

CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

An Unexpected Party

- Bilbo Baggins is a well-to-do, well-respected hobbit living in a cozy hole in The Hill.
- (Hobbits are about half the size of humans. They enjoy eating, drinking, and generally being happy and comfortable at home. Sounds plenty human to us!)
- One day, Bilbo is sitting outside his front door smoking when a wizard comes by: Gandalf.
- Gandalf comes to The Hill every now and again and stirs things up by telling wild stories and bringing young hobbits on adventures.
- Bilbo is uncomfortable and flustered so he panics, asks Gandalf to come to tea the following Wednesday, and runs inside.
- Gandalf laughs and makes some kind of strange mark on Bilbo's door.
- Bilbo totally forgets that Gandalf is coming over for tea on Wednesday, so when the doorbell rings, he's surprised.
- He is even more surprised when thirteen dwarves show up on his doorstep: Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Oin, Gloin, Fili, Kili, Dori, Nori, Ori, Dwalin, Balin, and Thorin Oakenshield, their leader.
- Gandalf also turns up.
- So now Bilbo has an unexpected party of fourteen strangers on his hands: how will he feed them all?!
- The evening goes on and, eventually, it comes out that the mark Gandalf put on the door was an ad.
- Gandalf is the one who told all the dwarves to turn up at Bilbo's home for tea on Wednesday.
- The mark on the door means, "Burglar wants a good job, plenty of Excitement and reasonable Reward" (1.98).
- The dwarves hesitate to believe that Bilbo would be a good addition to a treasure quest.
- But Gandalf insists that Bilbo is "as fierce as a dragon in a pinch" (1.93).
- He also promises: "There is a lot more in [Bilbo] than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself" (1.104).
- Bilbo feels proud (and frightened) at Gandalf's recommendation, so he sticks around to find out what Gandalf and the dwarves want him to do.
- Thorin's grandfather Thrór set up a huge, fine hall underneath the Lonely Mountain.
- Their family prospered, and they made lots of armor and jewelry and other fine things.
- All of this wealth attracted a dragon from the North, Smaug.
- When Smaug attacked the mountain under cover of night, these thirteen dwarves (along with Thorin's grandfather and father) barely escaped with their lives.

- They all vowed to return to the Lonely Mountain one day to take back the treasure from nasty old Smaug.
- Gandalf has a map showing a secret side door to the Lonely Mountain. He also has the key.
- He got both of these items from Thorin's father, Thrain, who was dying in the dungeons of the Necromancer when Gandalf found him.
- With this map and key in hand, the dwarves want to go to the Lonely Mountain.
- Then they want Bilbo, their professional burglar, to steal the treasure from the dragon Smaug.
- It's now late at night and everyone goes to sleep.
- Bilbo is still on the fence about whether he's going to go on this adventure or not.
- But he falls asleep listening to Thorin singing, "*Far over the misty mountains cold / To dungeons deep and caverns old / We must away, ere break of day, / To find out long-forgotten gold*" (1.143).

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

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Roast Mutton

- Bilbo oversleeps the next morning and finds that the dwarves have left by the time he gets out of bed.
- He's both relieved and disappointed – no more adventures for him!
- But then Gandalf turns up and points out a note Bilbo missed.
- The note gives Bilbo Thorin's "grateful acceptance" for his offer of "professional assistance" (2.8).
- Bilbo rushes to meet Thorin & Co. at a local inn at 11:00. And they're off to steal Smaug's treasure!
- As Bilbo and the dwarves ride off on their ponies, they hit a patch of bad weather.
- Bilbo heartily misses home. This adventure business is cold, wet, and uncomfortable!
- One night, the dwarves are feeling thoroughly bad-tempered and everyone is damp.
- Gandalf has also mysteriously disappeared.
- They notice a light flickering in the forest, and they send their burglar out to investigate.
- Bilbo finds three giant trolls sitting and roasting meat over the fire.
- The trolls are named Bert, Tom, and William.
- Bilbo wants to show the dwarves that he's worth something, so he tries to pick William's pocket.
- But William has a magic wallet that speaks up when Bilbo attempts to steal it.
- So the trolls capture Bilbo.
- They aren't hungry, though, so they don't eat him right away.

