

Chapter 11

I Don't Understand

"Well, did you get Rosemary all straightened out, then?" asks Mira. "Or do we need to dig a spot in the cellar for the body? You know, I hope not the latter, the cellar is very full just now."

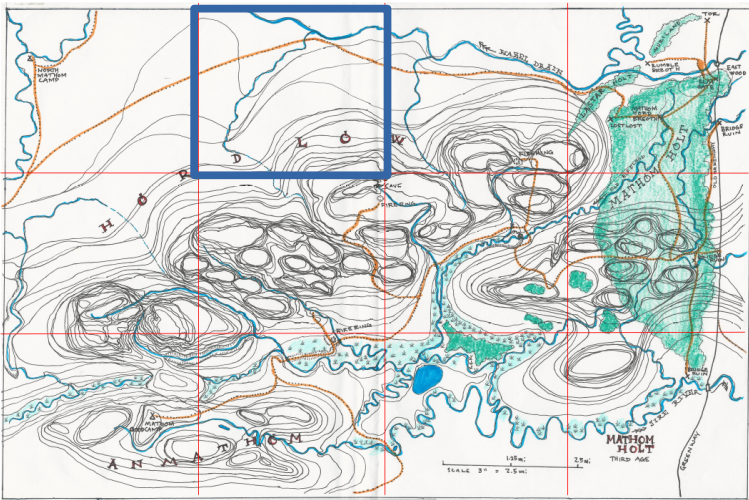
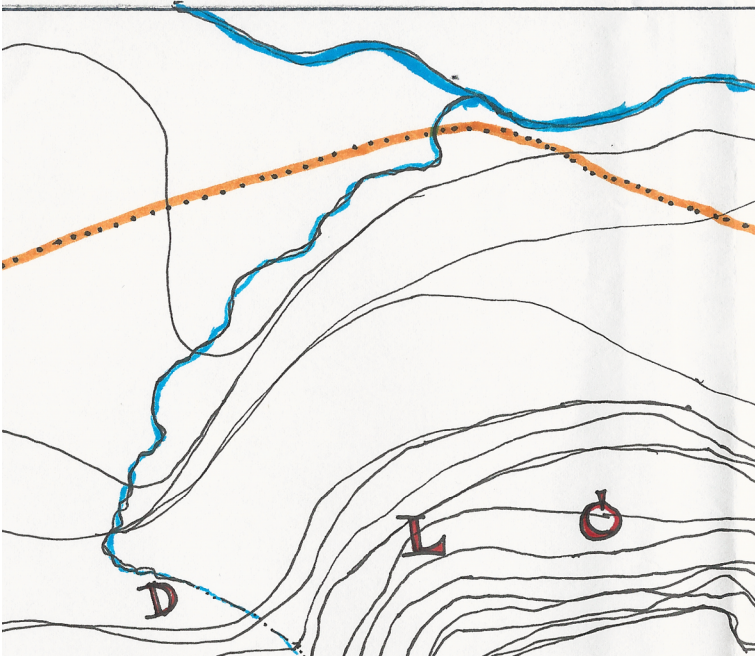
"Oh, she'll live," says Bella, in a tone of voice that indicates she is not entirely happy to say so. "She probably will have forgotten everything I told her in less time than it took to tell it to her. She ought to be worried about the fact that her own son came to his aunts for help instead of his own father, even though it was further to go. If she weren't family now, I'd..."

"Should we read some more in the journal?" you ask, trying to head off yet another anti-Rosemary tirade from Bella. You aren't entirely impressed with Rosemary either, but it seems unnecessary to keep talking about it.

Mira looks a question over at Bella, with an arched eyebrow and a hint of a smile.

"Oh, perhaps you're right," says Bella. "It will take my mind off my clodpole brothers."

Clodpole? you think, but before you can ask for a reminder of precisely what manner of insult that might be, Mira begins reading again.



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"Isn't this the way we just came?" asked Ricarda.

"Yes, but then we were running away from orcs to the north," I said, "and now we're running away from orcs to the south. Maybe the same orcs, actually. Anyway, this time we have Rinthilios with us."

"Is he able to fight off a dozen orcs at once?" asked Tyne. We were all scrambling downhill, following Rinthilios, who was the only one besides Hildigard who seemed to be able to do it without falling frequently. As a result of our falling in the snow, we were also falling behind him and Hildigard.

