



J.R.R.
TOLKIEN

TALES FROM THE
PERILOUS REALM

With illustrations by ALAN LEE

TALES FROM THE PERILOUS REALM

**BY
J.R.R. Tolkien**



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INTRODUCTION

We do not know when Tolkien began to turn his thoughts to the Perilous Realm of Faërie. In his essay “On Fairystories”, to be found at the end of this book, he admits that he took no particular interest in tales of that kind as a child: they were just one of many interests. A “real taste” for them, he says, “was wakened by philology on the threshold of manhood, and quickened to full life by war”. This seems to be strictly accurate. The first of his works to take an interest in fairies, that we know of, is a poem called “Wood-sunshine”, written in 1910, when Tolkien was eighteen and still at King Edward’s School in Birmingham. By the end of 1915, the year in which he took his Oxford degree and immediately joined the army to fight in the Great War, he had written several more, some of them containing major elements of what would be his developed Faërie mythology. By the end of 1917, most of which he spent in military hospital or waiting to be passed fit for active service once more, he had written the first draft of tales which would sixty years later be published in *The Silmarillion*, and much of Middle-earth, as also of Elvenhome beyond it, had taken shape in his mind.

What happened then is a long story, about which we now know a great deal more than we did, but once again it was summed up concisely and suggestively by Tolkien himself, in the story “Leaf by Niggle”. It is generally accepted that this has a strong element of self-portrait about it, with Tolkien the writer—a confirmed “niggler”, as he said himself—transposed as Niggle the painter. Niggle, the story tells us, was busy on all kinds of pictures, but one in particular started to grow on him. It began as just a single leaf, but then it became a tree, and the tree grew to be a Tree, and behind it a whole country started to open out, with “glimpses of a forest marching over the land, and of mountains tipped with snow”. Niggle, Tolkien wrote, “lost interest in his other pictures; or else he took them and tacked them on to the edges of his great picture”.

Once again this is an accurate account of what Tolkien can be seen doing in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. During those thirty years he kept working at variants of “Silmarillion” stories, writing occasional poems, often anonymously, and making up other stories, not always written down and sometimes told initially only to his children. *The Hobbit* started life as one of these, set in Middle-earth, but to begin with connected only tangentially with

the Elvish history of the Silmarils: it was, to use the modern term, a spin-off. *The Lord of the Rings* was a further spin-off, this time from *The Hobbit*, and initially motivated by Tolkien's publisher's strong desire for a *Hobbit*-sequel. But what Tolkien started to do, just like Niggle, was to take things he had written before and start "tacking them on to the edges". Tom Bombadil, who had begun as the name for a child's toy, got into print in 1934 as the hero of a poem, and then became perhaps the most mysterious figure in the world of *The Lord of the Rings*. That work also drew in other poems, some of them comic, like Sam Gamgee's "Oliphaunt" rhyme, first published in 1927, others grave and sad, like the version Strider gives on Weathertop of the tale of Beren and Lúthien, again going back to a poem published in 1925, and based on a story written even earlier.

Quite what was the "leaf" of Tolkien's original inspiration, and what he meant by "the Tree", we cannot be sure, though the "forest marching over the land" does sound very like the Ents. But the little allegory makes one further point which corroborates what Tolkien said elsewhere, and that is that "fairy-stories", whoever tells them, are not about fairies so much as about Faërie, the Perilous Realm itself. Tolkien indeed asserted there are not many stories actually *about* fairies, or even about elves, and most of them—he was too modest to add, unless they were written by Tolkien himself—were not very interesting. Most good fairy-stories are about "the *aventures* of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches", a very exact description once again of Tolkien's own tales of Beren on the marches or borders of Doriath, Túrin skirmishing around Nargothrond, or Tuor escaping from the Fall of Gondolin. Tolkien remained strongly ambivalent about the very notion of "fairy". He disliked the word, as a borrowing from French—the English word is "elf"—and he also disliked the whole Victorian cult of fairies as little, pretty, ineffective creatures, prone to being co-opted into the service of moral tales for children, and often irretrievably phony. Much of his essay "On Fairy—Stories", indeed (published in 1945 in a memorial volume for Charles Williams, and there expanded from a lecture given in 1939 in honour of Andrew Lang the fairy-tale collector) is avowedly corrective, both of scholarly terminology and of popular taste. Tolkien thought he knew better, was in touch with older, deeper, and more powerful conceptions than the Victorians knew, even those as learned as Andrew Lang.

