not move it. He tried to squeeze through the crack. He squeezed and squeezed, and he stuck! It was awful. His buttons had got wedged on the edge of the door and the doorpost. He could see outside into the open air: there were a few steps running down into a narrow valley between tall mountains; the sun came out from behind a cloud and shone bright on the outside of the door—but he could not get through.

Suddenly one of the goblins inside shouted: “There is a shadow by the door. Something is outside!”

Bilbo’s heart jumped into his mouth. He gave a terrific squirm. Buttons burst off in all directions. He was through, with a torn coat and waistcoat, leaping down the steps like a goat, while bewildered goblins were still picking up his nice brass buttons on the doorstep.

Of course they soon came down after him, hooting and hallooing, and hunting among the trees. But they don’t like the sun: it makes their legs wobble and their heads giddy. They could not find Bilbo with the ring on, slipping in and out of the shadow of the trees, running quick and quiet, and keeping out of the sun; so soon they went back grumbling and cursing to guard the door. Bilbo had escaped.
Chapter VI

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE

Bilbo had escaped the goblins, but he did not know where he was. He had lost hood, cloak, food, pony, his buttons and his friends. He wandered on and on, till the sun began to sink westwards—behind the mountains. Their shadows fell across Bilbo’s path, and he looked back. Then he looked forward and could see before him only ridges and slopes falling towards lowlands and plains glimpsed occasionally between the trees.

“Good heavens!” he exclaimed. “I seem to have got right to the other side of the Misty Mountains, right to the edge of the Land Beyond! Where and O where can Gandalf and the dwarves have got to? I only hope to goodness they are not still back there in the power of the goblins!”

He still wandered on, out of the little high valley, over its edge, and down the slopes beyond; but all the while a very
uncomfortable thought was growing inside him. He wondered whether he ought not, now he had the magic ring, to go back into the horrible, horrible, tunnels and look for his friends. He had just made up his mind that it was his duty, that he must turn back—and very miserable he felt about it—when he heard voices.

He stopped and listened. It did not sound like goblins; so he crept forward carefully. He was on a stony path winding downwards with a rocky wall on the left hand; on the other side the ground sloped away and there were dells below the level of the path overhung with bushes and low trees. In one of these dells under the bushes people were talking.

He crept still nearer, and suddenly he saw peering between two big boulders a head with a red hood on: it was Balin doing lookout. He could have clapped and shouted for joy, but he did not. He had still got the ring on, for fear of meeting something unexpected and unpleasant, and he saw that Balin was looking straight at him without noticing him.

"I will give them all a surprise," he thought, as he crawled into the bushes at the edge of the dell. Gandalf was arguing with the dwarves. They were discussing all that had happened to them in the tunnels, and wondering and debating what they were to do now. The dwarves were grumbling, and Gandalf was saying that they could not possibly go on with their journey leaving Mr.
Baggins in the hands of the goblins, without trying to find out if he was alive or dead, and without trying to rescue him.

“After all he is my friend,” said the wizard, “and not a bad little chap. I feel responsible for him. I wish to goodness you had not lost him.”

The dwarves wanted to know why he had ever been brought at all, why he could not stick to his friends and come along with them, and why the wizard had not chosen someone with more sense. “He has been more trouble than use so far,” said one. “If we have got to go back now into those abominable tunnels to look for him, then drat him, I say.”

Gandalf answered angrily: “I brought him, and I don’t bring things that are of no use. Either you help me to look for him, or I go and leave you here to get out of the mess as best you can yourselves. If we can only find him again, you will thank me before all is over. Whatever did you want to go and drop him for, Dori?”

“You would have dropped him,” said Dori, “if a goblin had suddenly grabbed your legs from behind in the dark, tripped up your feet, and kicked you in the back!”

“Then why didn’t you pick him up again?”

“Good heavens! Can you ask! Goblins fighting and biting in the dark, everybody falling over bodies and hitting one another! You nearly chopped off my head with Glamdring, and Thorin was stabbing here there
and everywhere with Orcrist. All of a sudden you gave one of your blinding flashes, and we saw the goblins running back yelping. You shouted ‘follow me everybody!’ and everybody ought to have followed. We thought everybody had. There was no time to count, as you know quite well, till we had dashed through the gate-guards, out of the lower door, and helter-skelter down here. And here we are—without the burglar, confusticate him!”

“And here’s the burglar!” said Bilbo stepping down into the middle of them, and slipping off the ring.

Bless me, how they jumped! Then they shouted with surprise and delight. Gandalf was as astonished as any of them, but probably more pleased than all the others. He called to Balin and told him what he thought of a look-out man who let people walk right into them like that without warning. It is a fact that Bilbo’s reputation went up a very great deal with the dwarves after this. If they had still doubted that he was really a first-class burglar, in spite of Gandalf’s words, they doubted no longer. Balin was the most puzzled of all; but everyone said it was a very clever bit of work.

Indeed Bilbo was so pleased with their praise that he just chuckled inside and said nothing whatever about the ring; and when they asked him how he did it, he said: “Oh, just crept along, you know—very carefully and quietly.”