quam ego indignus famulus tuus
 offero tibi Deo meo vivo et vero . .
 .

LEWIS
 (V.O.)
 . . . Christ ultimately screamed
 from the cross, "eloi, eloi, lama
 sabacthani"

LEWIS (CONT'D)
 "My God, My God, Why has thou
 forsaken me?"

During Lewis's next line, Williams checks into a hospital
 desk and is told to take a seat.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 Like Job, Christ questioned God.
 But he did not curse him. And this
 is critical in any intimate
 relationship.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
 Christ says we damn our brother
 when we call him "raca"- "you
 fool."

LATER:

TOLKIEN
 (reading)
 "At last Elrond spoke again. 'This
 is grievous news concerning
 Saruman,' he said,

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 'for we trusted him and he is deep
 in all our counsels.'"

During this reading, Williams sits in the hospital chair
 reading a book. A close up shows "The Screwtape Letters" by
 C.S. Lewis.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 "' It is perilous to study too
 deeply the arts of the enemy, for
 good or for ill.'"

There is a poignant pause. The Inklings are clearly falling in love with the Lord of the Rings, including Lewis, who does not pick up any hidden messages.

BARFIELD

It's brilliant, Ronald.

DYSON

Sometimes the story slows down. But you've got one fertile imagination.

LEWIS

It gets a little slow and strange in some places. I've told Ronald this.

Tolkien doesn't like this criticism much.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

But, the weak spots simply can't hold back the genius of the work overall.

A pause.

COGHILL

I've got Charles's review of Screwtape. By the way, "The Screwtape Letters" is selling through the roof. Overseas too. This idea of letters between two demons seems to be working.

(looks at Lewis)

Well done.

While he talks, Tolkien draws a sketch of Williams.

DYSON

What did Charles write?

COGHILL

It's a satire. More letters between demons, like in Jack's book:

"My dearest Scopuscle:

It's a dangerous book. I hate it, this giveaway of hell. Your dear friend, Snigsozzle."

The men respond favorably.

COGHILL (CONT'D)

"P.S. You WILL dispatch someone to Lewis, some very clever fiend?"

The men enjoy the second punch line, but Tolkien is without expression. A close-up of the picture shows he has turned Williams into a devil.

INT. OFFICES OF COLLINS HOUSE PUBLISHERS - DAY

Tolkien sits at a table with Waldmon.

Waldmon

We own interest in a paper company,
so you won't hear that excuse from
us. We'd also like to buy the
rights to the Hobbit.

TOLKIEN

You'll publish both--the Lord of
the Rings AND the Silmarillion?

Waldmon nods. Tolkien breathes with adrenaline, his
lifelong dream about to be realized.

Waldmon

You're under no legal obligation to
Unwin?

TOLKIEN

They rejected my most important
work.

Tolkien hands over his manuscript.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

He may think there's a moral
obligation. He's waited ten years
for my Hobbit sequel. I'll need to
talk with him.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Tolkien is working at his desk. The phone rings but he lets
Edith answer it. She opens the door slowly and steps inside
and closes it behind her. Tolkien looks at her curiously as
it is odd behavior.

EDITH

It was Dr. Havard. Charles Williams
is dead.

TOLKIEN

(after a pause)
Jack needs me.

He gets up to leave.

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE - HALLWAY

Tolkien walks past Magdalen tower, then down a stone
corridor to

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - DAY

The door is open and Tolkien steps in slowly as Jack and Warnie sit with their backs to him.

LEWIS

A routine operation. Then it hits
you out of nowhere.

Tolkien steps a little closer.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

He exuded love. He made literature
come alive for me. He was my best
friend.

Tolkien stops.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

My friend of all friends.

Tolkien frowns, then turns around and leaves the room
before either man sees him.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Has anyone talked to Tollers? He
must be devastated.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

Men hover around fires on the battlefield. Gunfire and
cannon are in the background and one bomb explodes in the
foreground as a lion emerges from the flames and heads
directly toward the camera until the close up shows a
ferocious mouth and roar.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lewis jerks up in his bed, frightened.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - NIGHT

Lewis bangs the glass with a spoon.

LEWIS

Well, does no one have anything to
read us?

COGHILL

Where's Tollers?

