(In darkness: a loud, heavy sound of air: the breathing of some HUGE beast over loudspeakers. From the back of the theater, BILBO's voice:)

BILBO. Put my foot in it this time, that's for certain. *(Picks his way forward toward the stage.)* What a peabrain I am! They couldn't have forced me to enter this place, and here I let my idiot pride volunteer for me! I have absolutely no use for dragon-guarded treasure, and the whole pile could stay here for all I care, if only I could wake up and discover that this awful tunnel was my own front hall at home in the Shire! *(Stops, peers ahead.)* What is that? *(On stage, lights come up dimly on a glowing pile: the treasure hoard. Gold and silver and jewels of all colors and golden plates and armor and helmets and weapons and all manner of precious things, tossed together in a heap.)* I wonder if that's—Goodness! I'm not even wearing my ring! It's so dark in here I forgot I was still visible! *(He puts on the ring. His special light comes up on him. The glow is slightly stronger from the stage: the edge of a huge pile of gold and treasure, glowing with its own light. BILBO sneaks forward.)* I can hear him. Here somewhere. Too dark to see. Huge, by the sound. Must be asleep. Lucky for me, invisible or not. What is that up ahead? *(Moves forward: the treasure glints.)* Would you look at that! Can't even see the end of it. *(One large jewel glints especially bright: there is a tinkle of sound from it now.)* What's that? *(Steps forward, stops.)* Careful, Bilbo. There's a dragon here somewhere. Shouldn't get closer, but...*(The jewel tinkles again.)* Perhaps...the dragon must be asleep. But on the other hand...*(Another tinkle: the jewels is quite bright by now.)* Well...I am a burglar, after all. *(Steps forward*

gingerly, lifts up the glowing jewel, stands facing D, staring in awe at it.) What a glorious thing.

(While he speaks, the heavy breathing has quickened, unnoticed by him. And now, behind him, two bright lights, about the brightness and size of auto headlights, lift up from the ground, shining out to blind the audience. These are the dragon's eyes. BILBO doesn't notice them, so entranced is he by the jewel.)

BILBO. What a glorious kingdom this must have been, Thorin and his fathers and kinfolk. Filled with music and light, and beautiful jewels like this. *(The dragon's eyes have been staring at him from the darkness; now they move slightly as we hear a huge, deep, rumbling voice speaking calmly over loudspeakers.)*

SMAUG. My treasures have taken to floating in the air, I see. *(BIBLO drops the jewel, leaps away and runs to the back of the audience, whirling around then and crouching down. There is a huge, low rumbling: the dragon's chuckle. The huge tail of the dragon plops down on stage, lolling and rolling when the dragon speaks.)* Welcome, thief. I smell you and I feel your breath. Come along and help yourself. There is plenty to spare.

BILBO *(hesitates; then)*. No thank you, O Smaug the Tremendous. I did not come for presents. I only wished to have a look at you and see if you were truly as great as tales say. I did not believe them.

SMAUG. Did you not?

BILBO. Truly songs and tales fall utterly short of the reality, O Smaug the Chiefest and Greatest of Calamities.

SMAUG. You have nice manners, for a thief and a liar. You seem familiar with my name, though I don't remember

smelling you before. You don't smell of human, or elf, or goblin. You have a slight smell of dwarf, but so does everything here: I have never quite burnt the stink of dwarf out of this place. Who are you and where do you come from, may I ask?

BILBO. You may indeed. I come from under hill, and over hill, and over and under many hills. I am he that walks unseen. I am Ringbearer and Luckwinner, and I was chosen for the lucky number.

SMAUG. Hm. Well I certainly hope you get a fair price from your employers for whatever you steal from here. Come then: this is only a small part of my hoard.

BILBO. And do you know everything, O mighty Smaug? Well you are mistaken. We have not come here for gold alone.

SMAUG. You admit the "we," then. Why not just say we fourteen, Mister Lucky Number? Will fourteen of you be enough to lift my treasure and carry it away? Perhaps if I were not here you could take your time.

BILBO *(to us)*. Dragons do have a way of getting under one's skin. *(Louder, to SMAUG.)* And are you immortal then, O invincible one? *(Suddenly, SMAUG laughs loudly, shaking BILBO and all of us with the quaking of it.)*

SMAUG. Oh, my little thief in the shadows, I ate the warriors of old like so many sheep, and no such warriors walk Middle Earth today. I was young and tender then; now I'm old and strong. My armor is like a carpet of shields, my teeth are swords, my claws spears, my wings are a hurricane, and my breath is the flame of death.

BILBO. Is that so? I have always understood that dragons were softer underneath, especially in the region of the underbelly and the chest—

SMAUG *(with a roar)*. You tire me with your chatter. I dislike thieves, but I hate even more those who hire them.

Farewell for the moment: we will speak again after I deal with your employers.

BILBO. And who might that be?

SMAUG. The men of Laketown, of course. I haven't visited those miserable tub-trading Lake-men for an age and an age; I've gotten lazy, and they've forgotten me. Good time for a visit.

BILBO. Just a moment. Those people in Laketown have nothing to do with me!

SMAUG. And I am a lizard, oh puniest of liars. See if you can ride to Laketown and warn your friends faster than I can fly there and visit my breath upon them. See if you can so much as run outside and warn your accomplices on the mountainside before I shower them with my rosy warmth. See you soon, thief. *(With a sound of huge wings, SMAUG disappears. BILBO calls after.)*

BILBO. It wasn't the Lake-men! Smaug! Not Laketown! *(Listens for an answer; silence.)* Well, that's done it. Never mock a live dragon, you idiot! *(Turns to shout out the tunnel.)* Balin! Thorin! LOOK OUT!

(A thunderous quake, and smoke pours in from the door behind the theater. BALIN, THORIN, and several DWARVES stagger in, singed and coughing.)

BILBO. What happened?

BALIN *(through coughing)*. We got inside in time. I overheard and got outside to warn them. We all ducked into the tunnel just as the dragon flew outside and spouted fire all along the mountainside.

GLOIN. He broke off boulders. The doorway is blocked.

FILI. We're trapped in here.

KILI. Trapped in the dragon's chamber.