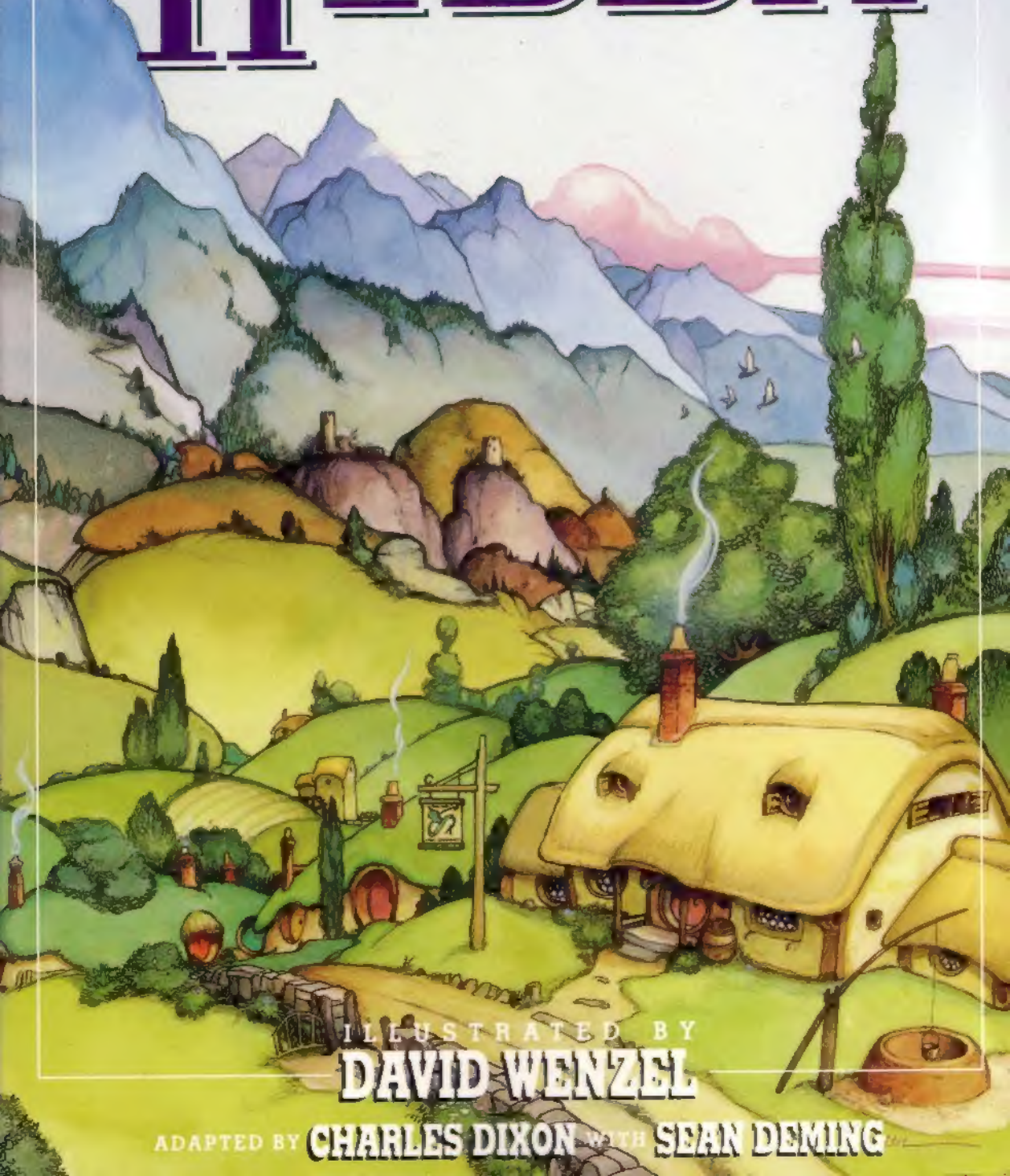


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THE J.R.R. TOLKIEN HOBBIT

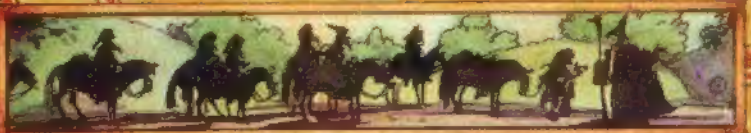


ILLUSTRATED BY
DAVID WENZEL

ADAPTED BY **CHARLES DIXON** WITH **SEAN DEMING**

THE HOBBIT





THE HOBBIT

or
There and Back Again

by
J. R. R. Tolkien

Illustrated by
David Wenzel

Adapted by
Charles Dixon

with
Sean Deming

Eclipse Books
Forestville, California - New York



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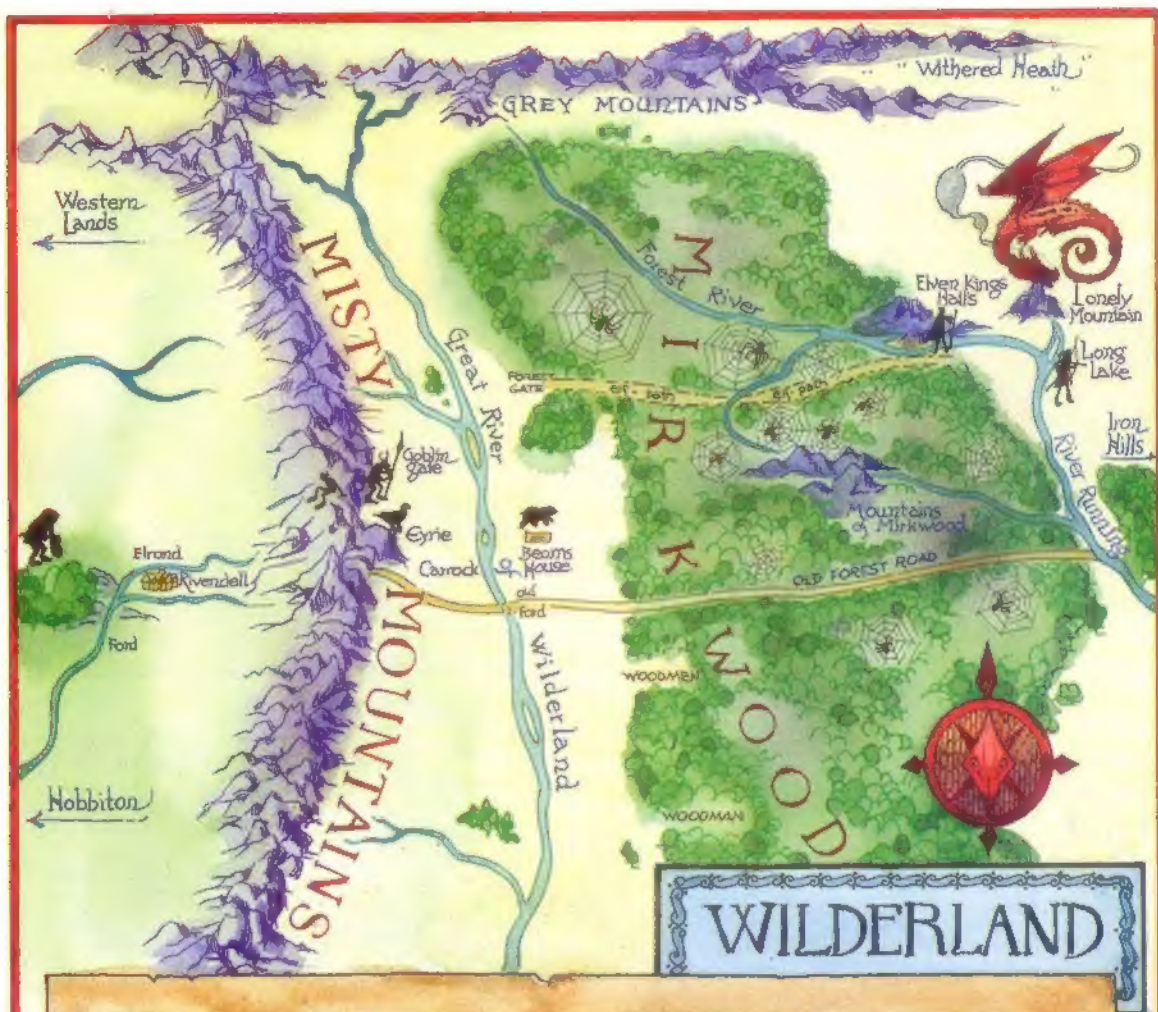
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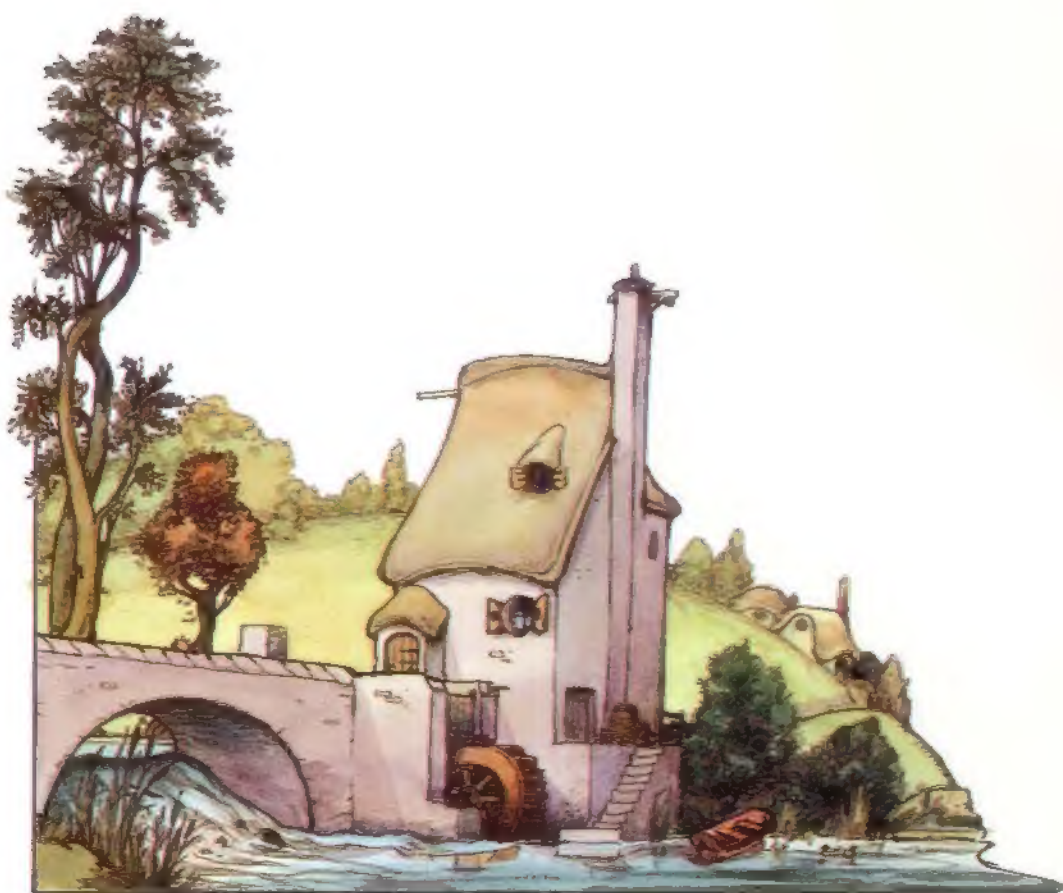
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In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.
Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, nor yet
a dry, bare sand hole; it was a
hobbit hole, and that means comfort.