Lewis shrugs.

INT. EASTGATE PUB - MORNING

Tolkien arrives late to their Monday meeting.

TOLKIEN

Sorry. And I've got to run in a few minutes.

LEWIS

You coming this Thursday?

TOLKIEN

I'm a devoted Inkling, Jack. The past two weeks, some family duties cropped up. And last week I was just exhausted.

LEWIS

(nods)

Ever since Charles died, you've seemed a bit preoccupied. I guess its been difficult for everyone.

TOLKIEN

I've been working on the Silmarillion. Looks like I may finally get it published.

LEWIS

Good for Sir Stanley.

TOLKIEN

No. Not Unwin. Collins House. They want to publish the Lord of the Rings as well.

LEWIS

And you simply leave Unwin out to dry?

TOLKIEN

The way they've treated me? So what?

LEWIS

I hope you know what you're doing. You're burning a bridge to the most important publication in your life. Ten years of work.

Tolkien isn't pleased with the comment but says nothing.

LATER:

TOLKIEN

(reading to Lewis)

"Now come, you filth!" He cried.

"You've hurt my master, you brute,
and you'll pay for it."

Lewis is deeply engrossed in the story.

LEWIS

Read again the elvish that Sam
chanted when he held the phial of
Galadriel up to the giant spider.

TOLKIEN

"A Elbereth Gilthoniel
o menel palan-direl,
le nallon si di-nguruthos!
A tiro nin, Fnuilos!

Lewis enthusiasm grows into enchantment. Tolkien's voice
fades into another section of the story.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

. . . Often he chafed his master's
hands and feet, and touched his
brow, but all were cold. 'Frodo,
Mr. Frodo,' he called, 'Don't leave
me here alone! It's your Sam
calling.'"

Lewis has true tears as Tolkien's reading fades to

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

"No change came over the still
face, and by that more than by all
other tokens Sam was convinced at
last that Frodo had died and laid
aside the Quest."

LATER:

Lewis thumbs through the manuscript.

LEWIS

It's a masterpiece, Ronald. A
triumph.

(pause, then with
excitement)

I'm writing one, too. Subcreation
is the highest of man's callings,
right?

He hands Tolkien his manuscript.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

It's about four children, a land
called Narnia . . . And a lion.

Tolkien looks at it, then back at Lewis. He shows neither a
smile nor a frown, but instead seems anxious.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

It's the first of seven books I'm
planning. I need your help. I'm
ready to plunge deeper into
subcreation

(beat)

and deeper into our friendship.

Tolkien, feeling awkward, gives a tentative nod.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - NIGHT

The Inklings are sitting in their usual places, all except
Lewis.

HAVARD

. . . And don't forget. The
Inklings dinner is one month away.
Black tie, gentlemen.

There is a sound at the door.

WARNIE

Here's Jack!

As Lewis walks in they all stand and salute, except for
Tolkien, who's not in the mood for it.

LEWIS

What IS this?

He ignores them and heads to his chair. On the coffee table
in front of him is a copy of TIME magazine with C.S. Lewis
prominently on the cover.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Oh, dear.

WARNIE

We got the early edition.

LEWIS

(sighs)

I expected an interview. But not
this.

WAIN

Congratulations, Jack.

The others chime in as well, some giving him a pat on the
back. Because of all the activity, not as many Inklings are
smoking pipes.

DYSON

And here's another article where WE
get mentioned.

(reads)

"Lewis's close-knit circle of accomplished friends
 (looks up to say
 "thank you")
 Has met regularly for a nearly two decades, a high-profile cast of Christian literary types."

They toast each other, but Tolkien continues to sulk.

LATER:

LEWIS

(reading)

" . . . all the Fauns and Dryands and Naiads and Dwarfs and Animals—at least all the good ones—simply hate her. And she can turn people into stone and do all kinds of horrible things. And she has made a magic so that it is always winter in Narnia—always winter, but it never gets to Christmas."

Lewis looks up.

WARNIE

It's marvellous, Jack.

HAVARD

Entertaining, no doubt. "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe."?

(Lewis nods)

And you've already got a publisher?

(Lewis nods again.)

TOLKIEN

Well, I can't support it.