However, while he had no time for fairies, Tolkien was all for Faërie itself, the land, as Bilbo Baggins puts it, of "dragons and goblins and giants", the land where one may hear of "the rescue of princesses and the unexpected

luck of widow's sons". The stories and poems in this book show Tolkien trying out various approaches to perilous realms of one kind or another, all of them suggestive, original, independent. They represent, one may say, the pictures Niggle did *not* "tack on to the edges of his great picture". They hint tantalisingly at directions which might have been explored further, like the later unwritten history of Farmer Giles's Little Kingdom. And they give quite different views of Tolkien's inspiration, spread over a period of at least forty years, and extending from maturity to old age. Also, as it happens, we know a good deal about how each of them came into being.

Roverandom, not published till 1998, began more than seventy years earlier as a story with a single limited purpose: to console a little boy for the loss of his toy dog. In September 1925 the Tolkien family, father, mother, and three sons, John (aged eight), Michael (aged five), and baby Christopher, went on holiday to the seaside town of Filey in Yorkshire. Michael at that time was very attached to a small toy dog, which went everywhere with him. He and his father and elder brother went down to the beach, he put it down to play, but when they went back for it they couldn't find it: the dog was white with black spots, and on a white shingle beach it was invisible. They looked for it without success that day and the next, and then a storm wrecked the beach and made further search impossible. To cheer Michael up, Tolkien invented a story in which toy Rover was *not* a toy, but a real dog turned into a toy by an angry wizard; the toy then met a friendly wizard on the beach, who sent him off on various quests in order to become a real dog again, and be reunited with his one-time owner, the boy called "Two". Like all Tolkien's stories, this grew in the telling, being written down, with several of Tolkien's own illustrations, probably around Christmas 1927, and reaching final shape at about the same time as *The Hobbit*, in 1936.

Besides the beach at Filey, where Rover meets the sandwizard Psamathos, *Roverandom* has three main settings, the light side of the Moon, where the Man in the Moon has his tower, the dark side, where sleeping children come down the moon-path to play in the valley of dreams, and the undersea kingdom of the mer-king, where the angry wizard Artaxerxes has gone to take up a position as Pacific Atlantic Magician, or PAM. Both in the Moon and under the sea Rover is befriended by a moon-dog, or a mer-dog, both called Rover, which is why he has to take the name Roverandom. The

three of them get into continual scrapes, teasing the Great White Dragon on the Moon, and stirring up the Sea-serpent on the ocean-bed, whose writhings send a storm like the one that scattered the shingle at Filey, while Roverandom is carried by the great whale Uin across the Shadowy Seas and beyond the Magic Isles to within sight of Elvenhome itself and the light of Faery—the nearest Tolkien comes to attaching this story to his greater mythology. “I should catch it, if this was found out!”, says Uin, diving hastily, and we hear no more of what would be Valinor.

“Catch it!” captures the tone of this early and humorous piece. The little dogs’ adventures are playful, the animals who transport them, Mew the gull and Uin the whale, are no worse than condescending, and even the three wizards who make an appearance are good-natured or, in the case of Artaxerxes, something less than competent. Nevertheless there are hints of things older and darker and deeper. The Great White Dragon the dogs tease on the Moon is also the White Dragon of England in the Merlin legend, forever at war with the Red Dragon of the Welsh; the Sea-serpent recalls the Midgard Serpent who will be the death of Thor on the day of Ragnarok; mer-dog Rover remembers a Viking master who sounds very like the famous King Olaf Tryggvason. There is myth, and legend, and even history, in *Roverandom*. Nor did Tolkien forget that even for children there must be suggestions of peril in the Perilous Realm. The dark side of the Moon has black spiders, as well as grey ones ready to pickle little dogs for their larders, while on the white side “there were sword-flies, and glass-beetles with jaws like steel-traps, and pale unicornets with stings like spears...And worse than the insects were the shadowbats”, not to mention, on the way back from the valley where the children go in dreams, “nasty creepy things in the bogs” that without the Man in the Moon’s protection “would otherwise have grabbed the little dog quick”. There are sea-goblins too, and a whole list of calamities caused by Artaxerxes tipping out his spells. Already Tolkien had grasped the effect of suggestion, of stories not told, of beings and powers (like the Necromancer in *The Hobbit*) held just out of sight. Whatever logic may say, time spent on details, even when they lead nowhere, is not all simply “niggling”.