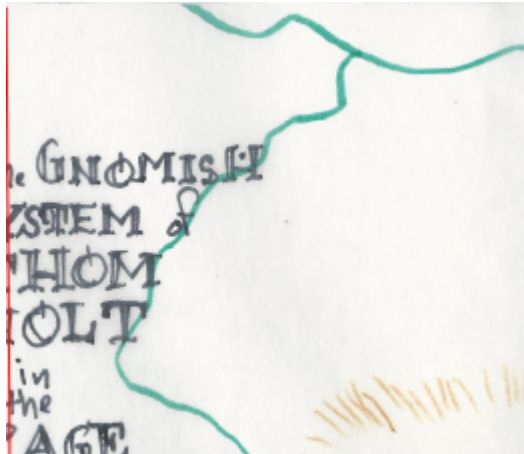
"I'm not certain," I said, "but then he knows other ways to deal with them. For example, his trick with the sound back in the cave."

"True enough," said Tyne. "I don't know how he did that, but it sure seemed to work on the orcs."

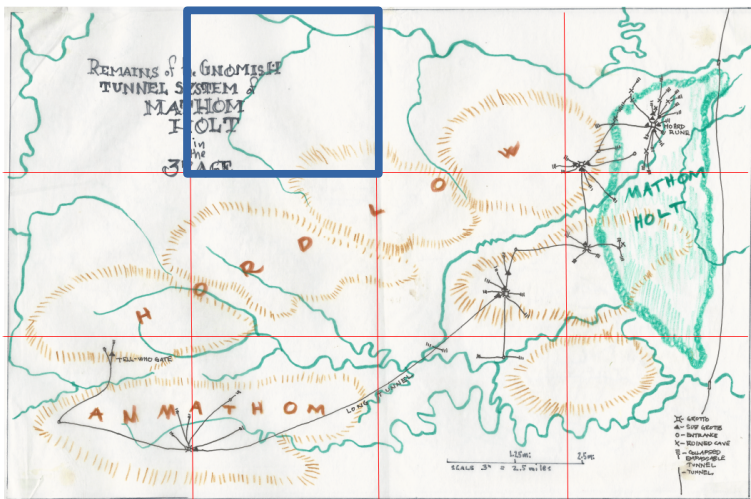
"It worked on you too," said Ricarda, casting him a mean look.

"Yes, Miss Ricarda, it certainly did," said Tyne, with no trace of resentment in his voice.

When we got to the road, we were all pretty cold from the snow, and starting to get tired. The fright of the events in the cave, and relief at Rinthilios showing up to rescue us, had drained away by then. We had been running uphill



Belowground



and downhill for a while, and were not sure where we were headed or how to get there. It was clear, though, that the spot we were at, was not a place to stay, being too out in the open and visible, so we kept moving. Rinthilios slowed up a bit to wait for us, and looked around us carefully, as if scanning the horizon for signs of any enemy.

"Do you see something?" I asked quietly.

"I see many things," said Rinthilios, "but I am not certain which are most important for us to attend to just now. That wisp of smoke, for example."

I looked off to the southeast, and saw a thin trail of blue-white smoke curling up into the cold air from just over the crest of the hills. Seeing the two of us looking, Ricarda and Tyne also turned to look back to the southeast, and then Who took off in flight.

"Oh, careful Who!" said Ricarda in a whisper.

We walked slowly east along the road, not in any hurry to get closer to the place where that thin trail of smoke was coming from, but not willing to stay where we were in the open either. I wondered what we would do if we saw orcs coming over the crest towards us; there was nowhere to hide. After a few minutes, Who flew back, and landed on Ricarda's outstretched hand.

"What did you see, Who?" she asked softly. "Can you tell us?"

"See, see!" said Who. "Us, us."

THE DUNEDAIN SORCERER



TYNE

"I thought as much," said Rinthilios, "he has full knowledge we are here, that is why he lit the fire."

"I don't understand," said Tyne.

"It's a threat," said Rinthilios. "He may not be able to attempt a frontal assault on me, but he can threaten the forest itself, with fire. His orcs could help him to stoke it, and I cannot be everywhere at once to stop them. If I do not go there to speak with him, he will unleash fire on Mathom Holt. Well, he is a wiser foe than the orcs who do his bidding."

"Yes," said Tyne, "I understood that part."