The Inklings are used to criticism, but this comment seems odd, and it causes an awkward pause.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

It's a garbled mess of metaphors. Nymphs, centaurs, humans, dwarves. Father Christmas? Good Lord, how many mythologies are you going to cram together? Aslan the Lion is so obvious. The whole thing is cheap allegory.

Tolkien's tone is clearly malicious. It stuns the others.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Splendid. Someone spends his entire lifetime toiling on a mythology-- because that's what excellence in subcreation requires, hard work, not a few months of child's play--but what are you on now, your 20th book of popular ideas?

DYSON

Now, Tolkies . . .

TOLKIEN

(looks at DYSON,
Lewis, and others)

None of you seem to care much for my mythology anyway . . . All this mediocrity . . .

(looks at Lewis)

I've got an opportunity to be published, and I won't let you hold me back!

He is visibly angry, emotional, and realizes he's made a fool of himself. He grabs his things and hurries out. The Inklings are shocked. Lewis, who is hurt, closes his eyes and sighs.

INT. OFFICE OF ALLEN AND UNWIN - DAY

Stanley Unwin sits behind his desk and Tolkien is seated opposite from him.

UNWIN

The Lord of the Rings is over a thousand pages. And the Silmarillion is . . .

TOLKIEN

About a thousand.

UNWIN

Well. If you demand that I print both books at the same time, or otherwise you will go to another publisher,

(he stands)

then I am quite terribly sorry.

Tolkien says nothing. He is not comfortable in confrontations or negotiations. Unwin is unsure of the man and confused by him.

UNWIN (CONT'D)

I'll have the staff return your manuscripts.

INT. LAMB AND FLAG PUB - DAY

Tolkien sits in a booth by himself, holding his pipe with two hands. He looks across the street at the Eagle and Child pub, as Lewis and a couple of other Inklings exit.

INT. THE RANDOLPH HOTEL - EVENING

The Inklings hover around a table in tuxedos. The place next to Lewis is empty.

HAVARD

Is Tollers not coming?

DYSON

Hasn't come since his tirade.

WARNIE

Doesn't meet with Jack on Mondays, either. It will be an Inklings Dinner without Tolkien.

DYSON

There IS no Inklings without Tolkien!

INT. OFFICE OF COLLINS HOUSE PUBLISHERS - DAY

Waldmon

You cut your ties with Unwin?
(Tolkien nods.)
Excellent.

TOLKIEN

He wasn't happy. I'm sure it's the last I'll see of him.

Waldmon

We do have a development. The paper shortage is more and more difficult. Management demands that the Lord of the Rings be cut in half.

TOLKIEN

But . . . That's impossible.

Waldmon

You just have to find some places to cut.

TOLKIEN

(angry)
I've cut every place I can possibly cut!

Either you print both books like
you promised or you'll get nothing
at all.

Waldmon

(beat)
I'm so sorry.

He walks away. Tolkien, devastated, remains seated and
puts his head in his hands.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - EVENING

Tolkien is in same position in his dark office.

INT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB - MORNING

The Inklings are engaged in small talk. Tolkien is chatting
with Fox, but standing closer to the door. Lewis, Warnie,
and Havard talk in the back corner.

LEWIS

Collins rejected him, too?

Havard nods.

WARNIE

He's his own worst enemy.

HAVARD

Quite a character study.

LEWIS

I've concluded you can't study
people. You can only get to know
them better. Two very different
things.

Lewis sees Tolkien walk out the front door and follows him.

EXT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB - MORNING

LEWIS

Tollers, I . . .

TOLKIEN

(still walking)
I'm on the run, Jack.

LEWIS

Ronald, if we need to talk, let's
talk.

Tolkien keeps walking.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Forgive me, Ronald. I forgive you,
whatever it is.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tolkien sits pensively next to the fire holding an envelope that he fiddles with anxiously. Someone knocks at the door and he hops up to open it for Raleigh, who gives him the day's mail.

TOLKIEN

Here.

He hands him the envelope, addressed to Allen & Unwin Publishers.

INT. OFFICES OF ALLEN & UNWIN - HALLWAY- DAY

Stanley UNWIN is talking with his son, RAYNOR UNWIN.

RAYNOR UNWIN

It's a weird book. But I think you should do it.