Humour is also the dominant tone of “Farmer Giles of Ham”, but it is humour of a different sort, more adult and even scholarly. Once again, this story began as a tale told impromptu to Tolkien’s children: his eldest son

John remembered being told a version of it as the family sheltered under a bridge from a storm, probably after they moved to Oxford in 1926. (One of the major scenes in the story is the dragon Chrysophylax coming out from under a bridge to rout the king and his army.) In the first written version, the narrator is “Daddy”, and a child interrupts to ask what is a “blunderbuss”. The tale was steadily expanded, reaching its final shape when it was read to an Oxford student society in January 1940, and was eventually published in 1949.

The first joke lies in the title, for we have two of them, one in English and one in Latin. Tolkien pretends to have translated the story out of Latin, and in his “Foreword” imitates a kind of scholarly introduction, which is thoroughly patronising. The imaginary editor despises the imaginary narrator’s Latin, sees the tale as useful mainly for explaining place-names, and raises a snobbish eyebrow at those deluded people who “may find the character and adventures of its hero attractive in themselves”. But the tale takes its revenge. The editor shows his approval of “sober annals” and “historians of the reign of Arthur”, but the “swift alternations of war and peace” he mentions come from the start of the romance of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as marvellous and unhistorical a source as one could hope to find. As the story indicates, the truth is that the “popular lays” which the editor sneers at are much more reliable than the scholarly commentary imposed on them. All through *Farmer Giles*, the old and the traditional defeat the learned and new-fangled. The “Four Wise Clerks of Oxenford” define a blunderbuss, and their definition is that of the great *Oxford English Dictionary* with (in Tolkien’s day) its four successive editors. Giles’s blunderbuss, however, defies the definition and works just the same. “Plain heavy swords” are “out of fashion” at the king’s court, and the king gives one away to Giles as being of no value: but the sword is “Tailbiter” (or if one insists on using Latin, “Caudimordax”), and Giles is heartened by having it, even in the face of dragons, because of his love of the old tales and heroic songs which have gone out of fashion too.

Gone out of fashion, maybe, but not gone away. All his life Tolkien was fascinated by survivals: words and phrases and sayings, even stories and rhymes, which came from a prehistoric past but which had been passed on by word of mouth, quite naturally, often garbled and generally unrecognized, right down to modern common experience. Fairy-stories are an obvious example, kept in being for centuries not by scholars but by old grannies and nursemaids. Nursery-rhymes too. Where do they come from? Old King Cole

figures in Tolkien's "Foreword" (suitably transferred to scholarly pseudohistory), and Chrysophylax quotes "Humpty Dumpty" when he comes out from under the bridge. Two more nursery-rhymes were rewritten as the "Man in the Moon" poems in *Tom Bombadil*. Riddles are survivals as well, told by Anglo-Saxons (we still have more than a hundred of them), and by modern schoolchildren. And then there are popular sayings, always open to revision—"Sunny Sam" the blacksmith inverts a couple of them in *Farmer Giles*, as does Bilbo in *The Lord of the Rings*, with his "All that is gold does not glitter"—but never dying out. And the commonest types of survival are names, of people and of places. They often descend from remote antiquity, their meaning is often forgotten, but they are still overpoweringly present. Tolkien was convinced that old heroic names hung on even in names associated with his own family, and one inspiration for *Farmer Giles* must be the urge to "make sense" of the local Buckinghamshire placenames of Tame and Worminghall.