This hobbit's hole was on The Hill, as all
the people for many miles around
called it, and his name was Baggins.

People considered the Bagginses very respectable,
not only because most of them were rich,
but also because they never had any
adventures or did anything unexpected.

This is a story of how a Baggins
had an adventure, and found
himself doing and saying things
altogether unexpected.

What is a hobbit?

I suppose hobbits need some
description nowadays, since
they have become rare and
shy of the Big People, as
they call us.

They are a little
people, smaller than
dwarves. They are
inclined to be fat in the
stomach; they dress in bright
colors and wear no shoes,
because their feet
grow natural
leathery soles
and thick warm
brown hair.

The mother of this parti-
cular hobbit — of Bilbo
Baggins, that is — was the
famous Belladonna Took!
Once in a while members of
the Took-clan would go and
have adventures. They dis-
creetly disappeared, and the
family hushed it up; the
Tooks were not as res-
pectable as the Bagginses.

It is probable that
Bilbo, Belladonna's
only son, although
he looked and behaved
like his father, got
something a bit queer
in his make-up from
the Took side, some-
thing that only
waited for a chance
to come out.

Oh.



GOOD MORNING!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
DO YOU WISH ME A GOOD
MORNING, OR MEAN THAT
IT IS A GOOD MORNING
WHETHER I WANT IT OR
NOT; OR THAT **YOU** FEEL
GOOD THIS MORNING;
OR THAT IT IS A
MORNING TO BE
GOOD ON?



ALL OF
THEM AT
ONCE.

AND A
VERY FINE
MORNING FOR A
PIPE OF TOBACCO
OUT OF DOORS.
SIT DOWN AND
HAVE A FILL
OF MINE!

VERY
PRETTY!
BUT I HAVE
NO TIME TO
BLOW SMOKE RINGS
THIS MORNING. I
AM LOOKING FOR
SOMEONE TO SHARE
IN AN **ADVENTURE**
AND IT'S VERY
DIFFICULT TO
FIND ANY-
ONE.

I SHOULD
THINK **SO**— IN
THESE PARTS!

WE ARE PLAIN
QUIET FOLK AND
HAVE NO **USE** FOR
ADVENTURES.

NASTY
DISTURBING
UNCOMFORTABLE
THINGS! MAKE
YOU LATE FOR
DINNER!

**GOOD
MORNING!**
WE DON'T
WANT ANY
ADVENTURES
HERE, THANK
YOU!



WHAT A LOT OF THINGS YOU DO USE **GOOD MORNING** FOR!

NOW YOU MEAN THAT YOU WANT TO GET RID OF ME, AND THAT IT WON'T BE GOOD TILL I MOVE OFF.



NOT AT ALL, MY DEAR SIR! LET ME SEE, I DON'T THINK I KNOW YOUR NAME.

YES, YOU DO, **BILBO BAGGINS**, THOUGH YOU DON'T REMEMBER THAT I BELONG TO IT.



I AM **GANDALF**, AND **GANDALF** MEANS ME.

TO THINK I SHOULD HAVE LIVED TO BE **GOOD-MORNINGED** BY **BELLADONNA TOOK'S** SON, AS IF I WERE SELLING **BUTTONS** AT THE DOOR!



GANDALF! NOT THE WANDERING WIZARD WHO USED TO TELL SUCH WONDERFUL TALES AT PARTIES, ABOUT DRAGONS AND GOBLINS AND GIANTS AND PRINCESSES AND WIDOW'S SONS?



NOT THE **GANDALF** WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SO MANY QUIET LADS AND LASSES GOING OFF INTO THE BLUE FOR MAD ADVENTURES?



I AM PLEASED TO FIND YOU REMEMBER SOMETHING ABOUT ME.

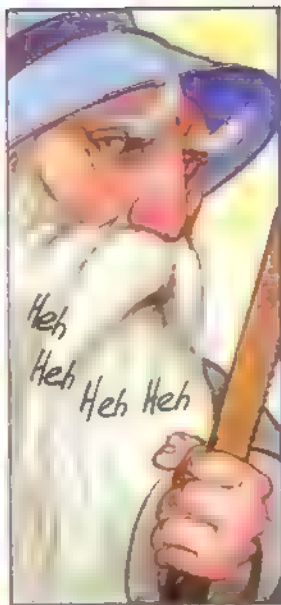
I THOUGHT I WOULD SEND **YOU** ON THIS ADVENTURE.

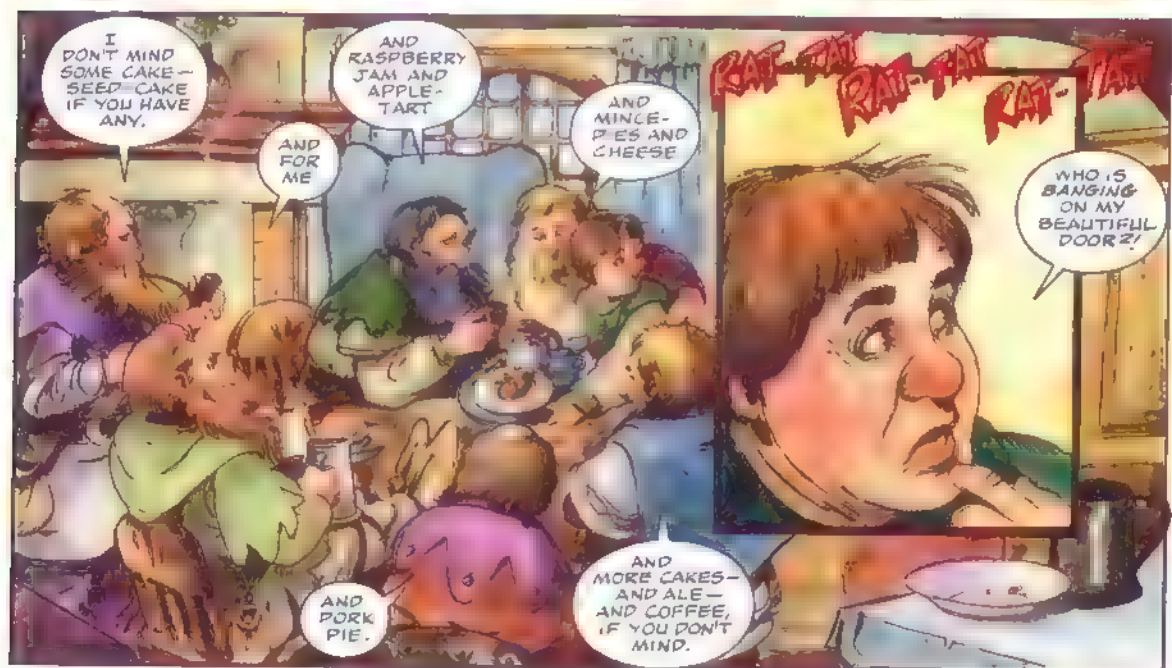
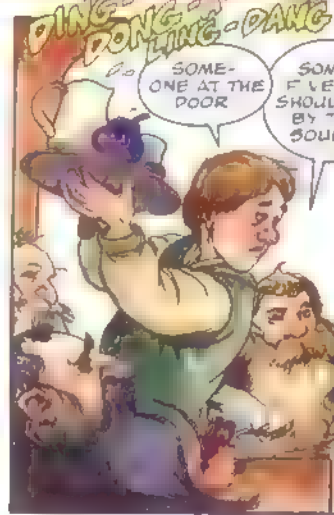
VERY AMUSING FOR ME, VERY GOOD FOR YOU - AND PROFITABLE TOO, VERY LIKELY, IF YOU EVER GET OVER IT.