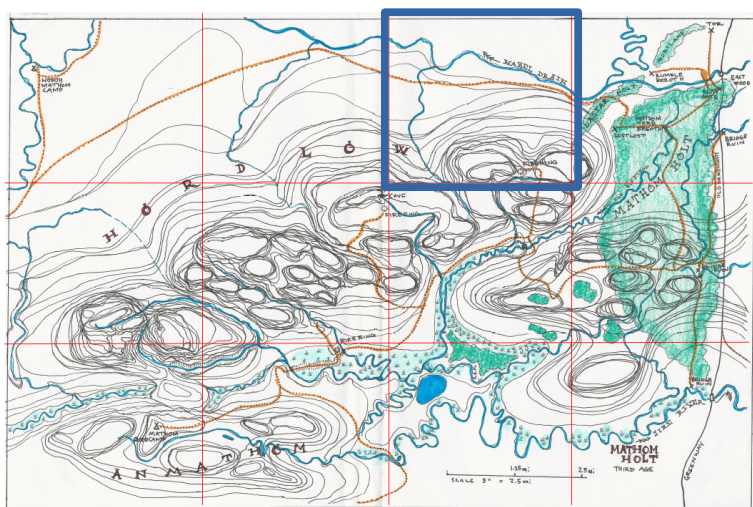
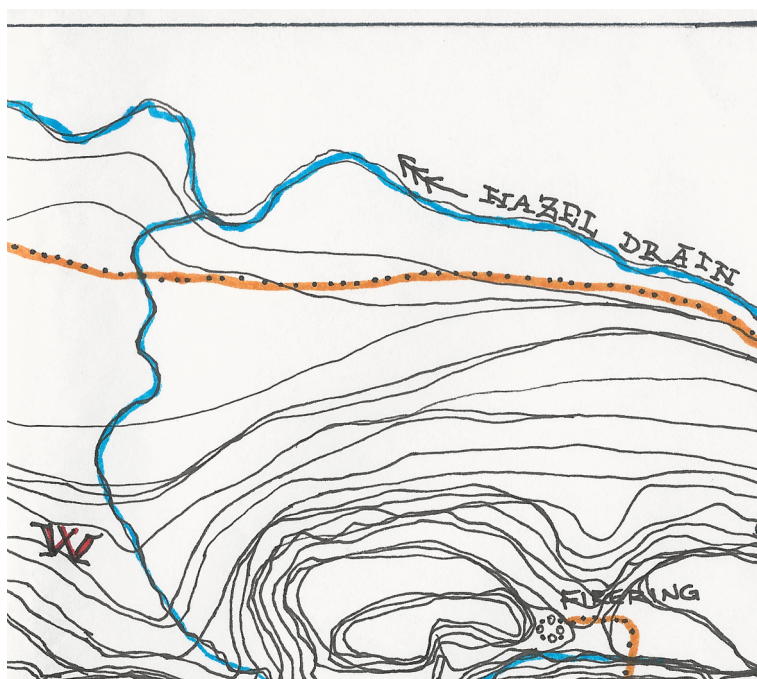
"You did?" asked Ricarda.

"Yes, but what I don't understand is, what does he want? What is he after?"

We were all silent for a moment.

"Do we care what he wants?" asked Ricarda. "He's evil. I don't want to give him anything, no matter how much he wants it."

"Well that may be, Miss Ricarda," said Tyne, "but it's still a good thing to be able to say what the other fellow is after. He wants something, or he's afraid of something, or both, and if you don't know what it is, then you don't know what he's likely to do. It's always better to be able to put yourself in the other fellow's shoes, even if you don't like him especially, so that you can understand what he's after. People are mostly driven by greed or fear, and



if it's not one it's the other. What's he greedy for, or afraid of? Or is it both?"

"That's a rather cynical view," I said.

"It is not," said Rinthilios, "it is more like the clearest view. But I am afraid, I do not know enough about this sorcerer to answer your question. I suppose the best way for us to find out, is for me to go up there and find out what he wants by asking him in person."

"Are you certain?" I asked. "If we circle around to the forest, we might be able to find Gandalf and Arathorn. They should be back by now, perhaps wondering where Ricarda and I got to. I wager Gandalf would be able to do something about this sorcerer fellow."

"Who is Gandalf?" asked Tyne.