Myths are the greatest of survivals, though, and the most important revenge in *Farmer Giles* is the revenge of the mythical on the everyday. For who is to say which is which? It is the young and silly dragons who conclude "So knights are mythical!...We always thought so." It is the silly over-civilised court which prefers sweet and sticky Mock Dragon's Tail to Real Tail. The courtiers' descendants (Tolkien implies) will eventually substitute their feeble imitations for the real thing even in fantasy—just like Nokes the Cook in *Smith of Wootton Major*, with his sad diminished idea of the Fairy Queen and Faërie itself. Giles deals firmly and fairly with king and court and dragon alike, though we should not forget the assistance he receives from the parson—a scholar who makes up for all the others—and from the story's unsung heroine, the grey mare. She knew what she was doing all the time, even when she sniffed at Giles's unnecessary spurs. He didn't need to pretend to be a knight.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil also owe their existence to prompting from Tolkien's family. In 1961 his Aunt Jane Neave suggested to him that he might bring out a little book with Tom Bombadil in it, which people like her could afford to buy as Christmas presents. Tolkien responded by collecting a clutch of poems he had already written at different times over the preceding forty years or more. Most of the sixteen had been printed, sometimes in very

obscure publications, in the 1920s and 1930s, but Tolkien took the opportunity in 1962 to revise them thoroughly. By this time *The Lord of the Rings* had appeared, and was already well-known, and Tolkien did what Niggle had done with his earlier pictures: he put these early compositions into the overall frame of his greater one. Once again he used the device of the scholarly editor, this time someone who has access to the Red Book of Westmarch, the hobbit-compilation from which *The Lord of the Rings* was supposed to have been drawn, and who has decided this time to edit not the main story but the “marginalia”—the things which medieval scribes in reality often wrote round the edges of their more official works.

This device allowed Tolkien to put in poems which were clearly just jokes, like no. 12, “Cat”, written as late as 1956 for his granddaughter Joanna; or poems which had no connection with Middle-earth, like no. 9, “The Mewlips”, originally printed in *The Oxford Magazine* for 1937 and there sub-titled “Lines Induced by Sensations When Waiting for an Answer at the Door of an Exalted Academic Person”; or poems which did have such a connection, but one which now made Tolkien uneasy. No. 3, “Errantry”, for instance, had been first written at least thirty years before, and had then been revised to become a song sung by Bilbo in *The Lord of the Rings*, but the names in it did not fit Tolkien’s increasingly developed Elvish languages. Editor-Tolkien accordingly explains that while the poem is Bilbo’s, he must have written it not long after his retirement to Rivendell, at a time when he did not know much about Elvish tradition. By the time Bilbo composed the *Lord of the Rings* version, he knew better, though Strider still thinks he should have left well alone. Several other poems, like nos. 7 and 8, the two troll-poems, or no. 10, “Oliphant”, are ascribed to Sam Gamgee, which helps to account for their non-serious nature. Nos. 5 and 6, the two “Man in the Moon” poems, both of them dating back to 1923, confirm Tolkien’s interest in nursery-rhymes: they are, in Tolkien’s imagination, the old complete poems of which modern children’s rhymes are garbled descendants, and the kind of thing that would have been popular in his imaginary Shire.

The first two and last three poems in the collection however show Tolkien working more deeply and more seriously. No. 1, the title poem, had also been published in *The Oxford Magazine*, in 1934, but no. 2, “Bombadil Goes Boating”, may date back even further. Like Roverandom, Bombadil had begun as the name of one of the Tolkien children’s toys, but had soon

established himself as a kind of image of the English countryside and the country-folk and their enduring traditions, powerful, indeed masterful, but uninterested in exercising power. In both poems Tom is continually threatened, seriously by Barrow-wight, jokingly by otter-lad and by the hobbits who shoot arrows into his hat, or else teased by the wren and the kingfisher, and again by the hobbits. He gives as good as he gets, or better, but while the first poem ends on a note of triumph and contentment, the second ends on a note of loss: Tom will not come back.