UNWIN

I'm not bankrupting the company for some strange professor.

INT. ALLEN & UNWIN - STANLEY UNWIN'S OFFICE - DAY

UNWIN

Just the Lord of the Rings, no Silmarillion?

Tolkien nods, reluctantly.

UNWIN (CONT'D)

Did you finish reading it to your Inklings group?

TOLKIEN

Not the last few chapters. They haven't met for months.

UNWIN

It's a thick book. Expensive.

(beat)

To take the risk, we'll need that big-name endorsement on the cover. I'll publish it as soon as you get that done.

TOLKIEN

From who?

UNWIN
Your good friend, C. S. Lewis.

INT. LEWIS ROOMS - DAY

Lewis is thumbing through a thick manuscript that he has pulled out of an envelope. Warnie reads the cover letter.

WARNIE
The audacity. After everything he's said about Narnia. What are you going to do?

Lewis shakes his head.

WARNIE (CONT'D)
I know what I'd do.

INT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB - MORNING

DYSON
What are you hearing about the department chair?

Lewis shrugs. Barfield holds a piece of paper.

BARFIELD
You've already sent this in to Unwin?

Lewis nods.

DYSON
What's that?

WARNIE
Jack's comments for Tollers book.

COGHILL
Read it!

BARFIELD
"This book is like lightning from a clear sky. The Lord of the Rings is almost unparalleled in the whole history of Romance, stretching back three thousand years."

He pauses as the rest of them take it in and puff on their pipes.

DYSON
That's damn big of you, Jack.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Edith sits on the couch holding "The Lord of the Rings" with the smaller title "'The Fellowship of the Ring' by J.R.R. Tolkien". Tolkien sits across from her smoking his pipe by the fire.

EDITH

All of those years. You're finally a success.

TOLKIEN

Hardly. Three thousand copies? If they don't sell, they won't print the rest of the trilogy. The critics will probably destroy it. That dooms the Silmarillion.

Edith looks at him sadly, then returns to the book and reads the back cover.

EDITH

Well how nice. A C.S. Lewis endorsement. Ronald, he has a ladyfriend! He's been going to her house every evening, staying late into the night--that's the neighborhood gossip anyway.

TOLKIEN

Wonderful behavior from our famous Christian author.

EDITH

He's been a bachelor all his life. Let him have some fun.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Tolkien sits at his desk and stares at the back cover of his book. He picks up the phone in his office and dials.

TOLKIEN

Chancellor? Professor Tolkien. That appointment to department chair? I'd like to do whatever I can to support Jack Lewis.

INT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB - DAY

Lewis and Warnie are sitting in their usual back room. Tolkien walks up to buy a beer and waves at them in a friendly way, causing the brothers to raise an eyebrow.

Tolkien approaches their table with a beer in his hand and takes a seat.

TOLKIEN

Excellent beer.

The two brothers agree.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Jack, I've spoken with the chancellor. I think we can get you that department chair.

LEWIS

You don't have to do that.

TOLKIEN

Glad to. He's ready to meet with you. I've got it all set up.

JOY GRESHAM walks with a cane toward their table. When she sees Tolkien, she decides not to interrupt.

JOY

Jack, I'll be at the Eastgate.

She hurries out the door before Lewis can respond.

TOLKIEN

Something serious?

LEWIS

Just a friend. Joy.

Warnie observes Lewis's coyness with concern.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOMS - DAY

Tolkien is lecturing to a group of 25 students.

TOLKIEN

Do you believe fairies still exist?

He pulls a small, 4-inch green shoe from his pocket and shows it to an amused audience.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

I happen to know that they do.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tolkien enters the living room and lights his pipe by the fire while Edith reads the paper.

TOLKIEN

I've set up a meeting with Jack and the chancellor. I think he's going to get that department chair.

EDITH

(reading)
Very nice.

TOLKIEN

It's been too long since Jack and I really talked. I think I'll go see him later today.

EDITH

Your close confidante? Take a look at the marriage licenses. "Mr. Clive Staples Lewis to Miss Joy Gresham."

Tolkien grabs the paper and looks.

TOLKIEN

She's divorced!

EDITH

Must have done it in secret. No one's talked about it. And she's diagnosed with cancer. It's all so odd.