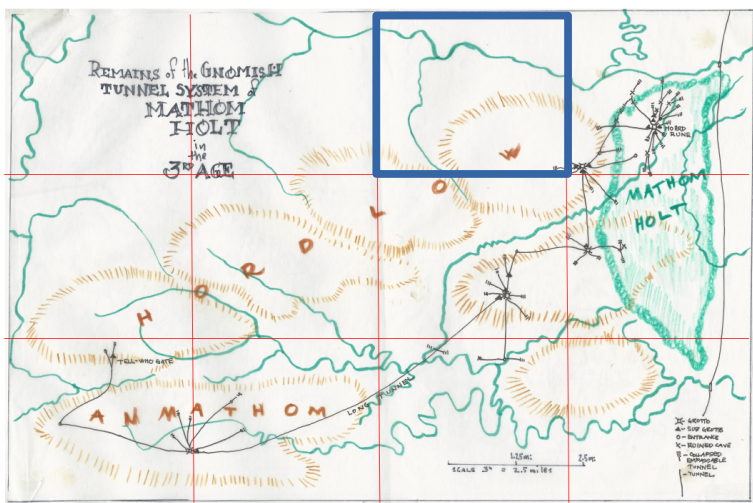
"If I recall aright, that is the Wizard we elves call Mithrandir, but as he is known to Men and Hobbits," said Rinthilios. "And he is especially skillful with fire. It is tempting. But, will there be time? Gandalf may be back to Mathom Holt, or he may not, and it would take us hours to find out. This sorcerer may decide to unleash as much flame as he can create, before then."

"Would it burn much, with it so cold and snowy out?" asked Ricarda.

"If this sorcerer wants it to burn, it is likely that it will," said Rinthilios. "It is a hard thing, to grow a forest, but it is not so difficult to burn one down, for a sorcerer especially."



Belowground



"I think I know what it is that he wants," I said.

"You do?" asked all of the others at once. Well, everyone except Hildigard.

"You do, you do," said Who, like an echo.

"Yes," I said, and I reached into my pack and brought out the Cardolan lockbox.

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Mira pauses in her reading, and you all look down at the Cardolan lockbox, lying on a side table there in front of you.

"Well," says Bella, "apparently he didn't get it."

Yet, you think. Does he still want it? If so, is he still trying?

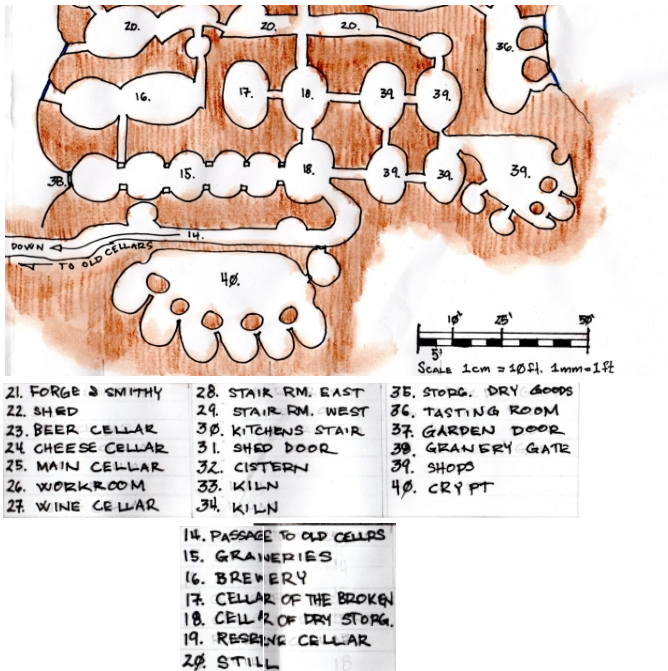
Your thoughts are interrupted by Isengrim's entry into the room.


"Excuse me, sisters," he says in his normal, rather formal and officious voice, "but there are some details about the use of Great Smials as a refuge this winter, which I must discuss with Father. I am sorry to interrupt you."

"No problem, I could use a short break from reading anyway," says Mira. "Papa, we will come back in a little while after you're done talking to Isengrim, would that be all right?"

Your father's eyes widen a bit, he frowns, and then nods awkwardly. While you wait for Isengrim and your father to finish talking, do you:

- 1) Visit the still, where the brandy and whisky of Great Smials is made? Page 13
- 2) Check on the granary, where grain from the harvests is stored until needed? Page 18
- 3) Look in on what is happening in the workshops, where cloth, leather and wooden goods are made or repaired? Page 22
- 4) See if you can get into the Crypts, where your ancestors' mortal remains were laid to rest? Page 27



You have never been a great enthusiast for the drinks produced in the stills of Great Smials, or anywhere really, but you do quite like the stills themselves. All that polished copper, and the many shapes and sizes. You would sometimes come down here to watch an old Hobbit by the name of Oswin Smallburrow, as he went from one apparatus to another, checking and listening and feeling the temperature, adjusting and humming tunelessly to himself as he did so. Sometimes he would turn to you and give a short, enthusiastic and mostly incomprehensible lecture on the craft of distilling. You would sit happily and watch and listen, paying just enough attention to be able to ask a relevant question when he would start to run out of things to say. You had no interest in distilling, really, but it was a pleasure to see someone so happy at their work.