SORRY! I DON'T WANT ANY ADVENTURES, THANK YOU.

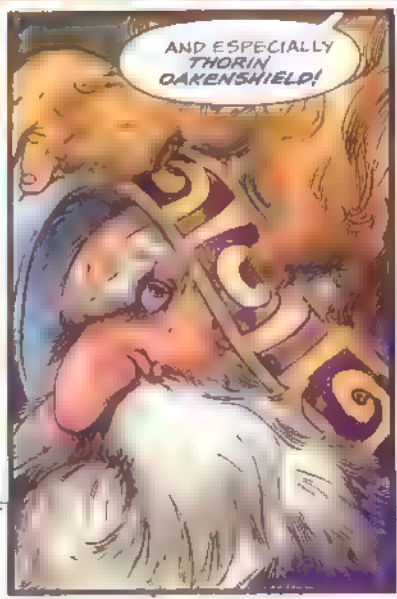
GOOD MORNING! BUT PLEASE COME TO TEA! WHY NOT TOMORROW? COME TOMORROW! **GOOD BYE!**



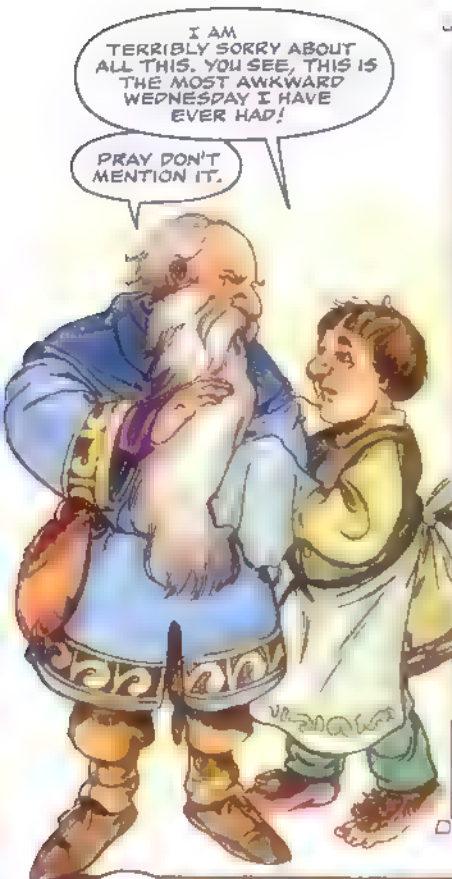




CAREFULLY!
CAREFULLY! IT IS NOT
LIKE YOU, BILBO TO KEEP
FRIENDS WAITING ON THE
MAT, AND THEN OPEN THE
DOOR LIKE A POP-GUN!
LET ME INTRODUCE
BIFLUR, BOFUR,
BOMBUR...



AND ESPECIALLY
THORIN
OAKENSHIELD!



I AM TERRIBLY SORRY ABOUT ALL THIS. YOU SEE, THIS IS THE MOST AWKWARD WEDNESDAY I HAVE EVER HAD!

PRAY DON'T MENTION IT.



NOW WE ARE ALL HERE! QUITE A MERRY GATHERING!

I HOPE THERE IS SOMETHING FOR THE LATE-COMERS TO EAT AND DRINK!



Oh, DEAR! THE TEA!



HUSH! LET THORIN SPEAK!

PARDON ME.

GANDALF, DWARVES AND MISTER BAGGINS! WE ARE MET TOGETHER IN THE HOUSE OF OUR FRIEND AND FELLOW CONSPIRATOR, TH'S MOST EXCELLENT AND AUDACIOUS HOBBIT.

MAY THE HAIR ON HIS GOES NEVER FALL OUT! ALL PRAISE TO HIS WINE AND ALE!



FELLOW CONSPIRATOR?

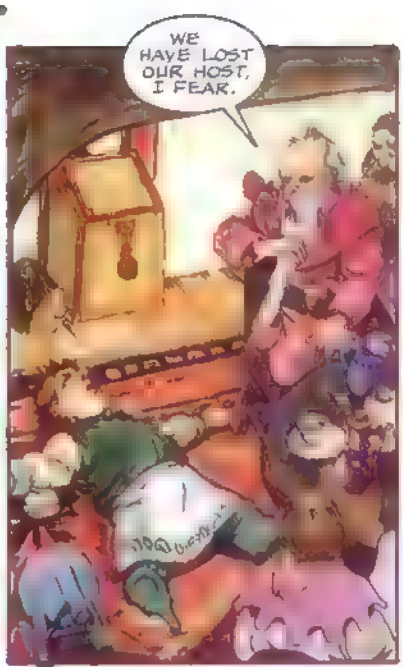


WE ARE MET TO DISCUSS OUR PLANS, OUR WAYS, MEANS, POLICY AND DEVICES, WE SHALL SOON BEFORE THE BREAK OF DAY START ON OUR LONG JOURNEY...

... A JOURNEY FROM WHICH SOME OF US MAY NEVER RETURN.



MAY NEVER RETURN ?!



WE HAVE LOST OUR HOST, I FEAR.



HUMPH! WILL HE DO, DO YOU THINK? AS SOON AS I CLAPPED EYES ON THE LITTLE FELLOW, I HAD MY DOUBTS.



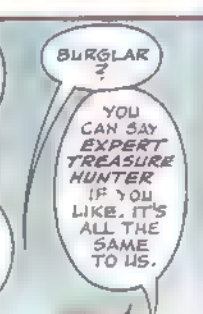
HE LOOKS MORE LIKE A GROCER THAN A BURGLAR!



PARDON ME, DID YOL SAY "BURGLAR" ?

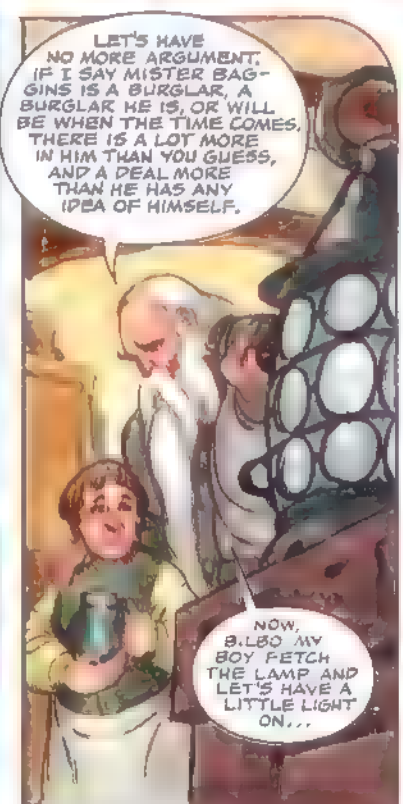
YES. I WAS TALKING ABOUT YOU. GANDALF TOLD US THAT THERE WAS A BURGLAR IN THESE PARTS LOOKING FOR A JOB AT ONCE, AND THAT HE HAD ARRANGED FOR A MEETING HERE THIS WEDNESDAY TEA-TIME.

THERE IS THE MARK ON YOUR DOOR—THE USUAL ONE IN THE TRADE, OR USED TO BE—BURGLAR WANTS A GOOD JOB, PLENTY OF EXCITEMENT AND REASONABLE REWARD.



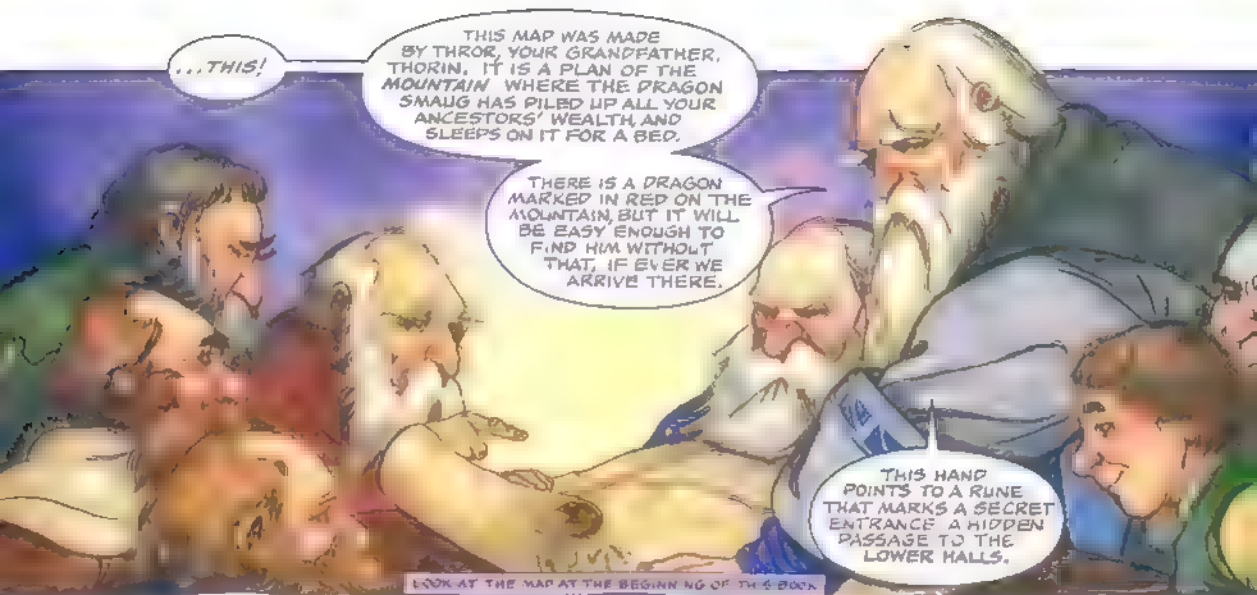
BURGLAR ?

