

November 21, 2017

Dear Mr. Tolkien,

Happy birthday to your father!

I hope he's had a great day. Congratulations to him on his retirement. His stewardship of his father's work, his texts and notes, have been monumental, literally. He deserves to rest and relax.

I know you have a birthday coming soon, as do many people in your family. Coincidentally, I have the same birthday as your cousin Michael – January 11. Though I'm closer to you in age and living in Los Angeles, which makes me closer to you than England.

That's probably why you've been first in my mind to share this news and I've always imagined you'd be the first person to read what I've written. I remember you talking about how fascinated you were when Gandalf finally found Isildur's scroll in Minas Tirith.

I read an interview you gave in which you said the reason you wrote books about lawyers was because you are one. You'd been inside a courtroom so you could write a novel about lawyers.

But you'd never been to Middle-earth. Sorry to those who pestered you about writing a sequel to your grandfather's books.

When I was eleven, a childless young couple moved into my neighborhood. I passed the husband in his new front yard gardening and we struck up a conversation. He was surprised I'd read so many mythologies and when I became brash, he challenged my knowledge on trolls.

Thanks to Marvel Comics, I knew the answers. But it surprised him I'd never heard of JRR Tolkien. He gave me a copy of 'The Hobbit' to see if I might like it. I was enchanted.

I became friends with his wife, who was also a huge fan and for Christmas, they made a gift of a deluxe boxed edition of 'The Lord of the Rings.'

For three days, I stayed in my room except for meals and devoured the worlds of JRR Tolkien. Over the years, I re-read those book until the spines gave out. After that, I'd lie in bed for hours every night imagining I was in Middle-earth on the Road with the hobbits.

I recognized what many had: after the Three passed West there were still at least fifteen Rings of Power unaccounted for in Middle-earth. Three books had been written about One.

For years, I imagined what those other Rings might do and the affect whoever found them might have on the lives of the people who survived the War of the Ring.

After Peter Jackson's adaptations of your grandfather's books, a lot of Tolkien-related websites published details of your grandfather's unpublished papers. They could have come from

librarians at Marquette University and some probably did, but it seemed some came from members of the Tolkien family.

Thank God for those notes. Without them, I wouldn't have written this book. Your grandfather wrote on a margin: “[Dark Elf] was also sometimes applied to Elves captured by Morgoth and enslaved and then released to do mischief among the Elves. I think this latter idea should be taken up.”

Some part of my creative subconscious took that as a command from your grandfather. It was my moment of inspiration. I immediately sat down and wrote what has become the single largest narrative section, and one of the best and my favorite chapters.

A popular saying is, “Don't reinvent the wheel.” Meaning, don't start from scratch making every mistake possible. Some people interpret it as ‘don't do what has already been done.’ Both are equally valid.

But a common misconception is inventing the wheel was easy, and if whoever did it hadn't, someone else certainly would have.

The truth is – no one reinvented the wheel. Every wheel came from someone who saw the first one or one of its descendants. That's why the people in the Americas had no wheels. They'd passed over the Bering-Strait before the first one was invented.

Another thing I've read which I really like, ‘The true measure of an idea's brilliance is how obvious it seems once someone finally thinks of it.’

Coming up with the obvious: the wheel, the airplane, the first rocket to the moon is the hardest thing in the world to do.

I once read a best-selling author who gets a 20 million advance to sit down and start a new book. He wrote even with the motivation and acclaim, writing books is the hardest thing in the world.

For the last three years, I've been doing the most obvious hardest thing in the world: I've been writing the obvious pitch-perfect sequel to ‘The Lord of the Rings.’

I know I shouldn't have, but I really didn't have a choice. Once the inspiration came, the hardest part was over and it was the one book I most dearly wished I could buy which I couldn't find on the shelf in a book store. I wrote it for all the right reasons you're supposed to write books.

My number one intention was to write the best story possible. Number two was to stick as close to canon as I could. Third was to take those criticisms of his work; there weren't many strong empowered women or minorities, or those things unaccounted for or seen as errors, and show we were blind men with the elephant, we just hadn't been given a view of the ‘big picture.’

I started performing poetry on stage when I was five, in Greek. I'm a quarter German and I speak it. I started winning awards for my writing at thirteen. I started writing poetry because I'd read

your grandfather's books and I started winning awards for my poetry when I was sixteen. My poetry was published by a scholastic journal at eighteen. I was invited to write for magazines when an editor saw my posts on a listserve and I was internationally published.

But I didn't enjoy writing articles. I finished my first screenplay when I was thirty-three and two of my unproduced scripts have been recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for excellence. Adapting one of those became my first unpublished novel. I've outlined over 150 novel ideas (pun intended). But after all these years, I'd decided to quit.

The one book I couldn't quit without writing was this one.

I've repeatedly been told I'm a gifted writer. As you probably understand being a writer yourself, most of being any good is rewriting and working very, very hard. I've rewritten this first book on Middle-earth over twenty times. It better be good.

I haven't listed these things to pat myself on the back. I wanted to assure you this story is engaging, entertaining, and meant as a loving homage to your grandfather and his work.

I don't believe anyone else could do or come close to doing what I've done with the magnificent set pieces he created that no one ever used. I believe it's what he would have wanted.

I'd love to share what I've done with you, answer your questions and invite you to see how much amazing adventure, fun and heartfelt emotion is in every chapter and almost on every page.

I know some people will hate anything about Middle-earth not written by your grandfather. Admittedly, at 180k words, the finished manuscript isn't perfect. But most of it is very good. For anyone who loves Middle-earth, there's an awful lot to love.

Sincerely,

Demetrious Polychron

PS: FYI – like your grandfather, I grew up in a religious household, Greek Orthodox. I went to Naval Nuclear Power school, ran one of the nuclear reactors aboard the USS Enterprise (CVN-65), am a decorated combat veteran, and was Honorably Discharged. I renewed my current and active SECRET Security Clearance with the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy, and I have worked at Boeing El Segundo and the Raytheon satellite production facilities.