Coming down here today, you find that Oswin's son Oswald is here now, having inherited his father's position years before. He looks over at you and nods and smiles, then turns back to his work.

Looking around, you can see that, Oswald's presence here notwithstanding, the stills are mostly idle now. You suppose that to be because the distilling required fuel for fires as part of the process. With the early onset of winter that at all appearances would be bitter cold and perhaps long-lasting, fuel was to be conserved if at all possible. You wonder what Oswald thinks of this state of affairs. But, there is little choice, if you are not all to freeze to death at the end of the winter.

"How if your father doing, then, Mrs. Donna?" asks Oswald.

"Better, Oswald, as far as I can tell, thank you," you answer. Since you cannot actually tell for certain, it is more or less the truth. In any case, Oswald certainly did not wish to hear every half-formed vague worry and uncertainty you might have, he was just asking to be polite.

"How are your stills behaving, then?" you ask.

"Just finishing this last batch, before we have to shut it all down for the winter," he says. "Isengrim was none too keen to allow even fuel for that, but I persuaded him at last. I'll remind him of the wisdom of it when this brandy is ready for drinking."

You manage a tiny smile, and ponder whether you should tell him that Isengrim is less interested in strong drink than you are. Perhaps not. If it is not Isengrim who will appreciate a good brandy, then it will be someone else. Your father, perhaps. Isengrim and your father are talking

right now; are they discussing the brandy? Perhaps not. Unless Isengrim is trying to convince your father to shut down the stills entirely, before the latest batch is done.

"How is your family, Oswald?" you ask.

"They are well enough, Mrs. Donna," he answers, "although they'd be better if the snow would ease up for a time. The boys squabble too much when they cannot go outside and run off their energy, and the missus has a time keeping them out of the larder. The first few days, it was all tobogganing and snowballs, but it started too early this year, and I fear it may go on too long."


You look around the chamber you are in, noting the many decorations, engravings of ivy and flowers and trees, rabbits and squirrels and birds of all kinds. Who made them all? They were here when you were a young lass, and did not look new then. You wish you had asked Oswin, when he was still alive, although perhaps even he did not know who had made the carvings or when.

It is important, you are reminded, to ask older people questions that no one else will be able to answer once they are gone.

Perhaps Isengrim and your father are done talking now. You say your goodbyes to Oswald, and head back to see.

stumbles backwards, out
possible. Then **you** and your
but it's an
put the two lockboxes very
ancient scroll, tied with a
crystal ball at Amon Sul,
a king. Unfortunately, he
the top. "It looks like
I could eat a bit now.
Took family. The sorcerer
and your father is himself
the nearest window, and open
asked. You turn to find
daughter Donnamira." "Oh,
maybe give some of this food
great enthusiasm. "No,"
wonders." "By the **way**,"
near your home. Do you know
other for a long
what he dropped and bring it
ask. "Yes, his name is
crow flies back, and lands
blessed," says your father.
centuries past, is now

through the ancient doorway
father combined, pull the
improvement. Looking at the
close together, if only for
colored ribbon. It must
saw in it, and wrote down
fumbles it, and drops the
he's moving away. We'll
Here, why don't you put
is still out there,
once again. After you
it a crack. "I saw him!"
some food to give him, but
the old one is up and flying
to the tall one, the one
says your father, "I don't
says the crow, pausing
him? I was thinking of
moment. "Tassel," says your
to us. Be careful, though,
Tassel," says your father.
near the window. Your
"The Arthedain key. He will
within your grasp after

Great Smials is many things, only one of which is a home for the Took. It is also the theoretical meeting place for Shire Moots, those occasional meetings of all the most prominent families of the Shire, to deal with emergencies such as invasions and the like. There has not been a Shire Moot for some time, and may not be one for many years to come. The current winter may turn into an emergency, but it won't be the sort which everyone can travel from all over the Shire to meet about.

In addition, Great Smials is the location for many workshops, the smithy, kilns, the largest bakery, and other shared resources which the hobbits of Tuckborough and other smaller nearby villages may come to use. One of the most important, is the granary. Those farmers who have the largest farms, have their own granaries, and store their harvest there, but the many farmers too poor to be able to have a granary of their own, use the granary of Great Smials.

In addition, they can have some of their grain baked into bread in the Great Smials bakery upstairs. Arrive at Great Smials with grain, and leave with loaves of bread, secure in knowledge that all of the rest of your grain is secure from rats, rain, and thieves.