YOU CAN SAY EXPERT TREASURE HUNTER IF YOU LIKE. IT'S ALL THE SAME TO US.



LET'S HAVE NO MORE ARGUMENT. IF I SAY MISTER BAGGINS IS A BURGLAR, A BURGLAR HE IS, OR WILL BE WHEN THE TIME COMES. THERE IS A LOT MORE IN HIM THAN YOU GUESS, AND A DEAL MORE THAN HE HAS ANY IDEA OF HIMSELF.

NOW, BILBO MY BOY FETCH THE LAMP AND LET'S HAVE A LITTLE LIGHT ON...



...THIS!

THIS MAP WAS MADE BY THOR, YOUR GRANDFATHER, THORIN. IT IS A PLAN OF THE MOUNTAIN WHERE THE DRAGON SMAUG HAS PILED UP ALL YOUR ANCESTORS' WEALTH, AND SLEEPS ON IT FOR A BED.

THERE IS A DRAGON MARKED IN RED ON THE MOUNTAIN, BUT IT WILL BE EASY ENOUGH TO FIND HIM WITHOUT THAT, IF EVER WE ARRIVE THERE.

THIS HAND POINTS TO A RUNE THAT MARKS A SECRET ENTRANCE, A HIDDEN PASSAGE TO THE LOWER HALLS.

LOOK AT THE MAP AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOK.



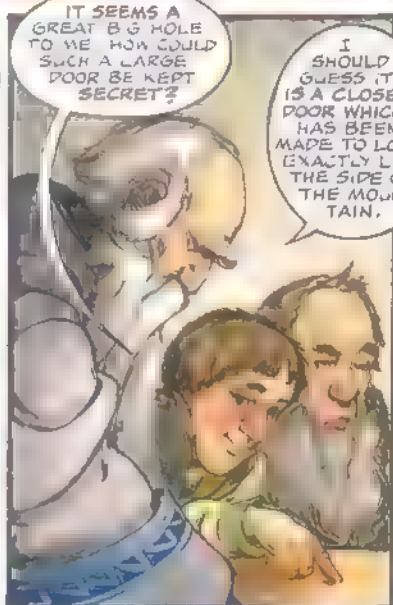
IT MAY HAVE BEEN SECRET ONCE BUT HOW DO WE KNOW THAT IT IS SECRET ANY LONGER?

OLD SMAUG HAS LIVED THERE LONG ENOUGH NOW TO FIND OUT ANYTHING THERE'S TO KNOW ABOUT THOSE CAVES.

HE MAY— BUT HE CAN'T HAVE USED IT FOR YEARS AND YEARS. IT IS TOO SMALL!



"FIVE FEET HIGH THE DOOR AND THREE MAY WALK AHEAD" SAY THE RUNES, BUT SMAUG COULD NOT CREEP INTO A HOLE THAT SIZE, CERTAINLY NOT AFTER DEVOURING SO MANY OF THE DWARVES AND MEN OF DALE.



IT SEEMS A GREAT BIG HOLE TO ME. HOW COULD SUCH A LARGE DOOR BE KEPT SECRET?

I SHOULD GUESS IT IS A CLOSED DOOR WHICH HAS BEEN MADE TO LOOK EXACTLY LIKE THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN.



ALSO, WITH THE MAP WENT A KEY, A SMALL AND CURIOUS KEY. HERE IT IS, THORIN— YOU MUST KEEP IT SAFE!

IN-DEED I WILL! NOW, SUPPOSING THE BURGLAR-EXPERT GIVES US SOME IDEAS OR SUGGESTIONS.

FIRST I SHOULD LIKE TO KNOW A BIT MORE ABOUT THINGS. I MEAN ABOUT THE GOLD AND THE DRAGON, AND ALL THAT, AND HOW IT GOT THERE, AND WHO IT BELONGS TO, AND SO ON AND FURTHER.

LONG AGO IN MY GRANDFATHER THORR'S TIME OUR FAMILY WAS DRIVEN OUT OF THE FAR NORTH, AND CAME BACK WITH ALL THEIR WEALTH AND TOOLS TO THIS MOUNTAIN ON THE MAP.

IT HAD BEEN DISCOVERED BY MY FAR ANCESTOR, THRAIN THE OLD, BUT NOW THEY MINED AND THEY MADE HUGER HALLS— AND I BELIEVE THEY FOUND A GOOD DEAL OF GOLD AND A GREAT MANY JEWELS TOO.

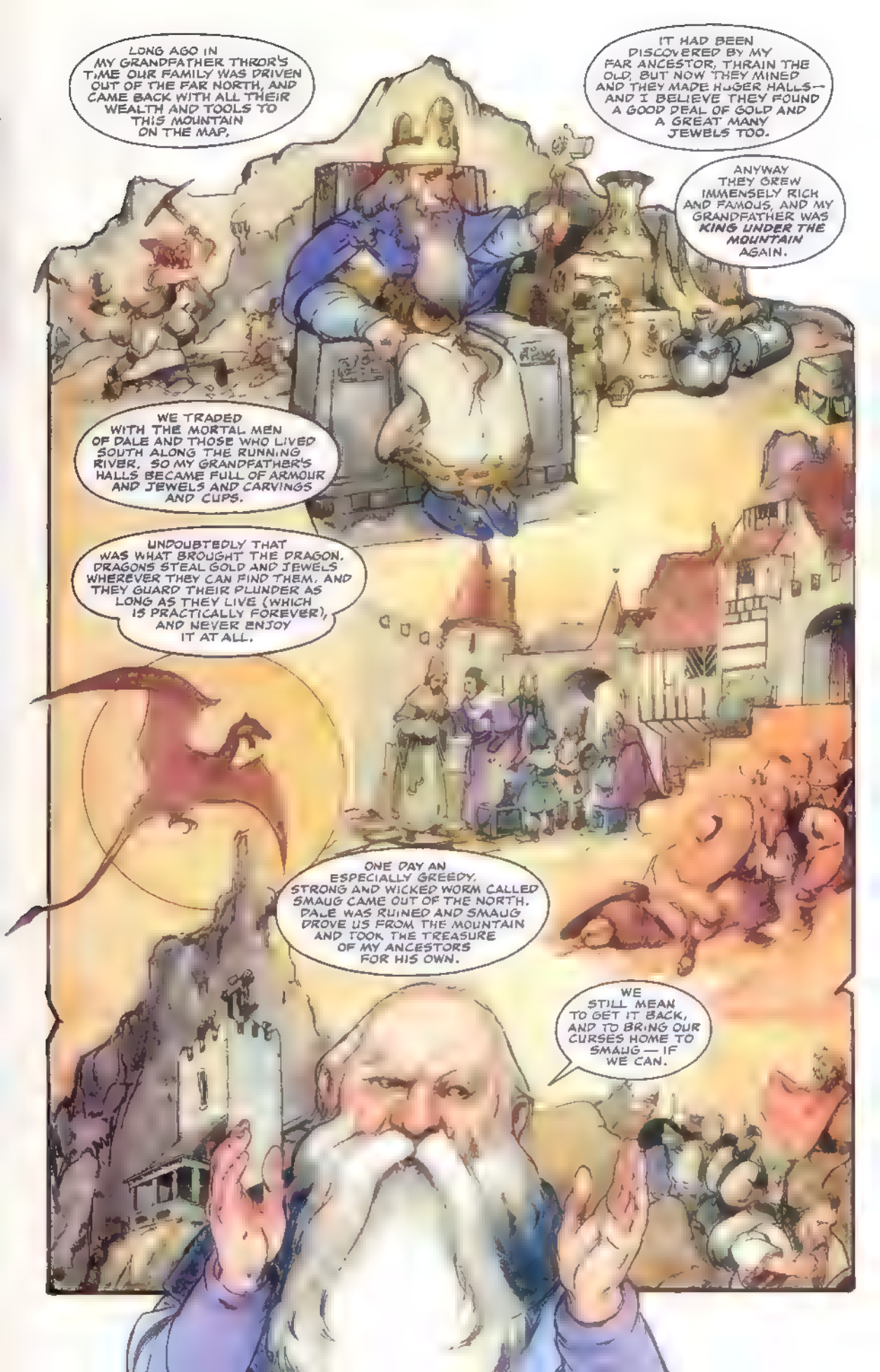
ANYWAY THEY GREW IMMENSELY RICH AND FAMOUS, AND MY GRANDFATHER WAS KING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN AGAIN.

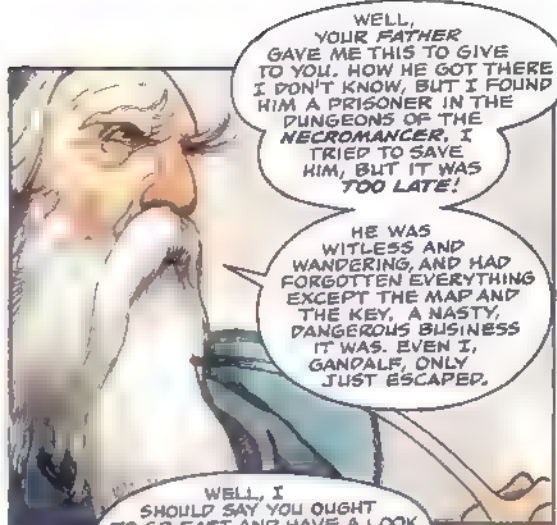
WE TRADED WITH THE MORTAL MEN OF DALE AND THOSE WHO LIVED SOUTH ALONG THE RUNNING RIVER. SO MY GRANDFATHER'S HALLS BECAME FULL OF ARMOUR AND JEWELS AND CARVINGS AND CUPS.

