with the light of the westering sun which slanted into it, and fell golden on the garden full of flowers that came right up to the steps.

Here they sat on wooden benches while Gandalf began his tale, and Bilbo swung his dangling legs and looked at the flowers in the garden, wondering what their names could be, as he had never seen half of them before.

“I was coming over the mountains with a friend or two...” said the wizard.
“Or two? I can only see one, and a little one at that,” said Beorn.

“Well to tell you the truth, I did not like to bother you with a lot of us, until I found out if you were busy. I will give a call, if I may.”

“Go on, call away!”

So Gandalf gave a long shrill whistle, and presently Thorin and Dori came round the house by the garden path and stood bowing low before them.

“One or three you meant, I see!” said Beorn. “But these aren’t hobbits, they are dwarves!”

“Thorin Oakenshield, at your service! Dori at your service!” said the two dwarves bowing again.

“I don’t need your service, thank you,” said Beorn, “but I expect you need mine. I am not over fond of dwarves; but if it is true you are Thorin (son of Thrain, son of Thror, I believe), and that your companion is respectable, and that you are enemies of goblins and are not up to any mischief in my lands—what are you up to, by the way?”

“They are on their way to visit the land of their fathers, away east beyond Mirkwood,” put in Gandalf, “and it is entirely an accident that we are in your lands at all. We were crossing by the High Pass that should have brought us to the road that lies to the south of your country, when we were attacked by the evil goblins—as I was about to tell you.”
“Go on telling, then!” said Beorn, who was never very polite.

“There was a terrible storm; the stone-giants were out hurling rocks, and at the head of the pass we took refuge in a cave, the hobbit and I and several of our companions...”

“Do you call two several?”

“Well, no. As a matter of fact there were more than two.”

“Where are they? Killed, eaten, gone home?”

“Well, no. They don’t seem all to have come when I whistled. Shy, I expect. You see, we are very much afraid that we are rather a lot for you to entertain.”

“Go on, whistle again! I am in for a party, it seems, and one or two more won’t make much difference,” growled Beorn.

Gandalf whistled again; but Nori and Ori were there almost before he had stopped, for, if you remember, Gandalf had told them to come in pairs every five minutes.

“Hullo!” said Beorn. “You came pretty quick—where were you hiding? Come on my jack-in-the-boxes!”

“Nori at your service, Ori at...” they began; but Beorn interrupted them.

“Thank you! When I want your help I will ask for it. Sit down, and let’s get on with this tale, or it will be supper-time before it is ended.”

“As soon as we were asleep,” went on Gandalf, “a crack at the back of the cave opened; goblins came out and grabbed the
hobbit and the dwarves and our troop of ponies—"

“Troop of ponies? What were you—a travelling circus? Or were you carrying lots of goods? Or do you always call six a troop?”

“Oh no! As a matter of fact there were more than six ponies, for there were more than six of us—and well, here are two more!” Just at that moment Balin and Dwalin appeared and bowed so low that their beards swept the stone floor. The big man was frowning at first, but they did their best to be frightfully polite, and kept on nodding and bending and bowing and waving their hoods before their knees (in proper dwarf-fashion), till he stopped frowning and burst into a chuckling laugh: they looked so comical.

“Troop, was right,” he said. “A fine comic one. Come in my merry men, and what are your names? I don’t want your service just now, only your names; and then sit down and stop wagging!”

“Balin and Dwalin,” they said not daring to be offended, and sat flop on the floor looking rather surprised.

“Now go on again!” said Beorn to the wizard.

“Where was I? O yes—I was not grabbed. I killed a goblin or two with a flash—”

“Good!” growled Beorn. “It is some good being a wizard, then.”

—and slipped inside the crack before it closed. I followed down into the main hall, which was crowded with goblins. The Great Goblin was there with thirty or forty armed
guards. I thought to myself ‘even if they were not all chained together, what can a dozen do against so many?’”

“A dozen! That’s the first time I’ve heard eight called a dozen. Or have you still got some more jacks that haven’t yet come out of their boxes?”

“Well, yes, there seem to be a couple more here now—Fili and Kili, I believe,” said Gandalf, as these two now appeared and stood smiling and bowing.

“That’s enough!” said Beorn. “Sit down and be quiet! Now go on, Gandalf!”

So Gandalf went on with the tale, until he came to the fight in the dark, the discovery of the lower gate, and their horror when they found that Mr. Baggins had been mislaid. “We counted ourselves and found that there was no hobbit. There were only fourteen of us left!”

“Fourteen! That’s the first time I’ve heard one from ten leave fourteen. You mean nine, or else you haven’t told me yet all the names of your party.”

“Well, of course you haven’t seen Oin and Gloin yet. And, bless me! here they are. I hope you will forgive them for bothering you.”

“O let ’em all come! Hurry up! Come along, you two, and sit down! But look here, Gandalf, even now we have only got yourself and ten dwarves and the hobbit that was lost. That only makes eleven (plus one mislaid) and not fourteen, unless wizards count differently to other people. But now please get on with the tale.” Beorn did not show