GANDALF. He has gotten a little thick round the middle, I grant you. But there's more about him than meets the eye.

THORIN. There would have to be. What meets the eye is pathetic.

(BILBO enters, panting, carrying stacks of foodstuffs.)

BILBO. Well, your friends certainly have healthy appetites, Gandalf, all twelve. If you include Master Oakenshield, thirteen—

THORIN. DON'T! say that number, Mister Baggins.

BILBO *(taken aback)*. Sorry.

THORIN. Terrible luck. I would think someone in your profession would know better.

BILBO. My profession?

(Enter GLOIN.)

GLOIN. Beg your pardon, Mister Baggins, but we've run flat out of biscuits, and the bread is too soft to dip in the rarebit. Is there any...?

BILBO *(dourly, going off with him)*. Yes, of course, be glad to, be happy to, nothing would please me more...

THORIN. More than meets the eye indeed. I'm still blind to whatever you see in this rabbit.

GANDALF. Hobbit. Let's look at the map, shall we?

THORIN. Yes. *(While plates and dishes clatter offstage, with shouts and laughter of the DWARVES, GANDALF draws out a rolled piece of fabric; hooks it on a wall somewhere, and unrolls a HUGE hand-scrawled map, with runes, dragons, rivers, directions, and a large mountain on it.)*

GANDALF. As I read it, there is a secret door to the side, as well as the main entrance. That side door will be your best entry.

THORIN. And why should I use a secret door into my own home?

GANDALF. To avoid getting eaten, perhaps, or burnt to a cinder?

THORIN. There are worse things than death.

GANDALF. True: and one of them is foolish pride.

(Enter BILBO, sticking his head around from behind the huge map; he is holding a stack of dirty dishes now, looks with amazement at the map.)

BILBO. What's all this?

THORIN. Mister Baggins: would you please set aside that plateware and attend to us. We've little time, and much business.

BILBO. Why, yes. I suppose. Of course. *(Sets down plates, stands listening to them. THORIN clears throat and proceeds.)*

THORIN. Mister Baggins, I am a plain straightforward dealer: I don't bandy words, I'll come straight to the point.

BILBO. Fine with me.

THORIN. What you see here is a map of the Kingdom of Erebor, come to be known as the Lonely Mountain. It is the ancestral kingdom of my people. *(Lights dim: the map becomes a screen on which shadow-figures enact this story.)* The Mountain is full of huge and beautiful chambers and halls, mined and built and covered with jewels and fine metals by the skill of my fathers and grandfathers. My grandfather Thror was King Under the Mountain, and my father Thrain was King after him; but in my father's

time, when I was just a young thing, a great and greedy worm, a dragon from the North, smelt with his long snout the hoard of gold and silver and diamonds and precious stones and fine workmanship that we had stored there; and the dragon came with his fiery breath and murdered all my people and drove the rest away, and stole our riches and our mountain. I escaped with few others. The dragon has sat there, as dragons will, sleeping on his hoard of wealth ever since, while I have wandered in exile. That is the story of Erebor, and that is why it is called the Lonely Mountain. *(Lights up: screen dims out to leave map.)*

BILBO. Quite scary. Very fine story indeed. Do you have some reason for telling this to me?

GANDALF. It is Thorin's opinion that time has come to reclaim his heritage and retake Erebor from the dragon.

BILBO. Really? How nice for you.

THORIN. We will march there, over the Misty Mountains and through the forest of Mirkwood, and we will reconquer the mountain and Erebor will be the kingdom of my people again.

BILBO. We? Who is we?

THORIN. My army and myself.

BILBO. You have an army?

THORIN *(gestures with head toward dining room)*. In there.

BILBO. Those? You have an army of thirteen?

THORIN. DON'T SPEAK THAT NUMBER!

BILBO. Sorry.

THORIN. It is TERRIBLY unlucky, and I hope to add a fourteenth for that very reason. We may seem few now, but there are human men in Laketown near the Mountain. Our plan is to raise an army there and take the mountain by force.

BILBO. Fight with a dragon?

THORIN. Don't underestimate us. Meanwhile, as I've mentioned, we need a fourteenth traveler, so as not to attempt the journey with so unlucky a number. Gandalf has suggested that I hire a trained burglar for the position, and he has recommended you.

BILBO. Me?

GANDALF. Yes, Mister Baggins. You needn't look surprised in hopes of driving the price up. Payment will be one-fourteenth of the treasure of Lonely Mountain, all traveling expenses paid, funeral expenses defrayed by us if necessary.

BILBO. But you said you wanted a trained burglar.

THORIN. I did: and you are Gandalf's choice. Gandalf has his quirky ways, as wizards will, but I bow to his superior knowledge in matters of theft and thievery.

BILBO. But—

GANDALF. I suppose you mean that as a compliment, Thorin. In any case, I have recommended Mister Baggins to you, and I continue to do so.

BILBO. But just a minute. I'm not—

GANDALF. And please remember, it was you that asked my help in finding a fourteenth for your trip.

THORIN. I had plainly hoped that you yourself would join us.

GANDALF. And I plainly have other business. Do you imagine your dragon Smaug is the only evil in Middle Earth? There is a Necromancer far off in Dol Guldur who might use your dragon to terrible effect, if left unchallenged much longer. I can't come with you now, though you may see me again before it's over. Meanwhile, if you wish to sneak up on this dragon—

THORIN. I will not sneak.

GANDALF. Exactly. That is why I recommend this hobbit. Hobbits are no great swordsmen, but they are light on their feet and clever, unlike your people.