UNDOUBTEDLY THAT WAS WHAT BROUGHT THE DRAGON. DRAGONS STEAL GOLD AND JEWELS WHEREVER THEY CAN FIND THEM, AND THEY GUARD THEIR PLUNDER AS LONG AS THEY LIVE (WHICH IS PRACTICALLY FOREVER), AND NEVER ENJOY IT AT ALL.

ONE DAY AN ESPECIALLY GREEDY, STRONG AND WICKED WORM CALLED SMAUG CAME OUT OF THE NORTH. DALE WAS RUINED AND SMAUG PROVE US FROM THE MOUNTAIN AND TOOK THE TREASURE OF MY ANCESTORS FOR HIS OWN.

WE STILL MEAN TO GET IT BACK, AND TO BRING OUR CURSES HOME TO SMAUG — IF WE CAN.





The next morning when he awoke, Bilbo was really relieved to find the dwarves had all gone on without him; and yet in a way he could not help feeling just a trifle disappointed. The feeling surprised him.

DON'T BE A FOOL, BILBO BAGGINS! THINKING OF DRAGONS AND ALL THAT OUTLANDISH NONSENSE AT YOUR AGE!



MY DEAR FELLOW, IT'S HALF PAST TEN! WHENEVER ARE YOU GOING TO COME? THEY LEFT YOU THE MESSAGE BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT WAIT.

WHAT MESSAGE?

GREAT ELEPHANTS! YOU ARE NOT AT ALL YOURSELF THIS MORNING. IF YOU HAD DUSTED THE MANTLEPIECE, YOU WOULD HAVE FOUND THIS JUST UNDER THE CLOCK.

THORIN AND COMPANY TO JURGULAR BILBO GREETINGS!
FOR YOUR OFFER OF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE
OUR GRATEFUL ACCEPTANCE
TERMS: CASH ON DELIVERY UP TO AND NOT
EXCEEDING ONE FOURTEENTH OF TOTAL PROFITS
(IF ANY). ALL TRAVELING EXPENSES
GUARANTEED IN ANY EVENT
FUNERAL EXPENSES TO BE DEFRAYED BY
US OR OUR REPRESENTATIVES IF
OCCASION ARISES.

WE HAVE PROCEEDED IN ADVANCE TO
MAKE REQUISITE PREPARATIONS AND SHALL
AWAIT YOUR RESPECTED PERSON AT THE
GREEN DRAGON INN, BYWATER, AT
11:00 A.M. SHARP.

WE HAVE THE HONOR TO REMAIN
YOURS DEEPLY—
THORIN & COMPANY

THAT LEAVES YOU JUST TEN MINUTES. YOU WILL HAVE TO RUN.

BUT—

NO TIME FOR IT.

BUT—

NO TIME FOR THAT EITHER!

OFF YOU GO!



That is how they all came to start, jogging off from the inn one fine morning just before May.

The party went along very merrily, and they told stories or sang songs as they rode forward.

Bilbo began to feel that adventures were not so bad after all.



At first they passed through hobbit-lands, a wild, respectable country inhabited by decent folk.



Then they came to lands where people spoke strangely and sang songs Bilbo had never heard before.

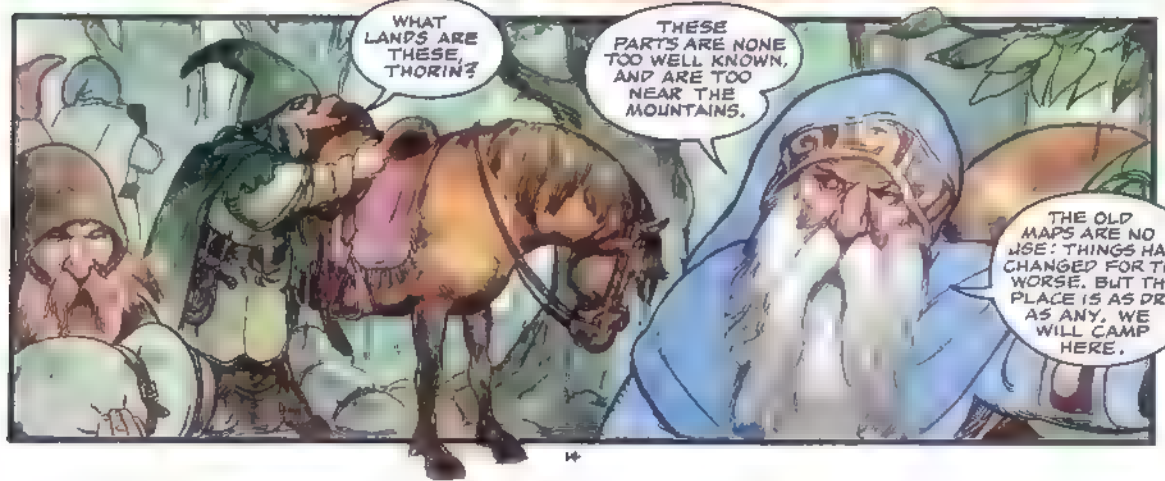
They passed through the Lone-lands, where there were no people left, no inns, and the roads grew steadily worse.

Now they climbed up dreary hills, rising higher and higher.



Everything seemed gloomy, for the weather that had mostly been as good as May can be had taken a nasty turn.

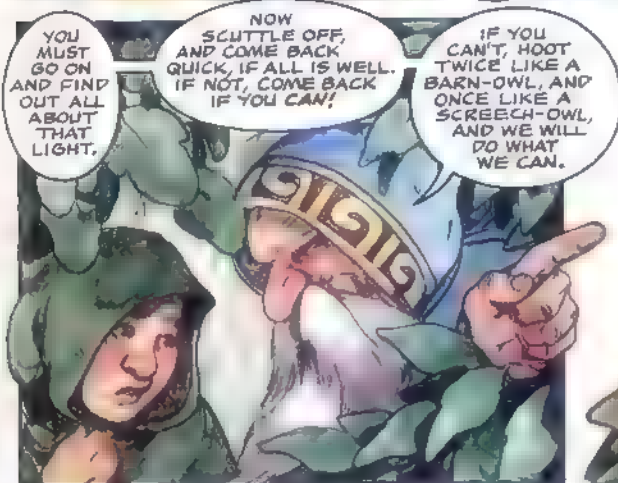
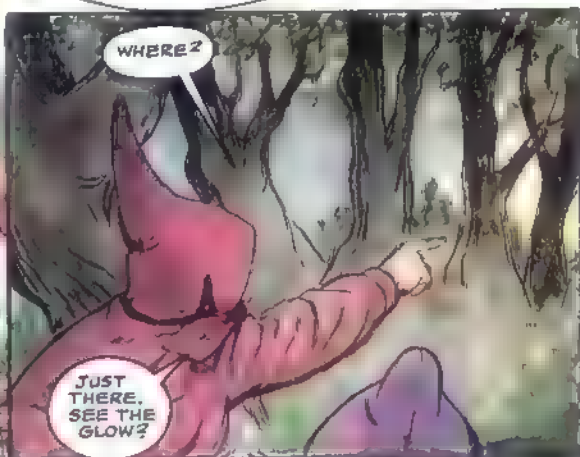
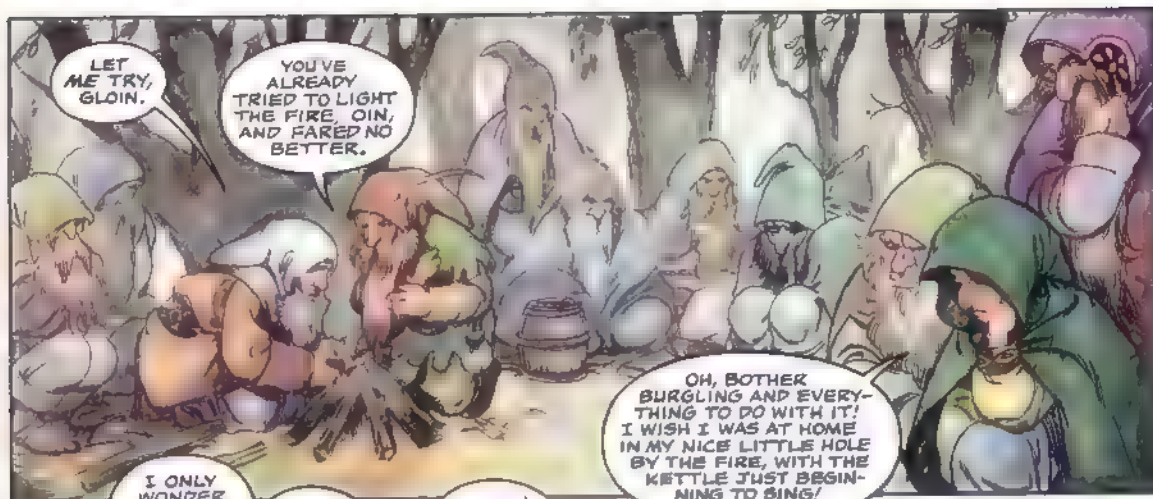
TO THINK IT WILL SOON BE JUNE, I'M SURE THE RAIN HAS GOTTEN INTO THE DRY CLOTHES AND THE FOODBAGS.



WHAT LANDS ARE THESE, THORIN?

THESE PARTS ARE NONE TOO WELL KNOWN, AND ARE TOO NEAR THE MOUNTAINS.

