

The Hobbit:
Goblins
(from: Chapter 4)

Soon Fili and Kili came crawling back, holding on to the rocks in the wind. “We have found a dry cave,” they said, “not far round the next corner; and ponies and all could get inside.”

“Have you thoroughly explored it?” said the wizard, who knew that caves up in the mountains were seldom unoccupied.

“Yes, yes!” they said, though everybody knew they could not have been long about it; they had come back too quick. “It isn’t all that big, and it does not go far back.”

That, of course, is the dangerous part about caves: you don’t know how far they go back, sometimes, or where a passage behind may lead to, or what is waiting for you inside. But now Fili and Kili’s news seemed good enough. So they all got up and prepared to move. The wind was howling and the thunder still growling, and they had a business getting themselves and their ponies along.

Still it was not very far to go, and before long they came to a big rock standing out into the path. If you stepped behind, you found a low arch in the side of the mountain. There was just room to get the ponies through with a squeeze when they had been unpacked and unsaddled. As they passed under the arch, it was good to hear the wind and the rain outside instead of all about them, and to feel safe from the giants and their rocks. But the wizard was taking no risks. He lit up his wand—as he did that day in Bilbo’s dining-room that seemed so long ago, if you remember—, and by its light they explored the cave from end to end.

It seemed quite a fair size, but not too large and mysterious. It had a dry floor and some comfortable nooks. At one end there was room for the ponies; and there they stood (mighty glad of the change) steaming, and champing in their nosebags.

Oin and Gloin wanted to light a fire at the door to dry their clothes, but Gandalf would not hear of it. So they spread out their wet things on the floor, and got dry ones out of their bundles; then they made their blankets comfortable, got out their pipes and blew smoke rings, which Gandalf turned into different colours and set dancing up by the roof to amuse them. They talked and talked, and forgot about the storm, and discussed what each would do with his share of the treasure (when

they got it, which at the moment did not seem so impossible); and so they dropped off to sleep one by one. And that was the last time that they used the ponies, packages, baggages, tools and paraphernalia that they had brought with them.

It turned out a good thing that night that they had brought little Bilbo with them, after all. For, somehow, he could not go to sleep for a long while; and when he did sleep, he had very nasty dreams. He dreamed that a crack in the wall at the back of the cave got bigger and bigger, and opened wider and wider, and he was very afraid but could not call out or do anything but lie and look.

Then he dreamed that the floor of the cave was giving way, and he was slipping—beginning to fall down, down, goodness knows where to.

At that he woke up with a horrible shock, and found that part of his dream was true. A crack had opened at the back of the cave and was already a wide passage. He was just in time to see the last of the ponies’ tails disappearing into it. Of course he gave a very loud yell, as loud a yell as a hobbit can give, which is surprising for their size.

Out jumped the goblins, big goblins, great ugly-looking goblins, lots of goblins. There were six to each dwarf, at least, and two even for Bilbo; and they were all grabbed and carried through the crack. But not Gandalf. Bilbo’s yell had done that much good. It had wakened him up wide in a second, and when goblins came to grab him, there was a terrific flash like lightning in the cave, a smell like gunpowder, and several of them fell dead.

The crack closed with a snap, and Bilbo and the dwarves were on the wrong side of it! Where was Gandalf? Of that neither they nor the goblins had any idea, and the goblins did not wait to find out. They seized Bilbo and the dwarves and hurried them along. It was deep, deep, dark, such as only goblins live in the heart of the mountains can see through. The passages there crossed each other in all directions, but the goblins knew their way, as well as you do to the nearest post-office; and the way went down and down, and it was most horribly stuffy. The goblins were very rough, and pinched unmercifully, and chuckled and laughed in their horrible stony voices; and Bilbo was more unhappy even than when the troll had picked him up by his toes. He wished again and again for his nice bright hobbit-hole. Not for the last time.

~20 paragraphs have been removed.

[The dwarves talk to the goblin king.]

[Gandalf rescues the dwarves.]

[They are running away from the Goblins through the tunnels.]

On they went. Gandalf was quite right: they began to hear goblin noises and horrible cries far behind in the passages they had come through. That sent them on faster than ever, and as poor Bilbo could not possibly go half as fast—for dwarves can roll along at a tremendous pace, I can tell you, when they have to—they took it in turn to carry him on their backs.

Still goblins go faster than dwarves, and these goblins knew the way better (they had made the paths themselves), and were madly angry; so that do what they could the dwarves heard the cries and howls getting closer and closer. Soon they could hear even the flap of the goblin feet, many many feet which seemed only just round the last corner. The blink of red torches could be seen behind them in the tunnel they were following; and they were getting deadly tired.

“Why, O why did I ever leave my hobbit-hole!” said poor Mr. Baggins bumping up and down on Bombur’s back.

“Why, O why did I ever bring a wretched little hobbit on a treasure hunt!” said poor Bombur, who was fat, and staggered along with the sweat dripping down his nose in his heat and terror.

3 paragraphs have been removed.

[The dwarves continue to run away from the goblins.]

It was quite a long while before any of them dared to turn that corner. By that time the dwarves had gone on again, a long, long, way on into the dark tunnels of the goblins’ realm. When the goblins discovered that, they put out their torches and they slipped on soft shoes, and they chose out their very quickest runners with the sharpest ears and eyes. These ran forward, as swift as weasels in the dark, and with hardly any more noise than bats.

That is why neither Bilbo, nor the dwarves, nor even Gandalf heard them coming. Nor did they see them. But they were seen by the goblins that ran silently up behind, for Gandalf was letting his wand give out a faint light to help the dwarves as they went along.

Quite suddenly Dori, now at the back again carrying Bilbo, was grabbed from behind in the dark. He shouted and fell; and the hobbit rolled off his shoulders into the blackness, bumped his head on hard rock, and remembered nothing more.