

The Lord of the Rails

Chapter One: A Long-delayed Journey

Deep in the heart of the Shire (AKA Surrey) was a sleepy village called Reigate. In this quiet town lived a grumpy hobbit called Mr Frodo Baggage-rack. Mr Baggage-race was grumpy because he didn't work in the Shire. He worked in a far off and dark shadowy realm, called London. To get to this dismal place he used The Season Ticket of Power. But a shadow had fallen across the Shire. The shadow of the Southern Rail Strike.

Chapter Two: Three is Company

One morning fellow commuter Mr Gandalf The-Going-Grey came to Mr Baggage-rack's three-bedroomed Victorian Hobbit hole.

"The Season Ticket of Power is growing week. It must be carried to the Great Tower at London Bridge and cast into the Ticket refund Office of Doom. This is your quest, Frodo."

"How am I supposed to do this alone?" asked Frodo

"But you will not go alone. You will go with me and your fellow commuter, Mr Sam-not-wise, who works in Bermondsey.

Chapter Three: A Short cut to Redhill Station

Frodo, Sam-not-wise and Mr Gandalf-the-going-grey left their hobbit hole in Reigate and started on the long walk to the bleak, grey station that is known as Redhill. They marched down Lesbourne Road and then lit a fire and sang a song. They turned into Chart Lane. They lit a fire and sang a song. Then they marched into the A25. And lit a fire and sang a song. The morning had grown quite long by the time they reached Redhill Station.

Chapter four

At the gate of the station was a sign written in a barely legible script. "Is it elvish, asked Frodo? " Mr Gandalf read it aloud:

One train to carry them all

Other trains? You can't find them.

One train to bring them all,

In commuting hell, bind them.

"Does that mean there is a replacement bus service? Asked Sam-not-wise.

"Fool of a Hobbit!! Said Gandalf the Going Grey.

Book Two: The Two Hours (Journey)

Chapter One: The delayed departure of Boromir.

The Company of the Rails stood on a desolate, grey, cold, plain.

“This must be platform two,” said Gandalf the Going Grey.

Mr Frodo Baggage-rack was already looking tired. “It’s the weight of this ticket. It feels like it weighs two thousand pounds.”

“Can’t I carry it for you? Said Sam-not-wise.

“No”, snapped Frodo. “It’s my precious Season Ticket. Get your Own!”

They waited. Then waited some more. Then they lit a fire and sang a song.

Frodo looked up from the fire. “There is a fell voice in the air. Listen!”

“Southern are sorry to announce that the 12.55 southern service to London Bridge, calling at Rohan, Gondor, East Croydon, Clapham Junction and Rivendell has been cancelled due to Industrial Action.”

So, the Fellowship waited. And waited some more. Then they lit a fire and sang a song.

Chapter Two:

The sun sank and the shadows grew long. Out of the gloom a train appeared.

“Oh no!” exclaimed Frodo. “Twelve carriages were promised yet only two appear!”

“And, alas these two already carry a great host!” cried Sam-not-wise.

“Courage”! Exclaimed Gandalf-the going-grey. “We shall seek refuge in First Class.”

The company stood (for there were no seats in first class).

Suddenly, Frodo pointed with a look of great fear. “Look out! We are about to have our ticket inspected by the Isen-Guard”.

“Tickets of Power please”, demanded the Isen-Guard.

Gandalf-the-going-grey stood in the doorway to first class and bellowed at the Isen-Guard “YOU SHALL NOT PASS”.

“I really do need to see your ticket of power, or you will have to get off at East Croydon.”

Gandalf turned to Frodo and Sam-not-wise. "Run you Fools"

"NOOOOOOOO"! Cried Frodo as Gandalf-the-going-grey was swept from the train onto platform two at East Croydon.

Book Three: The Return of the Fare.

The train ground on through the wastelands of South London. The walls of the line sprayed with strange Elvish Runes. In the distance, loomed the Great Tower at London Bridge, a vast evil shard of steel and glass.

"This season ticket is ever more a burden. I can feel every one of its two thousand pounds. I can't wait to cast it back at the Ticket Office of Doom."

After much delay the train ground into London Bridge. The company left the train amid a vast host of tired and grumpy commuters. They came to the Black Ticket Gae. They were faced with an Inspector the size of a cave troll.

"We have travelled from the Shire and are more than two hours late."

"You can claim compensation via the Delay and Replay website", growled the cave troll.

"But that is harder to navigate than the Mines of Moria, I can't be bothered. Anyway, I want a total refund."

The company struggle onto the ticket office where there was a three-hour queue of angry commuters all seeking a refund. One by one their season tickets were cast into the fiery pits for whence they came, until cracks started to appear in the crumbling structure of Southern Rail. With a huge crash, London Bridge also fell.

"At last" Said Frodo, "the railway is being re-nationalised."

Now we just have to get home.....

THE END