

The Cracks of Doom

UNTOLD TALES IN MIDDLE-EARTH

A COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF PLOT OPENINGS
for WRITERS, GAME MAKERS, ROLE-PLAYERS,
PERFORMERS and DAYDREAMERS

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INTRODUCTION:

On untold tales in Middle-earth

Welcome. This is a book for those who deeply respect the great tapestry of story woven by J.R.R. Tolkien, but who also increasingly see Middle-earth as a wider and more public enterprise to which they may now freely contribute. In recent years commercial licenses have been issued for movies, videogames and even entire television series which seek to extend Tolkien's original vision. Although my book has no such official approval, I thus have no qualms about writing a small book which similarly invites Tolkien's most engaged and respectful readers to help 'fill up the corners' of Middle-earth with amateur stories which attempt to use his style and approach. I also have some small hope that my book might somehow help to raise the standards and aspirations of such fiction, steering the field away from the salacious and tendentious. To do this I have not written either a dry chronology or a niggling book that tries to 'find fault' with Tolkien's plotting and character motivations. Instead I sympathetically identify the creative 'Openings', 'Gaps' and 'Cracks' in which a respectful new story might be set. Tolkien was himself at home in such enticing gaps, spending his professional and literary life delving in search of unresolved fragments, puzzling asides, uncertain words, and little niggling hints of larger histories. The 'Openings' in *The Lord of the Rings* are of course obvious for all to see, and they lead onto wide well-travelled greenways on which the fan-author will meet a host of dauntingly familiar elves, wizards, warriors and other travellers. The 'Gaps' often dwindle away into mere cart-tracks where grass grows between the ruts, and become tiny back-ways that lead to obscure places which may nevertheless be rich with possibility and poetry. Then there are the 'Cracks', which are often dark and obscure, difficult to worm one's way into, and perhaps lead into lonely and unlovely places in which one will meet one's doom. There is another un-named type which is happier, perhaps being only a short scramble down to a sandy river-scoop of Shire history. Which of these you choose to pursue will partly depend on your own personality, the time available to you, and the depth of your knowledge of the wide lands and deep histories of Middle-earth.

Westfold folk who had not fled to Helm's Deep. Only "three parts of the folk of Westfold" were stated to be in Helm's Deep, meaning that the rest were likely to be beset by the Orcs as the army passed through.

Chapter Eight

Gimli in the Caverns

During the fighting at Helm's Deep, Gimli was forced back into the caves. There he was highly impressed by the vast caverns of Helm's Deep — the "Glittering Caves of Aglarond", Aglarond being the name of a castle not a person. He later talks about these as he rides with Legolas.

There might be a story to be told of this part of Gimli's role at Helm's Deep, and of his first encounter with the caves in the company of Gamling the Old and Eomer. It would, however, be difficult to balance the rousing opening of the story with the likely very quiet ending of Gimli standing in simple awe amid the splendor of the caves. A long song might better convey the poetry of this strange transition from horrific battle to beautiful quiet, as experienced by Gimli. Had such a song really been devised then Tolkien might have drawn inspiration from some of the descriptions found in "The Pearl", a real poem by the *Gawain*-poet, on which he was an expert.

Saruman's Garden Slaves

It is stated that there were still some green gardens "beneath the walls of Isengard", presumably on the exterior and southward side of the great walls, where "there still were acres tilled by the slaves". Later, after the first attack of the Ents, it is stated at all "the southern wall" of Isengard is destroyed.

Much later, in the chapter "Many Partings", members of the Fellowship return and discover that the Ents have helped to make Isengard a garden and an orchard — the willing help of the surviving human gardener-slaves is not explicitly referred to in this post-attack cleansing, but it is surely implied.

One might devise an initially sad story of the gardener-slaves of Saruman, working on their little island-gardens against the exterior south wall, as the valley around them is bespoiled and grows rank with "a wilderness of weeds and thorns". Then, they would one day see the south wall suddenly and unexpectedly destroyed, by what seem to them to be living trees. Merry later states that the Ents reduced... "a large part of the southern walls to rubbish".

Those gardener-slaves who feared the huorns, and thus did not try to flee, would then creep back to their huts and gardens and encounter the Ents.

Chapter Eight

Ioreth's Story

Ioreth is the eldest of the women who staff the Houses of Healing, and she plays a significant role in terms of remembering that: "The hands of the king are the hands of a healer".

How did she come by this old lore? A little later she talks of the herb-market at Lossarnach, and Gandalf implies that her sisters live there and frequent the nearby woods. Did she and her sisters once encounter an old mysterious herbalist who passed on the lore? Could this even have been someone like Radagast, who might have been there seeking a special herb or creature, fruit or wild honey?

Chapter Ten

Mablung and his scouts

On their way to the Black Gate, Aragorn's army is waylaid by a major ambush but.... "the Captains of the West were well warned by their scouts, skilled men from Henneth Annun led by Mablung; and so the ambush was itself trapped."

One might tell the story of this engagement, even though it is only a 'feint' of Sauron's, as told by one of the scouts. It would be brisk and exciting to one who had perhaps not yet seen much of the War, and who accompanies more experienced men.

The Re-taking of Cair Andros

Aragorn recognizes that some of his army are not up to the task of assailing the Black Gate, and he gives them a secondary strategic task that they might accomplish.

The story of the brave and simple men of Westfold and Lossarnach who depart to try to re-take Cair Andros from the Enemy.

The Black Numenoreans

'The Mouth of Sauron' is described as a renegade sorcerer of the Black Numenoreans. Later chroniclers surmise that he learned his sorcery under the tutelage of Sauron himself, but they might have been uncertain on that point and not inclined to delve further into such dark matters.

What if the Black Numenoreans had their own sorcery and, having been trained in this in his youth, the Mouth was thus better able to become a

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