

CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

Queer Lodgings

- The eagles fly Gandalf, Bilbo, and the dwarves to a place near the Carrock.
- The Carrock is the home of "the Somebody [Gandalf] spoke of – a very great person" (7.18).
- Gandalf comes up with a plan: he and Bilbo are going to introduce themselves, and then the dwarves can follow two-by-two at decent intervals.
- So Gandalf and Bilbo approach the house of this Somebody.
- Somebody is "a huge man with a thick black beard and hair, and great bare arms and legs with knotted muscles" (7.34).
- He is Beorn, and he's a skin-changer – a shape-shifter.
- He has a large, spacious house with lots of beehives and gets waited on by smart, alert little horses.
- Gandalf settles in with Beorn and starts talking about the adventures of Bilbo, Thorin, and the dwarves.
- Every now and again, two more dwarves will turn up and introduce themselves, thus interrupting the story.
- Beorn gets irritated by the interruptions, but Bilbo finally realizes that the interruptions are also keeping Beorn interested in Gandalf's tale.
- Beorn hates goblins, so he gets really excited when Gandalf describes how he killed the Great Goblin with his sword.
- When all the dwarves have arrived, Beorn is so delighted by the story that he offers them dinner.
- After supper, Beorn leaves the house. He warns the dwarves to stay inside the hall.
- Late at night, Bilbo hears the growl of a bear outside.
- The next morning, Gandalf tells them all, "There must have been a regular bears' meeting outside here last night [...] I should say there were little bears, large bears, ordinary bears, and gigantic big bears, all dancing outside from dark to nearly dawn" (7.111).
- The bear tracks go in the direction of the Misty Mountains.
- They don't see Beorn again for another day. When he arrives the next morning, he seems very cheerful.
- In his bear shape, he has traveled all the way to the Misty Mountain and found that Gandalf's story is true.
- Beorn warns that the goblins and the Wargs are angry, and are gathering huge armies to go after their little band.

- Beorn provides the dwarves with provisions and directions for how to get through the dangerous forest of Mirkwood.
- He warns them not to go off the path into the forest.
- They all arrive at the edge of Mirkwood.
- There, Gandalf leaves the dwarves and Bilbo behind. He has "some pressing business away south" (7.136).
- The dwarves are disappointed to see Gandalf go (of course – if you're on an expedition, you don't want to lose your wizard!).
- Gandalf's last words to them are: "Good-bye! Be good, take care of yourselves – and DON'T LEAVE THE PATH!" (7.147).
- (Three guesses about what they're all going to do in the very next chapter.)

CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY

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Flies and Spiders

- Mirkwood is indeed murky – it's dark, stuffy, and feels claustrophobic.
- Eventually, they reach a river.
- Everyone crosses the river in groups on a little rowboat.
- But, unfortunately, a stag comes bounding into the dwarves and knocks Bombur (the heaviest dwarf) into the river.
- They rescue Bombur from the water, but he's not safe just yet.
- He keeps falling asleep and having strange dreams about a feast.
- The other dwarves have to carry Bombur's heavy butt through the forest, and they aren't too happy about it.
- They also keep hearing odd giggling in the woods: "The laughter was the laughter of fair voices not of goblins, and the singing was beautiful, but it sounded eerie and strange, and they were not comforted" (8.30).
- They've run out of food, they are thirsty, and Bombur keeps waking up just long enough to talk about his dream feasts.
- One night, they see lights through the forest, and they decide to go off the path (against the direct instructions of Gandalf *and* Beorn).
- They stumble onto an elvish feast.
- Thorin approaches the elves.
- Suddenly, the lights go out.
- Bilbo hears the dwarves calling each other's names in the dark, but they're growing more and more distant.
- He's lost alone in the dark. So he does what any hobbit would do: he falls asleep.

- But Bilbo wakes up just in time to find a spider wrapping him in thread.
- He pulls his knife and stabs at the spider until it dies. Close one!
- He slips on his ring and creeps invisibly through the forest.
- Eventually, he hears the hissing of spiders speaking to each other: they've got the dwarves wrapped up in their webs!
- Bilbo starts throwing stones and singing jeering songs at the spiders: "*Here I am, naughty little fly; / you are fat and lazy. / You cannot trap me, though you try, / in your cobwebs crazy*" (8.97).
- The spiders are so angry that they chase Bilbo's invisible voice away from the dwarves.
- Then Bilbo sneaks back to free the dwarves.
- The dwarves do their best to fight off the spiders when they come back to the clearing, but they aren't very strong after being hung upside down and poisoned.
- So Bilbo has to use his ring to lure the spiders a second time.
- When Bilbo and the dwarves meet up again, Bilbo tells them all about his ring of invisibility.
- They're now very impressed by Bilbo's quick-thinking and good luck.
- But just then, they notice that they are one dwarf down: Thorin is gone!
- When Thorin walked up to the elves' feast, the elves took him captive for interrupting their feasting.
- Thorin refuses to explain to the king of the Wood-elves what has brought his people to Mirkwood.
- So the Elvenking tosses Thorin into his dungeon.

