

“A Scene from the life of Shadowfax, Gandalf’s horse.”
William Hrdina

Oh sure, I know what you’re thinking, I couldn’t possibly have a thing in the world to complain about. You’re thinking you would give anything to be in my hooves. After all, my master is Gandalf the White, one of the most famous magicians in the history of Middle Earth. And I am Shadowfax mythical horse given to Gandalf by Theodon the King of the Horse People. I’m the fastest horse in the world and my master is the dictionary definition of a hero. On paper I’ve got the best life in the world.

But truth be told, my life pretty much sucks.

Sure, Gandalf can shoot lightning from a stick, but there’s more to life than pyrotechnics and killing ten orcs with a single blow.

Like hay, for instance. I happen to like hay a great deal. I like eating hay more than running or standing or anything else. But do I get to eat all the hay I want to?

Of course not.

Sure he stops when he has the chance, but when you spend your life saving the world from ultimate evil it doesn’t leave a whole lot of time for snacks.

So believe me when I tell you there are down sides to my job. It’s not all parades and glory, not by a long shot.

For instance, I want to tell you what just happened to me. For at least a year we’ve been racing all over everywhere trying to track down a ring that Gandalf read about while hanging around and smoking the “hobbits leaf.” Yeah, right, it’s pot and we all know it. So anyway, we’ve been traveling for months, never staying in one place for more than a day or two, trying to find this ring.

Then he finds it. So I’m happy right? Thinking okay good, we finally get to rest for a bit. And instead, right away he just gives the thing to this little midget guy with the hairiest feet you’ve ever seen.

Then more with the running.

Every time we stop long enough for me to meet a nice filly or find a particularly tasty clump of grass he’s up on my back yelling for me to “run like the wind” or “show him the meaning of the word speed” or “may the wind envy your swiftness.”

You have no idea how annoying this gets over time. No one ever yells to Gandalf, “Be really wizardly, like Merlin.” He gets respect.

I get to run all over kingdom come and I don’t even get health insurance or a 401k plan.

We ended up running all the way back to Rohan, my first home. It was nice to see some of the guys from my foal days, but then it turns out we’re just there because a huge battle is looming.

The next thing I know we run into this battle and I barely get through it alive. I mean there were all kinds of nasty creatures everywhere swinging sharp and pointy things at my tender bits. But I made it through.

Not two days after the battle we were on the road again this time with a bunch of folks and two different midgets. I don’t know what it is with Gandalf and midgets. He’s always liked to visit them and hang around their village. I think it’s the weed.

Anyway, after the battle we go to this ridiculously phallic tower owned by an old buddy of Gandalf’s named Sarumon. A fight erupts and in the confusion Sarumon drops

a big black marble and the next thing I know Gandalf's on my back along with this goddamn midget and I'm getting kicked in the ribs and told to hurry up. Now I can handle it and everything, but the point is, was that really necessary? I mean I've seen Gandalf's treasure room; the cheap son of a bitch could afford to spring for a horse for the stupid hobbit. But no, he figures two's better than one and now I have to carry an extra 65 pounds of hairy feet on my back.

So we run for THREE DAYS without stopping. Did they get to sleep? You bet your ass they did. You could hear the old man snoring from three valleys over.

Did I get to sleep? Not for a minute. OK, you know, that's my job. If I gotta run for three days so be it.

But then we get to Minas Tirith, this huge city built...

...into the side of a mountain.

Can you imagine? You've just run for three days, your destination comes into view and it slowly dawns on you that now you've got to run up the side of a mountain. Talk about a nightmare. I mean, you know right away that you're going to have to run all the way to the top because Gandalf is a very important wizard and he'll need to see whoever is in charge. Does the guy in charge ever live on the ground floor?

Of course he doesn't.

He lives in the penthouse.

There was a ray of hope when the fuzzy footed extra weight on my back remarked to Gandalf how high and steep the paths were. He asked, "Do you think the horse can handle it?"

Never in my life did I wish I spoke human more than I did at that moment. First, I wanted to tell the midget that my name was Shadowfax, not "the horse." And then I would tell them that stopping was a bloody stupendous idea. I would say, "Why don't the two of you continue the rest of the way on your own, or maybe you could ride another horse or something."

Only I don't speak human, and despite his many talents, Gandalf cannot speak horse. So, being Mr. Brave guy, Gandalf replies, "No Shadowfax has taken us all this way, he will take us to the end of our destination."

Oh sure. Easy for him to say, he's not the one who just ran for THREE DAYS without stopping. It's not like I'm riding on his back. He's lucky that I didn't join the horse's union, I'd be entitled to coffee breaks every few hours, and no mandatory overtime. You'd think the great hero would be pro-union.

But you'd be wrong.

By the time I reached the top of the city I honestly thought I was going to barf up my lung. Seriously, it was just terrible. To be fair Gandalf gave me a huge bucket of water as soon as we stopped, after THREE DAYS. Not much of a consolation if you ask me. Once I'd drunk the bucket dry I looked around for some grass and came to yet another in what was, at this point, a long series of terrible realizations.

I was in a city carved into the side of the mountain. Grass doesn't grow very well on stone. Hay doesn't either. So all I could do was wait while Gandalf had a three hour meeting in the hall on the top of the mountain. Finally he bothers to come out and take me to the city's depository of hay, where I was finally allowed to eat.

Then he thanks me with a lousy pat on my flank and tells me to rest well. There were a number of horses about, but they were all nervous and talking about some

upcoming battle. None of the filly's were in the mood for lovin, not even from Gandalf's horse. That's one perk I admit I like. Usually dropping Gandalf's name gave me some stud power with the ladies; everybody likes a celebrity.

Then the drum's started. They sound like thunder rumbling across the ground from miles away. As time passes they get keep getting louder.

I'm scared and this sucks.

I know at any minute Gandalf's going to come running in here, jump on my back and put my life in peril without once asking my opinion on the matter.

So the next time you're enjoying my story, remember, the horse who looks like he's just having the best time, is really just tired and wants to stop for a snack.