Tolkien is disgusted. He tears out the notice and throws the paper and his pipe on the chair and walks out the front door.

INT. ST. ALOYSIUS CHURCH - DAY

Tolkien sits in the pew while the priest is washing his fingers beside the altar. Looming over the altar is a giant cross with a stiff likeness of Christ attached. The priest is saying

Priest

Lavabo inter innocentes manus meus:
et circumdabo altare tuum.

During this, Tolkien looks at the notice that he holds in his left hand and crosses himself with his right hand.

INT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE - CHAPEL - DAY

Lewis kneels in a nearly empty chapel with a smoking candle in front of him. Behind the altar looms a very large painting of Christ, soft and human, carrying the cross. The rector recites in the background

RECTOR

I acknowledge my transgressions and
my sin is ever before me.

Hide thy face from my sins, and
blot out all mine iniquities. The
sacrifices of God are a broken
spirit . . .

While Lewis prays in the foreground

LEWIS

God, I pray for Joy, I pray for
Warnie, I pray for Ronald . . .

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Edith and JOY LEWIS sit at the kitchen table. Joy carries a
crutch. Edith has a box of pictures and memorabilia she is
showing.

EDITH

Here's our wedding. Did you and
Jack take pictures? Here's when we
were engaged. He was keeping it a
secret the whole time from his
closest friends.

JOY

Sounds familiar.

EDITH

Oh, Joy, you are too funny!

JOY

Jack says I have the mind of a
lioness.

Joy notices a letter in the box scrawled with kids
handwriting.

JOY (CONT'D)

One of your boys?

EDITH

That's Ronald. He could write at
four. So sad. His father died in
South Africa, so it was never sent.

(reads letter)

"My Dear Daddy, I know you will be
so glad to get a letter from your
little Ronald. I am got such a big
man now . . ."

(looks up)

Hard to read, really.

JOY

That's okay, sweetheart.

(beat)

Does he ever talk about him?

EDITH
No. Just the one memory.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Tolkien sits at his desk and stares at the chest with "Tolkien" painted on top.

EDITH
(cracks open the door)
Joy is here. Join us for tea?

Tolkien shakes his head. He is hunched over in his chair, in the familiar position of him holding his pipe with two hands.

He remains in that position as the subtitle reads, "Five years later." The phone rings. Warnie is on the other line.

WARNIE
Tollers, Jack's in the hospital. I thought you should know.
(beat)
It's been difficult, ever since the cancer got Joy. His heart may not hold up much longer.

Tolkien hangs up slowly. He picks up the book and looks at the C.S. Lewis endorsement on the back cover. The Tolkien chest can be seen in the background.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Tolkien inquires at the desk and a nurse points down the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL - LEWIS'S ROOM - DAY

Tolkien enters the room sheepishly.

LEWIS
Ronald!

He is relieved to hear Lewis's warm welcome.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
Well, come over here. Open that window for me a bit.

Lewis pulls out a pipe and lights it.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

It's against regulations, but they're hard to enforce on me--long term, anyway.

Tolkien smiles faintly at Lewis's black humor. Tolkien wants to say something but is clearly struggling. Lewis breaks the awkward silence.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

I enjoyed your Tom Bombadil book.

TOLKIEN

I guess I still speak indirectly .
. . In myth.

Lewis nods and smiles. Tolkien still wants to say something and this time Lewis waits out the awkward silence.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

You'll be getting out of here soon, right?

LEWIS

I expect to be relieved shortly, one way or the other.

Tolkien can't return the humor so well as he still is trying to say something. More silence.

TOLKIEN

I . . . uh . . . I'll talk to you then, Jack. Okay?

He gives Lewis a feeble pat on the leg and exits the room. Lewis watches him sadly.

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - GROUNDS - DAY

A casket with a candle on it appears in the foreground of the screen on a cold November day. Several Inklings, including Tolkien, are among the crowd of around thirty people.

MINISTER

" . . . And may your servant Clive Staples Lewis rest in peace. Our Father, who art in heaven . . .

The others join in reciting the Lord's prayer as the camera pans the audience and reaches Tolkien's face during the words "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us . . ." Tolkien does not recite the prayer, but is stoic.

LATER:

The minister approaches Tolkien after the service.