CHAPTER 9 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

Barrels Out of Bond

- Bilbo and the dwarves find themselves lost in the forest with no food or water.
- So they immediately surrender when the Wood-elves surround them.
- Bilbo slips on his ring and follows the dwarves to see where they are being led.
- The elves bring the dwarves to the halls of the Elvenking.
- The Elvenking informs the dwarves that, "It is a crime to wander in my realm without leave."
- He throws the dwarves into his dungeon until they agree to tell the king why they have come to Mirkwood.
- Bilbo sneaks around, "miserably burgling the same house day after day" (9.12).
- Bilbo tracks down all of the dwarves' cells, and he manages to get word to Thorin that all of the other dwarves are alive and imprisoned by the elves.
- Bilbo also finds out that there's another way out of the Elvenking's palace besides the front door.

- There is also a water gate where the elves send their empty wine barrels down to Long Lake, to be filled up by the men of Lake-town (a.k.a. Esgaroth).
- Bilbo waits until the night when there's a great feast and most of the servants are busy.
- The chief of the guards gets drunk on party wine and Bilbo sneaks his keys.
- Bilbo quietly brings all of the dwarves to the pier and packs them into individual wine barrels.
- He then waits for the next morning, when the hung-over butler instructs his servants to toss the "empty" barrels into the river.
- The barrels (containing one dwarf apiece) bob down the river to Lake-town.
- Bilbo jumps onto the last barrel and bobs along with them.
- Some elves on a raft fish the barrels onto a raft and row them downstream.

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How It All Goes Down

A Warm Welcome

- The trip down the river is very unpleasant, and Bilbo (who's clinging to a barrel rather than being packed inside one) catches a horrible cold.
- Once the raft of barrels is moored at Lake-town, the elves go off and Bilbo cuts the dwarves out of their barrels.
- Thorin thanks Bilbo for the trip, "though [he wishes Bilbo] could have arranged a more comfortable journey" (10.17).
- Thorin marches right up to the gates of the town and announces, "Thorin son of Thrain son of Thror King under the Mountain! [...] I have come back. I wish to see the Master of your town!" (10.21).
- All the guards are pretty excited to hear this.
- They bring the dwarves to see the Master of the town, who's feasting with the elves who brought their "empty" wine barrels to the town.
- These elves identify Thorin and his crew as prisoners escaped from the Elvenking.
- Thorin dismisses the right of the Elvenking to keep him prisoner.
- People are really excited that Thorin is back in town – they all have legends of the great wealth of the Lonely Mountain when the dwarves were in residence.
- They start singing in the streets: "*The King beneath the mountains, / The King of carven stone, / The lord of silver fountains / Shall come into his own!*" (10.35).
- After about two weeks chilling in Lake-town, Thorin suggests that they get going on their quest.
- The Master is surprised: he never *really* believed that Thorin was a descendant of the old dwarvish kings.

- But the Master is glad to see Thorin go – he and his dwarves are really stirring things up in Lake-town.
- So the dwarves (and Bilbo) all set out one autumn day to the Lonely Mountain.

CHAPTER 11 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

On the Doorstep

- As Bilbo and the dwarves march onward to the Lonely Mountain, they reach "the Desolation of the Dragon" (11.4): there are no bushes or trees, and very little grass. It's all just exposed rock.
- They scout around the mountain and find the ruins of the town of Dale.
- They eventually find the little side door marked on Thorin's map.
- But the door won't open, no matter how hard they shove.
- So Bilbo and the dwarves settle down in front of the side door to think about what to do next.
- It is an eerie place: "silence [reigns], broken by no bird or sound except that of the wind in the crannies of stone" (11.19).
- Everyone feels more and more depressed about their chances of making this whole quest thing work.
- Some of the dwarves start muttering about sending their burglar – poor Bilbo – in by the front door!
- Luckily, before that kind of talk really takes off, they have a breakthrough.
- On the last day of autumn, Bilbo is sitting on the doorstep at sunset. The moon is already in the sky.
- Just then, a **thrush** suddenly starts to crack a snail shell against the side door.
- Bilbo realizes that the bird is telling him something: it's Durin's Day, their only shot to use Thorin's father's key to open the side door to the Lonely Mountain.
- He beckons everyone over.
- A loud crack echoes: "A hole [appears] suddenly about three feet from the ground" (11.32).
- Bilbo shouts, "The key! [...] The key that went with the map! Try it now while there is still time!" (11.36).
- Thorin turns the key in this new keyhole, the dwarves all shove, and the side door opens into a "yawning mouth leading down and down" (11.38).