The last three poems are all heavily reworked from earlier originals, and have become thematically much darker. “The Hoard” (going back to 1923) describes what Tolkien in *The Hobbit* would call “dragon-sickness”, the greed and possessiveness which successively overpowers elf and dwarf and dragon and hero and leads all of them—like Thorin Oakenshield in *The Hobbit* and the elf-king Thingol “Greycloak” in *The Silmarillion*—to their deaths. “The Last Ship” shows Tolkien balanced between two urges, on the one hand the wish to escape mortality and travel to the Undying Lands like Frodo, and on the other the sense that this is not only impossible, but ultimately unwelcome: the right thing to do is to turn back and live one’s life, like Sam Gamgee. Right it may be, but as Arwen finds, if there is no way to reverse it that choice is bitter. Finally, “The Sea-Bell” reminds us why the Perilous Realm is perilous. Those who have travelled to it, like the speaker of the poem, know they will not be allowed to stay there, but when they come back, they are overwhelmed by a sense of loss. As Sam Gamgee says of Galadriel, the inhabitants of Faërie may mean no harm, but they are still dangerous for ordinary mortals. Those who encounter them may never be the same again. In Tolkien’s editorial fiction, though the speaker should not be identified with Frodo himself, the hobbit-scribe who called the poem “Frodos Dreame” was expressing the fear created in the Shire by the dimly-understood events of the War of the Ring, as also (in reality) Tolkien’s own sense of loss and age.

These themes become stronger in Tolkien’s last published story, *Smith of Wootton Major*. This began with a request from a publisher, in 1964, that Tolkien should write a preface to a new illustrated edition of the story “The Golden Key”, by the Victorian author George MacDonald. (Tolkien had praised the story in his essay “On Fairy-Stories” nearly twenty years before.)

Tolkien agreed, began work on the preface, and got a few pages into it when he started to illustrate his argument about the unexpected power of Faërie with a story about a cook trying to bake a cake for a children's party. But at that point he broke off the preface, which was never resumed, and wrote the story instead. A developed version was read to a large audience in Oxford on 28 October 1966, and the story was published the following year.

Its title is almost aggressively plain, even more so than *Farmer Giles of Ham*, and Tolkien himself noted that it sounded like an old-fashioned school story. The name "Wootton", however, though perfectly ordinary in England, has a meaning, as all names once did. It means "the town in the wood", and the second sentence confirms that it was "deep in the trees". Woods and forests were important for Tolkien, recurring from Mirkwood to Fangorn, and one of their recurrent (and realistic) features is that in them people lose their bearings and their way. One feels this is true of the inhabitants of Wootton Major, or many of them: a bit smug, easily satisfied, concerned above all with food and drink—not entirely bad qualities, but limited. To this Smith is an exception. At the children's party which the village holds every twenty-four years he swallows a star, and this star is his passport into Faërie (or Faery, as Tolkien spells it here). The story follows Smith's life, recounting some of his visions and experiences in Faërie, but also takes us through repeated festivals till the time when Smith has to give up the star, and allow it to be baked into a cake for some other child to succeed him. Smith knows when he leaves Faërie for the last time that "his way now led back to bereavement". He is in the same position, if with more acceptance, as the narrator of "The Sea-bell". The story is "a farewell to Fairyland".

This does not mean that Smith has been a failure. His passport to the Other World has made him a better person in this one, and his life has done something to weaken what Tolkien called, in a commentary on his own story, "the iron ring of the familiar" and the "adamantine ring of belief", in Wootton, that everything worth knowing is known already. The star is also passed on, in an unexpected way, and will continue to be. Nevertheless the power of the banal remains strong, and the main conflict in the story lies between Alf—an emissary from Faërie into the real world, as Smith is a visitor in the opposite direction—and his predecessor as Master Cook to the village, whose name is Nokes. Nokes sums up much of what Tolkien disliked in real life. It is sad that he has such a limited idea himself of Faërie, of whatever lies beyond the humdrum world of the village deep among the trees, but it is inexcusable that he denies that there can be any more imaginative one, and tries to keep the children down to his own level. Sweet

and sticky is his idea of a cake, insipidly pretty is his idea of fairies. Against this stand Smith's visions of the grim elf-warriors returning from battles on the Dark Marches, of the King's Tree, the wild Wind and the weeping birch, the elf-maidens dancing. Nokes is daunted in the end by his apprentice Alf, revealed as the King of Faërie, but he never changes his mind. He gets the last word in the story, most of the inhabitants of Wootton are happy to see Alf go, and the star passes out of Smith's family and into Nokes's. If Smith and Alf and Faërie have had an effect, it will take a while to show. But that may be just the way things are.