THE OLD MAPS ARE NO USE: THINGS HAVE CHANGED FOR THE WORSE, BUT THIS PLACE IS AS DRY AS ANY, WE WILL CAMP HERE.





YOU'VE ET
A VILLAGE AND A
HALF BETWEEN YER, SINCE
WE COME DOWN FROM THE
MOUNTAINS. HOW MUCH
MORE D'YER
WANT?

OW!

A really first-class burglar would at this point have picked the trolls' pockets — it is nearly always worthwhile, if you can manage it. Others would perhaps have stuck a dagger into each of them before they observed it. Then the night could have been spent cheerily.

AND
TIME'S BEEN
UP OUR WAY,
WHEN YER'D HAVE
SAID THANK YER
BILL, FOR A NICE
BIT O' FAT VALLEY
MUTTON LIKE
WHAT THIS
IS.

Bilbo knew it. He had read of a good many things he had never seen or done. He wished himself a hundred miles away, and yet — and yet somehow he could not go straight back to Thorin and Company empty-handed.

'ERE
'OO ARE
YOU?

OH!

BLIMEY,
BERT, LOOK
WHAT I'VE
COPPED!

WHAT
IS
IT?

LUMME,
IF I
KNOWS!

WHAT
ARE
YER?

BILBO
BAGGINS,
A BUR-A
HOBBIT.

A
BURRAHOBBIT?
WHAT'S A
BURRAHOBBIT
GOT TO DO WITH
MY POCKET
ANYWAYS?

AND CAN
YER COOK
'EM?

YER CAN TRY.
P'RAPS THERE
ARE MORE LIKE
HIM ROUND ABOUT,
AND WE MIGHT
MAKE A PIE.

HERE YOU,
ARE THERE
ANY MORE OF
YOUR SORT A-
SNEAKIN' IN THESE
HERE WOODS, YER
NASSTY LITTLE
RABBIT?

YES,
LOTS.

NO, NOT
AT ALL,
NOT
ONE!

WHAT
D'YER
MEAN?

POOR LITTLE
BLIGHTER!
LET HIM GO!
I'VE 'AD ME
SUPPER
ANYWAY!

I WON'T
HAVE IT,
I CAUGHT
HIM ANY-
WAY!

NOT TILL
HE SAYS WHAT
HE MEANS BY
LOTS AND NONE
AT ALL.

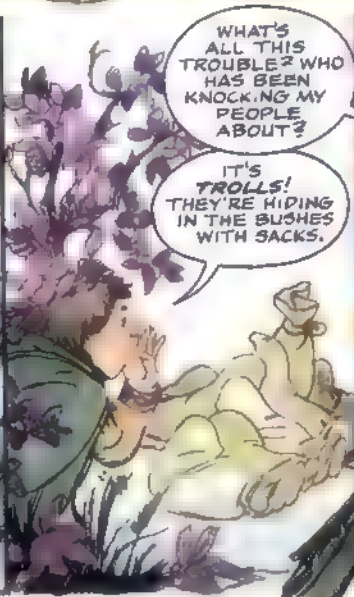
I DON'T
WANT TO
HAVE ME
THROAT CUT
IN ME SLEEP!

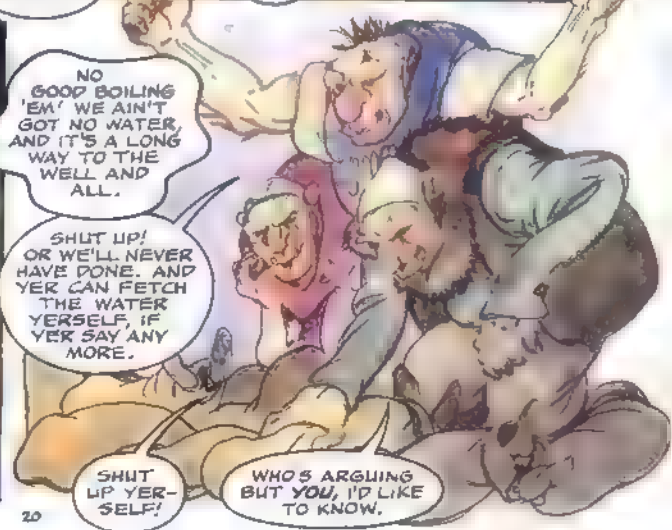
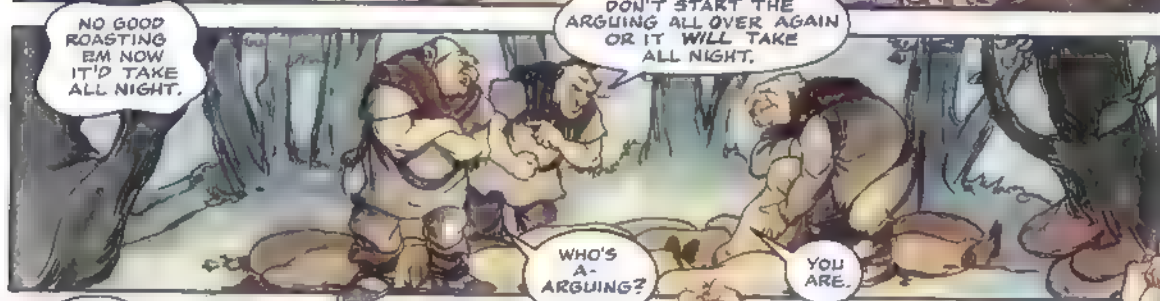
HOLD
HIS TOES
IN THE FIRE
TILL HE
TALKS!

YOU'RE A
FAT FOOL,
WILLIAM, AS
I'VE SAID
AFORE THIS
EVENING.

AND
YOU'RE
A LOU!
!

AND
I WON'T
TAKE THAT
FROM YOU,
BILL
HUGGINS!





NOW STOP IT!
THE NIGHT'S GETTIN'
ON, AND DAWN COMES
EARLY. LET'S GET
ON WITH IT!

DAWN
TAKE YOU
ALL...

...AND
BE...

...STONE
TO YOU!

GANDALF! IT WAS
YOUR VOICE THAT GOT THE
TROLLS TO ARGUE!

EXCELLENT!

INDEED!
YOU SEE, TROLLS
MUST BE UNDERGROUND
BEFORE DAWN OR THEY
GO BACK TO THE STUFF
OF THE MOUNTAINS
THEY ARE MADE OF
AND NEVER MOVE
AGAIN.

The dwarves had to hear Bilbo's account of
what happened to him twice over, before
they were satisfied.

...AND BEFORE
I COULD GET AWAY,
HE HAD GRABBED ME
BY THE NECK.

SILLY TIME TO
GO PRACTISING PINCH-
ING AND POCKET-PICKING,
WHEN WHAT WE WANTED
WAS FIRE AND
FOOD!

BUT AS TROLLS
ARE SLOW, AND DAWN
WAS NOT FAR OFF, IT
WAS A SIMPLE THING TO
KEEP THEM BICKERING
AND GUARRELING,
UNTIL THE LIGHT
CAME AND MADE
AN END OF
THEM.

AND THAT'S
JUST WHAT YOU
WOULDN'T HAVE
GOT IN ANY CASE
ANYHOW YOU ARE
WASTING TIME
NOW!

DON'T YOU
REALIZE THAT THE
TROLLS MUST HAVE A CAVE
OR A HOLE DUG SOMEWHERE
NEAR TO HIDE FROM THE
SUN IN? WE MUST
LOOK INTO IT!

HERE ARE SOME TROLL-PRINTS LEADING BACK THROUGH THE TREES!

PERHAPS THEIR CAVE LIES AT THE END.

They followed the tracks up the hill, until they came on a big door of stone leading to a cave. But they could not open it, not though they all pushed, while Gandalf tried various incantations.

WHY ON EARTH DIDN'T YOU MENTION IT BEFORE?

NOW TO SEE WHAT TREASURES A TROLL HOARDS.

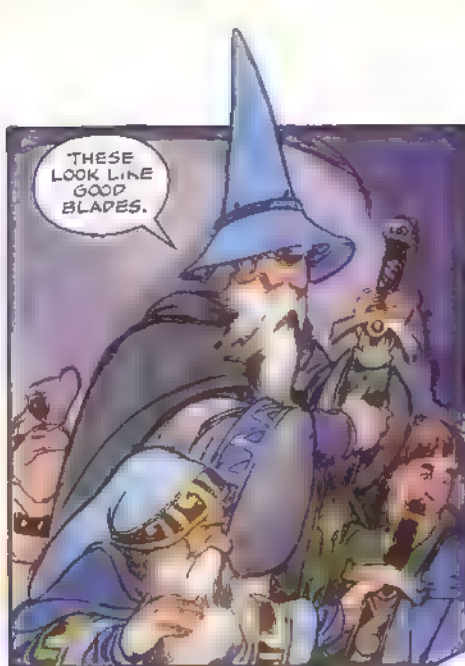
WOULD THIS BE ANY GOOD? I FOUND IT ON THE GROUND WHERE THE TROLLS HAD THEIR FIGHT.

THIS PLACE SMELLS OF TROLLS.

AND NO WONDER.

CARRY THE GOLD OUTSIDE. WE'LL BURY IT FOR OUR RETURN TRIP.

TAKE ANY FOOD THAT HASN'T ROTTED.



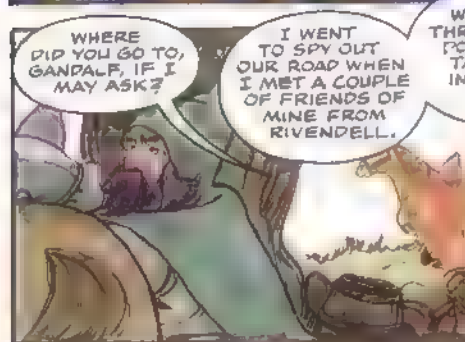
THESE
LOOK LIKE
GOOD
BLADES.