CHAPTER 12 SUMMARY

How It All Goes Down

Inside Information

- The dwarves strongly encourage Bilbo to go down into the hole and see what's going on with Smaug.
- Bilbo walks down the long tunnel towards a red glow. It's getting hotter and steamier the closer he gets to the center of the mountain.
- At last, Bilbo sees Smaug: "a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep [...] with wings folded like an immeasurable bat" (12.13-4).
- Smaug is lying on a huge bed of jewels and gold (we'll trade our flannel sheets for that any day!).
- Bilbo sneaks up and grabs a large golden cup.
- Bilbo thinks to himself, "I've done it! This will show [the dwarves]. 'More like a grocer than a burglar' indeed!" (12.17).
- The dwarves are delighted by the cup – that is, until Smaug the dragon comes flying out the front gate tearing up trees and setting things on fire.
- Quickly, they haul as much as they can into their tiny secret passageway.
- Smaug comes flying by, flaming things along the way. He catches and eats all of their ponies (*sniff*!).
- Back in the hole, the dwarves are now annoyed that Bilbo made Smaug angry.
- Bilbo offers to go back down into Smaug's lair to find out more: "Every worm has his weak spot,' as [Bilbo's] father used to say" (12.37).
- Smaug is awake and waiting for Bilbo.
- But, of course, Smaug can't see him, so they fall into pleasant (if tense) conversation.
- Bilbo butters up Smaug as much as he can – "Smaug the Tremendous!" (12.45) and "Smaug the Chiefest and Greatest of Calamities" (12.47), Bilbo calls him.
- Bilbo tries not to give Smaug any direct information about where he's coming from because it might give Smaug power.
- Even though Bilbo tries to be clever about hiding his origins, Smaug figures out that he has come through Lake-town in the company of dwarves.
- Smaug starts to sow doubt in Bilbo's mind: why is Bilbo there alone? Why are the dwarves willing to let him do the dirty work? Is Bilbo *really* going to make any cash off this venture?
- Bilbo plucks up his courage. He tells Smaug that Bilbo and his friends are there for *revenge*.
- Smaug gets overconfident and rolls over to show Bilbo his solid, armored underbelly.
- Unfortunately for Smaug, Bilbo spots something else: a patch of skin that's bare of scales. Smaug's weak point!
- Bilbo turns to go and Smaug sends a flame after him.
- Bilbo barely escapes with his life.
- Bilbo tells the dwarves all that he let slip, which will point Smaug right in the direction of Lake-town.

- Bilbo convinces the dwarves that they're in danger. Even though it seems desperate, they close the side door out of the mountain.
- Just in time! Smaug starts throwing boulders and trees against the side of the mountain in his rage.
- Smaug then flies to Lake-town to teach them a lesson: "They shall see me and remember who is the real King under the Mountain!" (12.101).

CHAPTER 13 SUMMARY

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Not at Home

- Days go by, and Bilbo and the dwarves don't hear a peep from Smaug.
- Finally, they decide to walk down the passage to the center of the mountain to see what's going on.
- But Smaug isn't home!
- As Bilbo goes exploring over the treasure pile, he finds the Arkenstone, Thorin's most desired treasure.
- The Arkenstone – a.k.a. the Heart of the Mountain – is a great gem that takes "all light that [falls] upon it and [changes] it into ten thousand sparks of white radiance shot with glints of rainbow" (13.19). Yes, please!
- For some reason, he decides not to show it to the dwarves quite yet.
- The dwarves arrive and start combing through the treasure.
- Thorin gives Bilbo a present: a chain-mail coat made of *mithril*, Elvish metal.
- Bilbo thinks, "I feel magnificent [...] but I expect I look rather absurd. How they would laugh on the Hill at home!" (13.37).
- Bilbo reminds the greedy dwarves that they can't just hang around waiting for Smaug to get back.
- Thorin agrees, and he leads them by memory through the old halls (and past some skulls and things) to the Front Gate.
- Balin leads them up to an old watchmen's place so that they can keep an eye on Smaug (if he comes back).
- So they go to sleep filled with wonder that there's *still* no sign of Smaug the dragon.