The way they are in *this* world, that is. In "Leaf by Niggle" Tolkien presents his vision of a world elsewhere, one with room in it for Middle-earth and Faërie and all other hearts' desires as well. Nevertheless, although it presents a "divine comedy" and ends with world-shaking laughter, the story began in fear. Tolkien reported in more than one letter that the whole story came to him in a dream and that he wrote it down immediately, at some time (reports vary) between 1939 and 1942. This is the more plausible in that it is so obvious what kind of a dream it was: an anxiety-dream, of the kind we all get. Students with an exam to take dream that they have overslept and missed it, academics due to make a presentation dream they have arrived on the podium with nothing to read and nothing in their heads, and the fear at the heart of "Leaf by Niggle" is clearly that of *never getting finished*. Niggle knows he has a deadline—it is obviously death, the journey we all have to take—he has a painting he desperately wants to finish, but he puts things off and puts things off, and when he finally buckles down to it, first there is a call on his time he cannot refuse, and then he gets sick, and then an Inspector turns up and condemns his painting as scrap, and as he starts to contest this the Driver turns up and tells him he must leave now with no more than he can snatch up. He leaves even that little bag on the train, and when he turns back for it, the train has gone. This kind of one-thing-after-another dream is all too familiar. The motive for it is also easy to imagine, in Tolkien's case. By 1940 he had been working on his "Silmarillion" mythology for more than twenty years, and none of it had been published except for a scattering of poems and the "spin-off" *The Hobbit*. He had been writing *The Lord of the Rings* since Christmas 1937, and it too was going slowly. His study was full of drafts and revisions. One can guess also that, like most professors, he found his many administrative

duties a distraction, though Niggle (and perhaps Tolkien) is guiltily aware that he is easily distracted, and not a good manager of his time.

Concentration and time-management are what Niggle has to learn in the Workhouse, which most critics have identified as a version of Purgatory. His reward is to find that in the Other World, dreams come true: there before him is his Tree, better than he had ever painted it and better even than he had imagined it, and beyond it the Forest and the Mountains that he had only begun to imagine. And yet there is room for more improvement, and to make it Niggle has to work with his neighbour Parish, who in the real world had seemed only another distraction. What becomes their joint vision is recognized as therapeutically valuable even by the Voices who judge people's lives, but even then it is only an introduction to a greater vision mortals can only guess at. But everyone has to start somewhere. As the Fairy Queen says in *Smith*, "Better a little doll, maybe, than no memory of Faery at all", and better Faery than no sense of anything beyond the mundane world of everyday.

"Leaf" after all has two endings, one in the Other World and one in the world which Niggle left. The Other World ending is one of joy and laughter, but in the real world hope and memory are crushed. Niggle's great painting of the Tree was used to patch a hole, one leaf of it went to a museum, but that too was burned down and Niggle was entirely forgotten. The last words ever said about him are "never knew he painted", and the future seems to belong to people like Councillor Tompkins, with his views on practical education and—remember that this is a story of at latest the early 1940s—the elimination of undesirable elements of Society. If there is a remedy for us, Tolkien says, stressing that Niggle uses the word "quite literally", it will be "a gift". Another word for "gift" is "grace".

"Leaf by Niggle" ends, then, both with what Tolkien in "On Fairy-Stories" calls "dyscatastrophe...sorrow and failure", and with what he regards as the "highest function" of fairy-story and of *evangelium*, the "good news" or Gospel beyond it, and that is "eucatastrophe", the "sudden joyous 'turn'", the "sudden and miraculous grace", which one finds in Grimm, in modern fairy-tale, and supremely in Tolkien's own "Tales of the Perilous Realm". In the Middle English poem *Sir Orfeo*, which Tolkien edited in 1943-4 (in an anonymous pamphlet of which, characteristically, hardly any copies survive), the barons comfort the steward who has just been told his

lord is dead, “and telleth him hou it geth, / It is no bot of mannes deth”. That’s the way it goes, they say, there’s no help for it, or as Tolkien rendered the last line in his posthumously-published translation of 1975, “death of man no man can mend”. The barons are compassionate, well-intentioned, and above all sensible: that *is* the way things go. But the poem proves them wrong, just this once, for Orfeo is alive, and has rescued his queen from captivity in Faërie as well. We find the same “turn” in *The Lord of the Rings*, as Sam, who has lain down to die on Mount Doom after the destruction of the Ring, wakes to find himself alive, rescued, and faced by the resurrected Gandalf. There is joy in the Perilous Realm, and on its Dark Marches too, all the stronger for the real-life sorrows and losses which it challenges and surmounts.