Minister (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, Professor. I know how
close you were.

TOLKIEN
Yes . . . It's a terrible blow.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Tolkien picks a book off the shelf and lays it on the
counter for purchase: "Letters to Malcolm" by C.S. Lewis.

CLERK
Last one he wrote.

Tolkien doesn't respond.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Tolkien has the book out, underlining and writing in the
margins rather furiously. He gets out a fresh notebook and
begins writing in it as he studies the book. Close up on
the Title: "Letters to Malcolm."

INT. HOSPITAL - LEWIS'S ROOM - DAY

WARNIE
What are we calling this one?

LEWIS
"Letters to Malcolm."

LATER:

Lewis reads from the manuscript.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
" . . . You are a bigot. Broaden
your mind, Malcolm. It takes all
sorts to make a world, or a
church."

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

TOLKIEN
Bigot. Hmmmph!

(Intercut between Lewis and Warnie in Hospital room and
Tolkien in office.)

LEWIS
"One fold doesn't mean one pool."

TOLKIEN

So you say. You're flirting with heresy, Lewis!

LEWIS

My grandfather, an Anglican clergyman, used to say he looked forward to meeting St. Paul in heaven.

WARNIE

I remember him saying that.

TOLKIEN

The same one who called Catholics "the devil's children"? And since when did you care about saints?

LEWIS

My dear Malcolm, do not get angry. As Blake said:
 "I was angry with my friend,
 I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
 I was angry with my foe,
 I told it not, my wrath did grow."

As Lewis reads, Tolkien makes more furious comments in his notebook.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

"Wrath and pardon belong to the circle of deeply personal relationships. But perhaps I've said too much."

WARNIE

Who is Malcolm?

Lewis shrugs and smiles. Tolkien looks at the book cover suspiciously with the Tolkien chest in the background.

TOLKIEN

Malcolm . . . Malcolm.

LEWIS

"There is a pleasure in having a grievance.

Tolkien goes back to his agitated writing.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

"A resentment draws one back and back to nurse and fondle and encourage it. But did I tell you that last week, while in prayer, I felt as if I had really forgiven someone I had been trying to forgive for years?"

WARNIE

Who's this about?

TOLKIEN

Who's this about!

LEWIS

(looks up)

"If we finally forgive someone
after they're dead, do they know
it?"

Tolkien writes his last sentence, throws the book off the table, grabs the notebook and marches out of the office toward the living room.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Edith is reading the notebook, standing by the counter, while Tolkien stands and waits.

EDITH

(looks up)

I can't believe you're saying all
these horrible things about Jack.
He's dead, Ronald.

TOLKIEN

He's not dead! His words live on,
and he must be exposed. Lewis is a
fool!

Edith is stunned. He grabs the notebook from her and stomps out.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Tolkien enters his office, and tosses the notebook in the chest, which remains partially open so we can see both the notebook and the "Tolkien" painted on top of it. He dials a number, then picks up the phone and paces.

INT. OFFICE OF ALLEN & UNWIN - DAY

Stanley Unwin picks up the phone ringing on his desk.

(Intercut between Tolkien and Unwin's offices.)

TOLKIEN

Stanley, I've got something I need
you to publish right away.

UNWIN

Ronald! I was about to call you . . .

TOLKIEN

It's a review of Lewis's last book. It's full of errors, even heresies, and laced all through with anti-Catholic propaganda. I've entitled it "The Ulterior Motive."

UNWIN

(dismissing)

I can't print that. My God, you and Lewis were best friends.

(now to the point)

Ronald, listen! The paperback for the Lord of the Rings has exploded in the States. Based on early returns, it may become the bestselling novel ever!

TOLKIEN

(after a long pause)

I need you to print this review.

UNWIN

It's out of the question. He's dead for God's sake.

TOLKIEN

(frustrated, under his breath)

He's not dead. He's not dead.

Unwin shakes his head briefly, then continues.

UNWIN

And the Silmarillion. We're finally ready to publish The Silmarillion.

TOLKIEN

(another pause)

You mean . . . it's over?

UNWIN

(confused)

Yeah, it's over. I mean, we need you to finish the manuscript for the Silmarillion right away.

TOLKIEN

(distantly)

I can't finish it without Jack.