Of course, mice and rats are not averse to trespassing, so it was necessary to have multiple defenses. Not only sealed containers, but also guards, actively patrolling, ready to pounce on any rodent that should attempt to eat what Hobbits had spent all year growing.

"Meow?" you hear from behind and to the left of you, and you look back to see a young, orange, stripey cat looking up at you. You lean over slowly to reach out a hand, not too far so as not to frighten it, but close enough to invite it to come closer and say hello. It decides to do so, and a short time later you are sitting on the cool floor of the granary with an orange cat in your lap.

"I see you've met Young Buck," says a voice from behind you, and you turn to look over your shoulder at a young adult hobbit, her simple clothes indicating she is from one of the poorer families nearby, but too young for you to know her from your time living here.

"Hello, I'm Donna Boffin, but I grew up here as Donna Took," you say, still petting Young Buck as you do so.

"Hi there, I'm Lily Grubb," she says, and smiles. Once she does, you realize that her broad face, tiny upturned nose, and large ears do look somewhat like other Hobbits in the Grubb family that you have known. "I'm meant to

be watching the granary. I've heard of you, I think. You're the quiet one?"

"I am?" you ask, surprised. Not that you considered yourself noisy, but it is somewhat unexpected to hear that you have a reputation of any sort.

"So they say," says Lily. "Belladonna Baggins, she's the one who will spit fire at Isengrim or any other Took if she pleases, and hold nothing back. Mirabella Brandybuck is the one who you'll hear laughing from across Great Smials, and she can talk to anyone, and her voice will charm anyone who hears it. Perhaps even if they don't, as her husband's deaf, they say. You're said to be the quiet one, meaning no disrespect."

"None taken," you say, and ponder the question of who could have been telling Lily Grubb about you and your sisters. You had not imagined anyone to be particularly taking notice of the three of you, and you least of all. Getting noticed is not particularly your favorite thing to do. Lily kneels down, and scratches Young Buck behind the ears.

"Why is he called Young Buck?" you ask.

"Because he prowls around Great Smials like Old Buck's ghost, but he's much younger," says Lily.

Oh yes, of course, Old Buck. You wonder if tales of Old Buck are going to be told and retold more this winter, with so many families spending it in Great Smials.

"Did you ever see him, in your time living here?" asks Lily. "Old Buck, I mean."

"No," you say. You could say more about having heard him, perhaps, or perhaps it was not a ghost after all, you're not sure; but you do not say anything. Lily seems to be able to tell a lot from a person's facial expression, and she arches her eyebrows and smiles.

"Ahhh, I see. Heard but not seen. Well, Old Buck's never done any harm to anyone, that I've heard. Not Young Buck, either, so long as you're not mouse or rat."

"No, no harm that I ever heard of either," you say, meaning Old Buck.

But, he was said to take things. When a thing was not where it was supposed to be, and no one knew why, or where it was now, Took's often said, "Old Buck's got it", meaning it was lost, but could perhaps reappear someday. It was not like being attacked, but it was annoying, to have a thing and then lose it.

You wonder, about the sorcerer, who wants the Cardolan lockbox. Did he once have it? Did he think it stolen, or rightfully his? Was that why he was so long in pursuit of it? Or was there another reason?

You give Young Buck a bit more petting, and then feel the urge to return back to your father's room and see what is happening there. You hand him over to a willing Lily, and make your way back.

There are several workshops in the cellars of Great Smials: leatherworker, carpenter, ropemaker, cloth dyer, weaver, and tailor. In most cases there were now other shops in Tuckborough that most folks could go to, but the older shops of Great Smials were kept in a functional state, and occasionally used. It happened less often after the split in the Took family back in your great-grandfather's day (he and his younger brother Bullroarer had arguments that eventually resulted in the near-emptying of Great Smials). Your grandfather and father worked to repair the damage, and your many brothers' families now all live in Great Smials, which makes it more full and busy even when there are not as many visitors as there are now. As the population of Great Smials has increased over time, so has the frequency which with the shops are used.

Now that many families of Tuckborough have had to take refuge here, the shops are bustling. The first great storm of the winter caught many by surprise, and the increasing load of ice and snow caused the roofs of the poorer houses

to give way in many cases. What was rescued, was often damaged, and some of it severely so. As a remedy to this, and also as a way to keep folks active and engaged, the shops are busy, with many volunteers helping out the artisans who actually know what they are doing.

In some cases, if they had not been asked by Gerontius to be grateful and accepting of any who wish to help, you believe those artisans would gladly tell all and sundry that their help was more trouble than it was worth. An artisan in his (or her) shop is often not happy to have new and untutored hands trying to help. But it does sound as if Tomkin Hogg, the leatherworker, is trying his very best to be gracious about it.