TOM SHIPPEY

ROVERANDOM

1

Once upon a time there was a little dog, and his name was Rover. He was very small, and very young, or he would have known better; and he was very happy playing in the garden in the sunshine with a yellow ball, or he would never have done what he did.

Not every old man with ragged trousers is a bad old man: some are bone-and-bottle men, and have little dogs of their own; and some are gardeners; and a few, a very few, are wizards prowling round on a holiday looking for something to do. This one was a wizard, the one that now walked into the story. He came wandering up the garden-path in a ragged old coat, with an old pipe in his mouth, and an old green hat on his head. If Rover had not been so busy barking at the ball, he might have noticed the blue feather stuck in the back of the green hat, and then he would have suspected that the man was a wizard, as any other sensible little dog would; but he never saw the feather at all.

When the old man stooped down and picked up the ball—he was thinking of turning it into an orange, or even a bone or a piece of meat for Rover—Rover growled, and said:

‘Put it down!’ Without ever a ‘please’.

Of course the wizard, being a wizard, understood perfectly, and he answered back again:

‘Be quiet, silly!’ Without ever a ‘please’.

Then he put the ball in his pocket, just to tease the dog, and turned away. I am sorry to say that Rover immediately bit his trousers, and tore out quite a piece. Perhaps he also tore out a piece of the wizard. Anyway the old man suddenly turned round very angry and shouted:

‘Idiot! Go and be a toy!’

After that the most peculiar things began to happen. Rover was only a little dog to begin with, but he suddenly felt very much smaller. The grass seemed to grow monstrously tall and wave far above his head; and a long way away through the grass, like the sun rising through the trees of a forest, he could see the huge yellow ball, where the wizard had thrown it down again. He heard the gate click as the old man went out, but he could not see him. He tried to bark, but only a little tiny noise came out, too small for

ordinary people to hear; and I don't suppose even a dog would have noticed it.

So small had he become that I am sure, if a cat had come along just then, she would have thought Rover was a mouse, and would have eaten him. Tinker would. Tinker was the large black cat that lived in the same house.

At the very thought of Tinker, Rover began to feel thoroughly frightened; but cats were soon put right out of his mind. The garden about him suddenly vanished, and Rover felt himself whisked off, he didn't know where. When the rush was over, he found he was in the dark, lying against a lot of hard things; and there he lay, in a stuffy box by the feel of it, very uncomfortably for a long while. He had nothing to eat or drink; but worst of all, he found he could not move. At first he thought this was because he was packed so tight, but afterwards he discovered that in the daytime he could only move very little, and with a great effort, and then only when no one was looking. Only after midnight could he walk and wag his tail, and a bit stiffly at that. He had become a toy. And because he had not said 'please' to the wizard, now all day long he had to sit up and beg. He was fixed like that.

After what seemed a very long, dark time he tried once more to bark loud enough to make people hear. Then he tried to bite the other things in the box with him, stupid little toy animals, really only made of wood or lead, not enchanted real dogs like Rover. But it was no good; he could not bark or bite.

Suddenly someone came and took off the lid of the box, and let in the light.

'We had better put a few of these animals in the window this morning, Harry,' said a voice, and a hand came into the box. 'Where did this one come from?' said the voice, as the hand took hold of Rover. 'I don't remember seeing this one before. It's no business in the threepenny box, I'm sure. Did you ever see anything so real-looking? Look at its fur and its eyes!'

'Mark him sixpence,' said Harry, 'and put him in the front of the window!'

There in the front of the window in the hot sun poor little Rover had to sit all the morning, and all the afternoon, till nearly tea-time; and all the while he had to sit up and pretend to beg, though really in his inside he was very angry indeed.