- They fall to arguing about what they should do with Bilbo.
- Of course, just then, two of the dwarves – Bifur and Bofur – come to the fire to check out what's going on.
- The trolls catch the two dwarves – and every dwarf who comes after them – in sacks.
- Bilbo takes advantage of the ruckus to get clear of the trolls.
- So, by the end, all the dwarves are tied up in sacks and Bilbo is crouching in the forest shadows wondering what to do.
- The trolls are "arguing whether they should roast them slowly, or mince them fine and boil them, or just sit on them one by one and squash them into jelly" (2.75) – not an ideal situation for the dwarves, to be sure.
- As the trolls argue, a mysterious voice keeps egging them on.
- Sometimes it sounds like William and sometimes it sounds like Tom. Who could it be?!
- The voice finally tells the trolls, "Dawn take you all, and be stone to you!" (2.101).
- It's Gandalf!
- He got back to the party just in time to keep the trolls arguing until the sun came up.
- So Gandalf frees the dwarves from their sacks and they all go to the trolls' cave.
- Inside the cave is lots of treasure, which they bury near the road for later.
- Gandalf and Thorin pick up two beautiful swords, and Bilbo takes a knife of the same make.
- All the dwarves grab the trolls' bread and cheese and beer for the road.
- Gandalf tells the dwarves and Bilbo that they should head to Rivendell, the house of Elrond.

CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

A Short Rest

- Things are starting to get more classically adventure-y: "They camped under the stars, and their horses had more to eat than they had, for there was plenty of grass, but there was not much in their bags" (3.1).
- At last, a large mountain comes into view.
- Bilbo has never seen anything so big before, but it's only the first of the Misty Mountains.
- They have to get over or under this mountain range before coming close to the Lonely Mountain where Smaug is waiting.
- Before they reach the Misty Mountains, they rest briefly in Rivendell.
- Rivendell is a secret valley lined with pine forest and filled with elves.
- The dwarves aren't totally happy to be hanging with elves because the two groups don't get along that well.
- But Bilbo and Gandalf have a grand old time.

- The head of the Last Homely House in Rivendell is Elrond, who is "as noble and as fair in face as an elf-lord, as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of dwarves and as kind as summer" (3.28). So, he's pretty great, we guess.
- He's the one who tells Gandalf and Thorin that their swords are elvish ones dating back to the Goblin-wars.
- Thorin shows Elrond his map of the Lonely Mountain.
- The moon happens to be shining on the map in just the right way to expose moon-letters, special secret runes that say, "Stand by the grey stone when the thrush knocks [...] and the setting sun with the last light of Durin's Day will shine upon the keyhole" (3.39).
- Durin is Thorin's first ancestor, and his Day is the first day of the dwarves' new year.
- But there's a problem: no one can calculate exactly when Durin's Day falls anymore.
- Elrond gives Thorin his map back.
- The next morning, Bilbo, Gandalf, and the dwarves all set off for the Misty Mountains.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

Over Hill and Under Hill

- They climb up and up and up, and the weather gets colder and more uncertain.
- One night, a truly terrific storm breaks out and they try to find shelter crouched against a sheer cliff.
- The dwarves send the two youngest, Fili and Kili, to scout for shelter.
- Quick as anything, Fili and Kili return with good news: there's a cave nearby!
- They promise they've explored the cave thoroughly, even though they haven't been gone nearly long enough for that to be true.
- Everyone is relieved to be in out of the rain and falling rocks and thunder, though.
- That night, Bilbo has strange dreams that prevent him from sleeping.
- This turns out to be lucky, because Bilbo is awake when a crack opens at the back of the cave.
- Bilbo yells and wakes Gandalf, who disappears in a flash of light.
- Suddenly, a bunch of goblins jump out of the crack.
- They grab Bilbo and all the dwarves and carry them into their mountain passages.
- The goblins shake their prisoners and laugh and sing threatening songs: "*Crash, crash! Crush, smash! / Hammer and tongs! Knocker and gongs! / Pound, pound, far underground! / Ho, ho! my lad!*" (4.18)
- The goblins arrive with their prisoners in a big chamber lit with fires.
- The Great Goblin sees that Thorin is carrying an elvish sword – Orcrist, the Goblin-cleaver – and *freaks out*.

- The goblins call this sword Biter, and they hate it in memory of the Goblin-wars back in the day.
- The Great Goblin calls them "Murderers and elf-friends!" (4.31) and rushes at Thorin to kill him.
- Just then, the lights go out and another sword starts to flash: it's Glamdring, the Foehammer, which the goblins call Beater. In other words, it's Gandalf's sword. Gandalf's back!
- With Gandalf's help, Bilbo, Thorin, and the other dwarves escape.
- They rush along the dark mountain halls as quickly as they can.
- But goblins are fast, quiet, and they know the way better than the dwarves do, so eventually they manage to ambush the dwarves.
- In the confusion, Bilbo knocks his head on a rock and loses consciousness.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