"No, Rishley, I'd rather do that part myself. No no, just hold that end over there. Oh not like that, like you were before. Yes, just hold it, that's all, I'll be ready for it in just a few moments."

You decide not to intrude on good Tomkin's instructions to Rishley, whoever that may be, and pass by the leatherworking shop. Instead, you stop in to see Snowdrop Headstrong in the dyer's shop.

The Headstrongs were once among the wealthier families of the Shire, although their status has declined somewhat in the last couple generations. Some of it was bad luck, some of it was bad decisions, and some of it is not clear to you. You know Snowdrop slightly, having seen her at several festivals in the past, and she seems easy to talk to. Where the family name comes from, you don't know, but so far as you're aware the Headstrongs are all friendly and agreeable people. You see that she has accumulated a

goodly number of hobbit-lasses in her orbit. She has put them to work with vat, mortar and pestle, or picking through a basket of flowers to extract the parts which will be used to make dyes.

"Oh well hullo there, it's Mrs. Donna Boffin now!" she says as you enter. "Pardon that I'm not rising to greet you, Mrs. Donna, I'm a bit tied up in my work at the moment, as you can see."

"Please don't trouble yourself, Snowdrop," you say. "It's good to see that the lasses are lending you a hand." Several half-grown hobbit-lasses look up from their work, some smiling and some wide-eyed and curious.

"Yes, we've a lot to get through here. Some haven't quite the winter clothing we would want them to have, but as luck would have it a great load of wool has come in, just before the deep snows, so we aim to fix that. How is your father, if I may ask?"

Snowdrop has an angular, pointed face, and bright blue eyes. Her hair is wispy, light-colored, and unruly, giving her an appearance as if she is evaporating, her hair rising up like smoke in spirals and streams. Her smile is pleasant, if sometimes appearing at odd times, such as now, when asking about your father's health when she knows he was at death's door not long ago.

"He is recovering, it seems," you say carefully, and move on to change the subject. "Where did the wool come from?"

"Your Took relatives from North Cleeve sent it down, I'm led to believe," she says. "It arrived just before the first heavy snow. I wonder what the sheep will be eating now, with all the grass covered up. Some of them will be mutton before the spring, I expect." She smiles again.

"Oh, I'm afraid you're probably right, Snowdrop, but hopefully not most of them. For one thing, they are awfully cute sometimes, and for another, we will need some more wool next year as well."

"If there are any of us left to need it," says one of the girls, darkly.

"Oh, now Daisy," says Snowdrop mildly, "don't be like that. I'm sure we'll get through it. Remember, there have been bad winters before. At least this time we have a good bit of food put in store. Remember, it wasn't but a hundred and fifty years ago that we had the Long Winter, and plenty of hobbits made it through. Except for the ones as didn't, of course!"

She smiles again. You're not sure what Snowdrop's smile means, and from the expressions on their faces perhaps the lasses around her are not sure either. However, it is good of her to make sure they all have warm wool clothes, which will matter more than an odd manner.

"Mrs. Boffin," asks one of the younger hobbit-lasses, whose name you do not know but apparently she knows yours, "will we have to go on one meal a day this winter?"


You pause, unsure what to say. Do you even know? You recall the tales you heard when you were a child, about the

Long Winter. Hair falling out in clumps, people too malnourished to stand up straight. You would like to think it will not come to that.

"One meal a day's better than none!" says Snowdrop brightly. "Think of it that way! You might be on no meals a day!"

She smiles.

It seems to you that it is time to go check on your father again. You say goodbye to Snowdrop and your young companions, and head back.

Most Hobbit families in the Shire bury their dead in simple, small family cemeteries, and mark them with tombstones of easily-worked stone or hard wood. The tombstones of those who died during the Long Winter are difficult to read now, and the ones much older than that are probably hard to even find. Hobbits do not have a tradition of elaborate or impressive cemeteries.

The Took, in this as in so many things, are not entirely like other Hobbits of the Shire. Since the Took began living in what later became Great Smials, about five hundred years ago, they have put the Thains and their wives in this crypt on the lowest level. The bones of many other Tooks are here as well. There are six alcoves in the crypt, and once the sixth was filled the seventh thain was laid to rest in the first alcove, with the bones of the first Took thain removed to a small metal receptacle.

You have not often been in the Took crypt. In point of fact, since your grandfather and grandmother died before you were born, and your father is still living, you should

in theory only have been here once, when your mother Adamanta died and was laid to rest, to await her husband's eventual arrival.