THEY
WERE NOT
MADE BY ANY
TROLL NOR ANY
SMITH AMONG
MEN IN THESE
PARTS AND
DAYS.



BUT
WHEN WE
CAN READ
THE RUNES
ON THEM
WE SHALL
KNOW MORE
ABOUT
THEM.



WHERE
DID YOU GO TO,
GANDALF, IF I
MAY ASK?

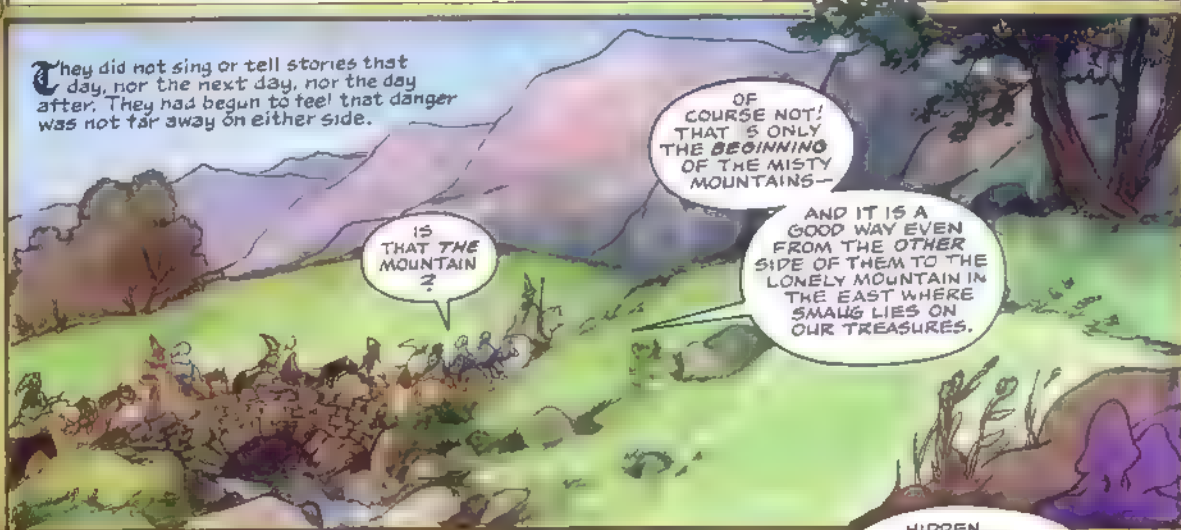
I WENT
TO SPY OUT
OUR ROAD WHEN
I MET A COUPLE
OF FRIENDS OF
MINE FROM
RIVENDELL.

IT WAS THEY
WHO TOLD ME THAT
THREE TROLLS HAD COME
DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS
AND SETTLED
IN THE WOODS NOT
FAR FROM THE
ROAD.



I
IMMEDIATELY
HAD A FEELING
THAT I WAS WANTED
BACK. PLEASE BE MORE
CAREFUL, NEXT TIME,
OR WE SHALL NEVER
GET ANYWHERE!

THANK
YOU!



They did not sing or tell stories that day, nor the next day, nor the day after. They had begun to feel that danger was not far away on either side.

IS
THAT THE
MOUNTAIN
?

OF
COURSE NOT!
THAT 'S ONLY
THE BEGINNING
OF THE MISTY
MOUNTAINS--

AND IT IS A
GOOD WAY EVEN
FROM THE OTHER
SIDE OF THEM TO THE
LONELY MOUNTAIN IN
THE EAST WHERE
SMAUG LIES ON
OUR TREASURES.



WE MUST
NOT MISS THE
ROAD, OR WE
SHALL BE
DONE FOR!

HIDDEN
SOMEWHERE AHEAD
OF US IS THE FAIR
VALLEY OF RIVENDELL
WHERE ELROND LIVES
IN THE LAST HOMELY
HOUSE.

I SENT
A MESSAGE
BY MY FRIENDS,
AND WE ARE
EXPECTED.

Bilbo never forgot the way they slithered and slipped in the dusk down the steep zig-zag path into the secret valley of Rivendell. The air grew warmer as they got lower...



...and their spirits rose as they went down and down.

HERE IT IS AT LAST!

HMMM! IT SMELLS LIKE ELVES!

WELCOME TO THE VALLEY!

YOU ARE A LITTLE OUT OF YOUR WAY.

WE WILL SET YOU RIGHT, BUT YOU HAD BEST GET ON FOOT UNTIL YOU ARE OVER THE BRIDGE

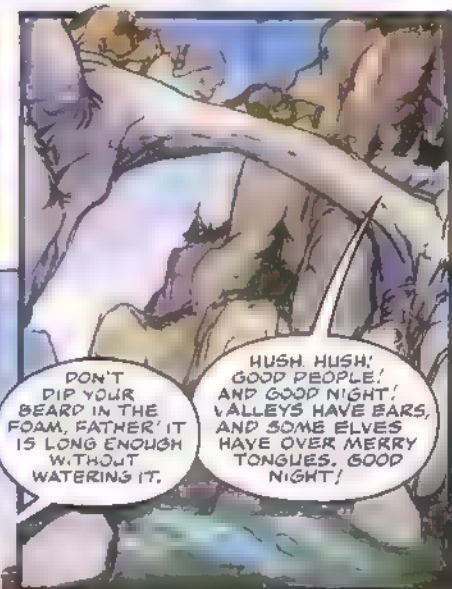
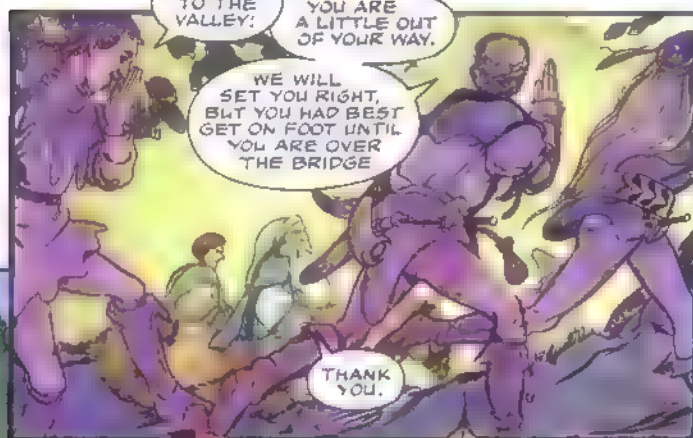
THANK YOU.

There were elves of course. Soon Bilbo caught glimpses of them as the darkness deepened. He loved elves, though he seldom met them but he was a little frightened of them too.



Dwarves don't get on well with elves.

Even decent enough dwarves like Thorin and his friends think them foolish (which is a very foolish thing to think), or get annoyed with them. For some elves tease them and laugh at them, and most of all at their beards.



DON'T DIP YOUR BEARD IN THE FOAM, FATHER! IT IS LONG ENOUGH WITHOUT WATERING IT.

HUSH HUSH! GOOD PEOPLE! AND GOOD NIGHT! VALLEYS HAVE EARS, AND SOME ELVES HAVE OVER MERRY TONGUES. GOOD NIGHT!

And so at last they all came to the last Homely House and found its doors flung wide.



Now it is a strange thing, but things that are good to have and days that are good to spend are soon told about, and not much to listen to; while things that are uncomfortable, palpitating, and even gruesome, may make a good tale, and take a deal of telling anyway.

Elrond, that master of the house, was an elf-friend. In those days of our tale there were still some people who had both elves and heroes of the North for ancestors, and Elrond was their chief.

He comes into many tales, but his part in the story of Bilbo's great adventure is only a small one, though important, as you will see, if we ever get to the end of it.

They stayed long in that good house, fourteen days at least, and they found it hard to leave.

Bilbo would gladly have stopped there for ever and ever - even supposing a wish would have taken him right back to his hobbit-hole without trouble.

So the time came to mid-summer eve and they were to go on again with the early sun on midsummer morning.

Elrond knew all about runes of every kind. That day he looked at the swords they had brought from the troll's lair.

THESE ARE NOT TROLL-MAKE. THEY ARE OLD SWORDS, VERY OLD SWORDS OF THE HIGH ELVES OF THE WEST, MY KIN.

THEY WERE MADE IN GONDOLIN FOR THE GOBLIN-WARS.

THEY MUST HAVE COME FROM A DRAGON'S HOARD OR GOBLIN PLUNDER, FOR DRAGONS AND GOBLINS DESTROYED THAT CITY MANY AGES AGO.



THIS, THORIN, THE RUNES NAME ORCRIST, THE GOBLIN-CLEAVER IN THE ANCIENT TONGUE OF GONDOLIN; IT WAS A FAMOUS BLADE.

THIS, GANDALF, WAS GLAMDRING, FOE-HAMMER THAT THE KING OF GONDOLIN ONCE WORE.

I WILL KEEP THIS SWORD IN HONOUR, MAY IT SOON CLEAVE GOBLINS ONCE AGAIN!

A WISH THAT IS LIKELY TO BE GRANTED SOON ENOUGH IN THE MOUNTAINS! BUT SHOW ME NOW YOUR MAP!

KEEP THEM WELL!

WHAT IS THIS?

THERE ARE MOON-LETTERS HERE, BESIDE THE PLAIN RUNES WHICH SAY "FIVE FEET HIGH THE DOOR AND THREE MAY WALK ABREAST."