Tolkien hangs up. Unwin looks into the phone and shakes his head.

Tolkien stands there for a few more seconds as he stares at the chest with the notebook in it.

INT. ST. ALOYSIUS CHURCH - DAY

Tolkien is sitting in the pew. The priest is reading from the Gospel book.

Priest
Eloi, eloi, lama sabacthani.

LATER:

Tolkien kneels at the altar with several others to receive the Eucharist. The priest serves someone a few places up from Tolkien while quickly saying

Priest (CONT'D)
May the body of our Lord Jesus
Christ preserve your soul unto life
everlasting. Amen.

The priest does this two more times while Tolkien is watching, very disturbed. When the priest reaches Tolkien, Tolkien closes his eyes, drops his head, shakes it sadly, and gets up and walks away.

INT. TOLKIEN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tolkien, on his knees, breathes into the flames to kindle a nice fire. We view him from behind the flames. From his left side he drags over the fully open chest holding the notebook with the review entitled "Ulterior Motive." He takes out the notebook and leans forward to place it in the fire.

Then he stops, leans back, closes his eyes and exhales. He places the notebook back in the chest and latches it closed, making visible the "Tolkien" painted on top. He looks back at the fire and crosses himself. He then grabs the chest and throws it in the fire. He begins to weep.

As the chest continues to burn, the screen slowly fades to black.

EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - DAY

Girl
(O.S.)
Mr. Tolkien? . . . Mr. Tolkien?

Fade in to Tolkien's face as he appeared in the first scene, distant and unresponsive. The emcee is talking faintly in the background but is not intelligible.

Queen
(O.S.)
Professor?

Tolkien comes to his senses. The Queen is indicating that it is time for him to go up front and receive his award. Tolkien stands, scribbles something quickly in the book, then decides to keep it and holds up a finger to the girl indicating "give me a minute" as he walks forward.

LATER:

Applause as Tolkien shakes the emcee's hand and takes the award in his other hand, then moves to the podium. His delivery is awkward.

TOLKIEN

Thank you.

He fumbles with the award and the book that was already in his hand.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

A young lady asked me to sign a book. Said she's also read all the Narnia books by C.S. Lewis.

(beat)

We knew each other quite well.

Warnie is in the audience and he perks up at the mention of Lewis, as do a few Inklings at the table with him, including DYSON and Barfield.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Your Majesty, all my life, I wanted to present you with a grand mythology, and say, simply, "For my country." I never finished it . . . I wish my wife were here today My elves are immortal, I may need to change that . . .

The audience is concerned that he may be losing focus.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

I owe Jack Lewis a great debt. He led me to the Inklings. Without them, there would be no Lord of the Rings.

There is a quick gust of wind, which motivates Tolkien to begin wrapping up.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

I dedicate this award to them . . . along with this tribute in Anglo-Saxon: "Hwaet! We Inclinga . . .

Tolkien changes to his comfortable, dramatic mode. The audience is slightly taken back, but quickly starts to enjoy the recitation.

Subtitles appear: (Listen! We have all heard of the Inklings,)

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

. . . on aerdagum searopancolra
snyttru gehierdon"
(those wise ones who sat together,
reciting and deliberating. That was
true joy!)

At the Inklings table, they lean over as Barfield whispers to them a translation.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

"para waes Hloduig sum, brad ond
beorhtword,"
(The one named Lewis was broad and
bright of word)

"haeleda dyrost."
(He was the dearest of them all.)

Tolkien pauses briefly, and moves back into a more timid posture.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

The audience stands to their feet and applauds heartily, along with the Inklings (some with tears) as Tolkien steps away from the podium and people move forward to shake his hand. The royal band plays and the chorus sings "Keep the Home Fires Burning."

He stops briefly to write something more in the girl's book. She comes forward to get it and he hands it to her and smiles. She steps away, then stops and looks at the signature. On each side of his name he has drawn a quick sketch of a wizard and a lion. She looks back and smiles broadly and Tolkien gives her a wink and turns to shake more hands.

The first credits to appear say:

"The unfinished 'Silmarillion' was compiled, edited and published by Christopher Tolkien several years after his father's death."

"The 'Lord of the Rings' remains the bestselling novel of all time."