You recall well the time when your mother, who had been unwell for some time, finally passed on, and you were called back to Great Smials to participate in the small ceremony in which she was put into the second alcove (alongside the 2nd and 8th Took thains, their spouses, and a few of their children, each in small metal boxes with their names engraved on the outside). It was very difficult for you.

Not due to grief over your mother's death. You were sorry to see her go, but it was not unexpected, you had been bracing for it for some time, and given her failing health it was in some ways a bit of a mercy. In any case, no one expected you not to cry, it was your mother's funeral, so you bawled like a wee hobbit-lass and hugged your sisters, who did the same.

No, the hard part was that you realized you needed to pretend that you had never been in the crypt before, whereas in fact you had been there on many occasions, and this was not a fact you wished to become generally known. You are not generally practiced at being an actress, and you were not certain how one was supposed to look or feel upon seeing the space for the first time.

You have no particular fascination with death, or cemeteries or the like. You do, however, very much like to see that which is hidden, secret, or locked up. If the crypt had been left unlocked, you might have gone once and been done with it, but since it was a locked room that

no one you knew except your father and mother had even seen, it had a fascination for you. It was the only room in Great Smials that you seriously considered giving up on. Getting down to this part of the cellar was difficult, and because of its purpose this part of the smials was creepy when faced alone with little light, and the lock was clearly better than of Hobbit manufacture. Either the lock dated back to the Dunedain kingdoms, or the Blue Mountain dwarves were responsible for making it. Standing here alone in the dark, trying to pick the lock, worried that any stray sound might be the living come to discover you at it, but also worried that it might not be the living, made it difficult to concentrate.

Eventually, you found out how to get into your father's vault upstairs, the one with a board with many hooks on it for holding keys, and one of those turned out to be the key to this door. You were nervous at the thought of taking the key for long, though, as there was always the (admittedly slim) chance that your father might visit the vault while it was gone, and miss it. Eventually you found another key that looked enough like it, superficially, that you could put it there as a placeholder while you were using the real one. It would not have fooled anyone who was looking directly at it, but it was approximately the same shape, so if your father was simply getting something else from his vault, he would be unlikely to notice that the key had been swapped out for a different one.

You have no such placeholder key available to you now, and no time to find one. Moreover, there are many more people in Great Smials, and a few of them (such as your oldest brother Isengrim, who is acting as Thain and head of the Took household while your father convalesces)

might notice if you took the key to the crypt from its spot in your father's vault. You consider trying to pick the lock.

One advantage you have, is that you have some idea of what the key looks like, which gives you some clues as to how to bend the wire which you are intending to pick the lock with. Another advantage, is that the crypt is not a part of Great Smials which sees a lot of traffic, so the chances of you being interrupted are small.

Well normally the crypt does not see much traffic, but you realize as you get closer that you do hear the sound of someone in the hallway ahead of you. You slow down, not wanting to be seen if you don't have to, but to your surprise, the person stops at the very door to the crypt you were headed for. It is Hyacinth Banks, and she is carrying a pitcher of water. She takes the key out of her small purse, unlocks the door, and steps inside. You follow after her, and look inside.

There, to your even greater surprise, is a small vase on the floor, and in it sits a golden flower, still fresh, glowing faintly. Hyacinth looks up at you, surprised to be interrupted, although not alarmed.

"Hullo, Hyacinth," you say, "are you here to water the flower?"

"Yes, ma'am," says Hyacinth, "I was just about to. Shall I do that now?"

"Yes, please do," you say. If Hyacinth finds it odd that you are here, she says nothing about it. You are, after all,

a member of the Took family, and she is not, so probably she believes that you have every right to be here.

"Did father ask you to do this?" you ask.

"Yes, ma'am, a few weeks ago, just before he fell ill," she says. "It's for your mother, I suppose."

You say nothing, but try to give a neutral facial expression, something between a thin smile and a grimace. You are not sure, but your guess is that this flower is not in fact put here in memory of your mother, or anyone else. Why it is put here is a difficult question, however.

Hyacinth has, it appears, the key to the crypt, presumably given to her by your father in order to perform this task.

"It's a wonder that the flower still looks so fresh," says Hyacinth. "I am not familiar with the plant it comes from, are you?"

"I believe it is from south of here," you say. "I'm not sure of the name."

Hyacinth finishes putting water in the flower's small vase, and then departs, locking the door after her. Perhaps now is not the time to enter the crypt. Perhaps you saw the thing you most needed to see, in any event. You head back to your father's room.

What is he up to? And can you ask him? If you do, can he answer?