Riddles in the Dark

- Bilbo wakes up in the dark.
- He has no idea what's happening, so he gropes around the tunnel trying to get his bearings.
- Bilbo puts his hand on a metal ring. (Dun dun *dun!*)
- As the narrator points out, "[the ring] was the turning point in his career but he did not know it" (5.2).
- After all, this is the prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*.
- Anyhoo, back to the action: Bilbo puts the ring in his pocket and goes on his merry way.
- He finds that he's still armed with that little knife he got from the trolls' treasure cave.
- The knife is glowing faintly: like Orcrist and Glamdring, it must be of elvish make.
- Bilbo feels a bit braver with the knife in hand, so he keeps on down this dark tunnel.
- Bilbo suddenly puts his foot in cold water: he has reached an underground lake.
- On an island in this underground lake lives Gollum, a small slimy fellow who's been living under the mountains and dodging goblins for longer than he can remember.
- Gollum sees Bilbo, gets into his little boat, and comes rowing out to attack him. Here we go!
- Bilbo holds Gollum off with his knife.
- Gollum challenges Bilbo to a riddle game to get on Bilbo's good side.
- If Bilbo wins, Gollum will show the hobbit how to get out of the goblins' caves.
- If Gollum wins, Gollum gets to eat Bilbo. High stakes!
- The two exchange riddles for a while, but Bilbo starts to get flustered.
- In his panic, he asks the first thing that pops into his head: "What have I got in my pocket?" (5.54).
- Of course, Gollum fails to guess the right answer.

- Bilbo is on guard: he knows that he's on shaky ground because his question wasn't a real riddle.
- Gollum says he'll show Bilbo the way out, but he has to get something first.
- Gollum rows back to his island to find something special of his: "a ring of power, and if you slipped that ring on your finger, you were invisible" (5.78).
- But the ring is gone!
- Gollum rows back to Bilbo wailing about having lost his "precious" (5.82) – the ring.
- Suddenly, Gollum gets suspicious: what does Bilbo have in his pockets? Could it be – the *ring*?
- Gollum leaps at Bilbo, but Bilbo happens to slip on the ring.
- Suddenly, Bilbo is invisible. Gollum is confused.
- Gollum sits weeping and muttering to himself. He wants to get his "birthday-present" (5.100) back.
- Gollum assumes Bilbo's heading for the exit, so he starts to creep down the tunnel to try and find him.
- Bilbo follows Gollum as quietly as he can, allowing Gollum to show him the way out.
- When they get close to the door, Gollum stops. He can't go on because he might be seen by the goblins.
- Bilbo almost kills Gollum to get him out of the way.
- But he feels so much pity for the wretched fellow that he decides to jump over Gollum instead.
- Gollum shouts after him: "Thief, thief, thief! Baggins! We hates it, we hates it, we hates it forever!" (5.122).
- Bilbo races down the passageway.
- He finds the open door surrounded by goblin guards.
- He has a bad moment when the ring slips off and they all rush at him together.
- But Bilbo manages to burst through the exit just before the door shuts. Phew!

CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

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Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Fire

- Bilbo has come out the other side of the Misty Mountains.
- But what is he supposed to do next? He's alone in the middle of the wild!
- Fortunately, as he walks along, he soon overhears arguing voices: it's the dwarves and Gandalf.
- He decides to sneak up on them and give the group a bit of a surprise.

- So Bilbo puts his ring on and walks right up to their fire before announcing, "And here's the burglar!" (6.13).
- Everyone is very impressed by Bilbo's skills.
- But they're not out of the woods yet: the goblins will come hunting the dwarves when night comes, so they have to find some place safe.
- After a long evening of travel, they stumble into a moonlit clearing.
- They hear wolves howling nearby.
- Gandalf tells everyone, "Up the trees quick!" (6.52).
- They all get up into the trees just in time to avoid being eaten by Wargs – "for so the evil wolves over the Edge of the Wild are named" (6.59).
- The Wargs keep pouring in to the clearing. They're waiting for the goblins to arrive.
- Gandalf starts setting pine cones on fire and hurling them like grenades at the Wargs in the clearing.
- The sounds of the Wargs "howling [...] crying and yammering" (6.65) attracts the attention of the Lord of the Eagles.
- The Lord of the Eagles gathers a bunch of his eagle friends and flies out to investigate.
- Meanwhile, the burning Wargs have been running around setting the clearing on fire.
- So, all the dwarves, Gandalf, and Bilbo are caught in burning trees.
- The goblins have arrived, and they are dancing around these trees singing, "*Bake and toast 'em, fry and roast 'em! / till beards blaze and eyes glaze*" (6.75). (Eep!)
- Luckily, before these horrible things happen, the eagles swoop in and rescue our friends.
- Gandalf is friends with the Lord of the Eagles, so the Lord of the Eagles agrees to bring them all far away from the Misty Mountains.