WHAT ARE MOON-LETTERS?



MOON-LETTERS ARE RING-LETTERS, BUT THEY CAN ONLY BE SEEN WHEN THE MOON SHINES BEHIND THEM, AND WHAT IS MORE, WITH THE MORE CUNNING SORT IT MUST BE A MOON OF THE SAME SHAPE AND SEASON AS THE DAY WHEN THEY WERE WRITTEN.

THESE MUST HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ON A MID-SUMMER'S EVE IN A CRESCENT MOON, A LONG WHILE AGO.



"STAND BY THE GREY STONE WHEN THE THRUSH KNOCKS AND THE SETTING SUN WITH THE LAST LIGHT OF DURIN'S DAY WILL SHINE UPON THE KEY-HOLE."

DURIN, DURIN: HE WAS THE FATHER OF THE ELDEST RACE OF DWARVES, THE LONGBEARDS, AND MY FIRST ANCESTOR, I AM HIS HEIR.

THEN WHAT IS DURIN'S DAY?

WE STILL CALL IT DURIN'S DAY WHEN THE LAST MOON OF AUTUMN AND THE SUN ARE IN THE SKY TOGETHER. BUT I FEAR IT PASSES OUR SKILL IN THESE DAYS TO GUESS WHEN SUCH A TIME WILL COME AGAIN.

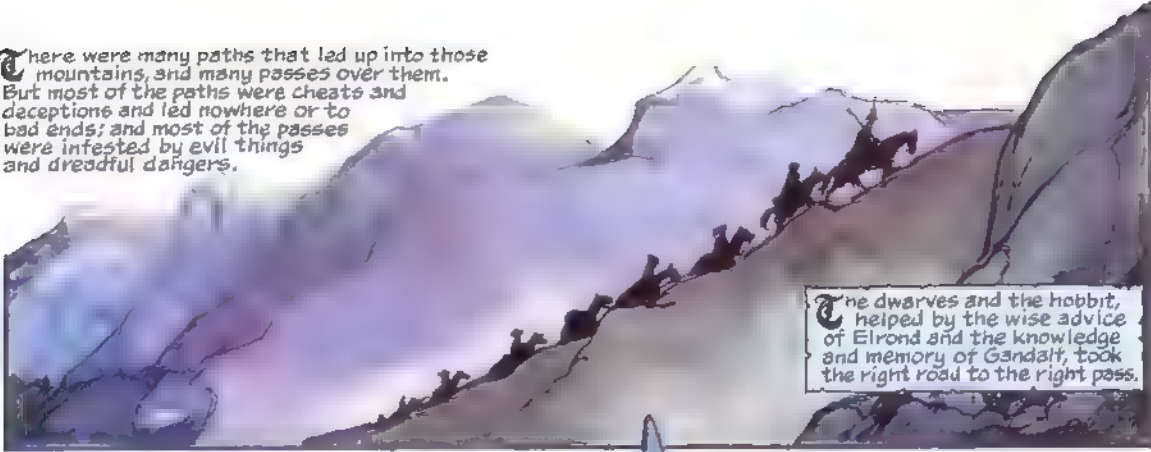
THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN.



The next morning was a mid-summer's morning as fair and fresh as could be dreamed: blue sky and never a cloud and the sun glinting on the water.

Now they rode away amid songs of farewell and good speed, with their hearts ready for more adventure and with a knowledge of the road they must follow over the Misty Mountains to the land beyond.

There were many paths that led up into those mountains, and many passes over them. But most of the paths were cheats and deceptions and led nowhere or to bad ends; and most of the passes were infested by evil things and dreadful dangers.



The dwarves and the hobbit, helped by the wise advice of Elrond and the knowledge and memory of Gandalf, took the right road to the right pass.



Long days after they had climbed out of the valley and left the Last Homely House miles behind, they were still going up and up and up.

YOU
SEEM DOWN
IN SPIRITS,
BILBO.

Far, far away in the West, Bilbo knew there lay his own country of safe and comfortable things, and his little hobbit-hole. But it was getting bitter cold up here, and the wind came shrill among the rocks.



THE
SUMMER
IS GETTING
ON DOWN
BELOW, AND
HAYMAKING
IS GOING
ON AND
PICNICS.



THEY WILL
BE HARVESTING
AND BLACKBERRYING,
BEFORE WE EVEN
BEGIN TO GO DOWN
THE OTHER SIDE
AT THIS RATE.

Gandalf only shook his head and said nothing. He knew how evil and danger had grown and thriven in the Wild, since the dragons had driven men from the lands and the goblins had spread in secret after the battle of the Mines of Moria.

He hardly dared to hope that they would pass without fearful adventure over those great tall mountains with lonely peaks and valleys where no king ruled.

They did not

All was well until one day they met a thunderstorm — more than a thunderstorm, a thunder-battle.

Lightning splintered on the peaks and rocks, snivered, and great crashes split the air and rolled and tumbled into every cave and hollow; and the darkness was filled with overwhelming noise and sudden light.

Bilbo had never seen or imagined anything of the kind.

Oh,
FEAR!

In the lightning-flashes, he saw that across the valley the stone-giants were out.



They were hurling rocks at one another for a game, and catching them, and tossing them down into the darkness where they smashed among the trees far below, or splintered into little bits with a bang.



Then came a wind and a rain, and the wind whipped the rain and the hail about in every direction. Soon they were getting drenched and their ponies were whinnying with fright.

They could hear the giants guffawing and shouting all over the mountainsides.



THIS WON'T DO AT ALL!

IF WE DON'T GET BLOWN OFF OR DROWNED, OR STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, WE SHALL BE PICKED UP BY SOME GIANT AND KICKED SKY-HIGH FOR A FOOTBALL.

THORIN!
WE HAVE FOUND A
DRY CAVE NOT FAR ROUND
THE NEXT CORNER, AND
PONIES AND ALL COULD
GET INSIDE.

HAVE YOU
THOROUGHLY
EXPLORED
IT?

YES, YES!
IT ISN'T ALL
THAT BIG, AND
IT DOES NOT
GO FAR
BACK.

GOOD
ENOUGH.
LET US HAVE
A LOOK AT
THIS CAVE,
THEN.

THE
FLOOR IS
DRY AND IT
IS OUT OF
THE RAIN.

IT WILL DO —
BUT NO FIRES! WE
SHALL HAVE TO GET BY
WITH A CHANGE INTO
DRY CLOTHES.

So they spread out their wet things
on the floor and then they made
their blankets comfortable.

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 impos-
sible).

And so
they
dropped
off to
sleep one
by one.

And that was the last time
that they used the ponies,
packages, and parapher-
nalia 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.

NEEEEEE
KAK

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.

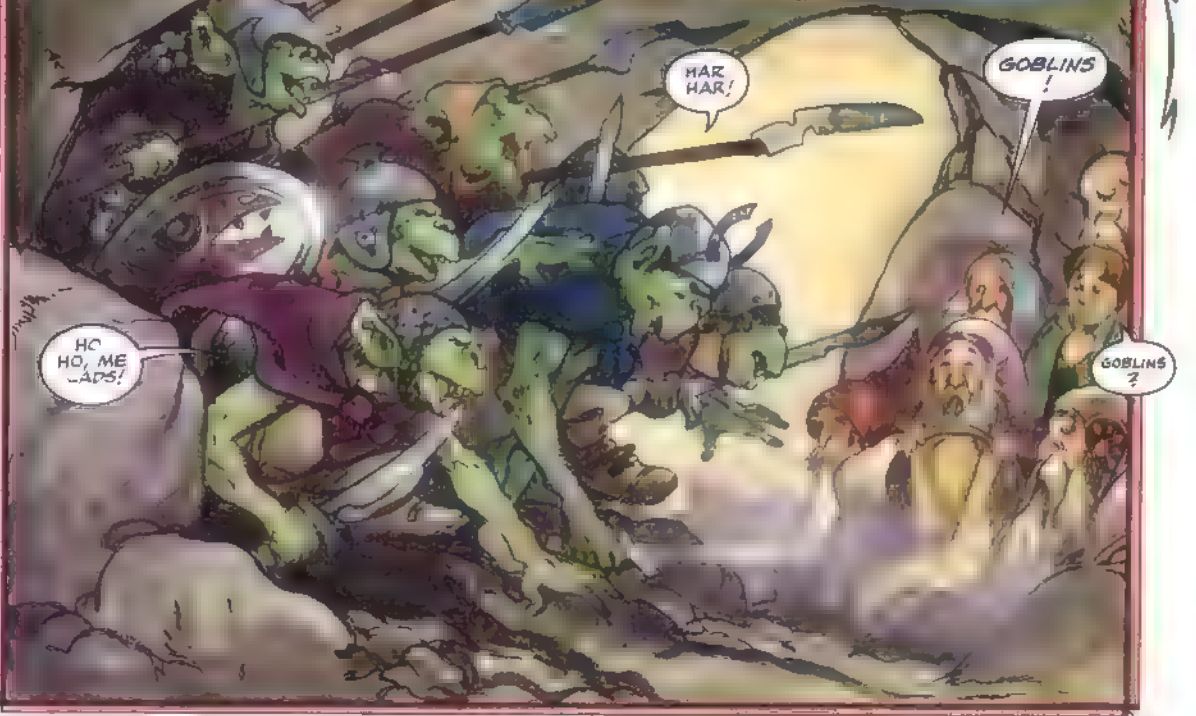
Then he dreamed that the floor of the cave was giving way and he was slipping - beginning to fall down, down, goodness knows where to.



THE PONIES!

UH?

WHUH?

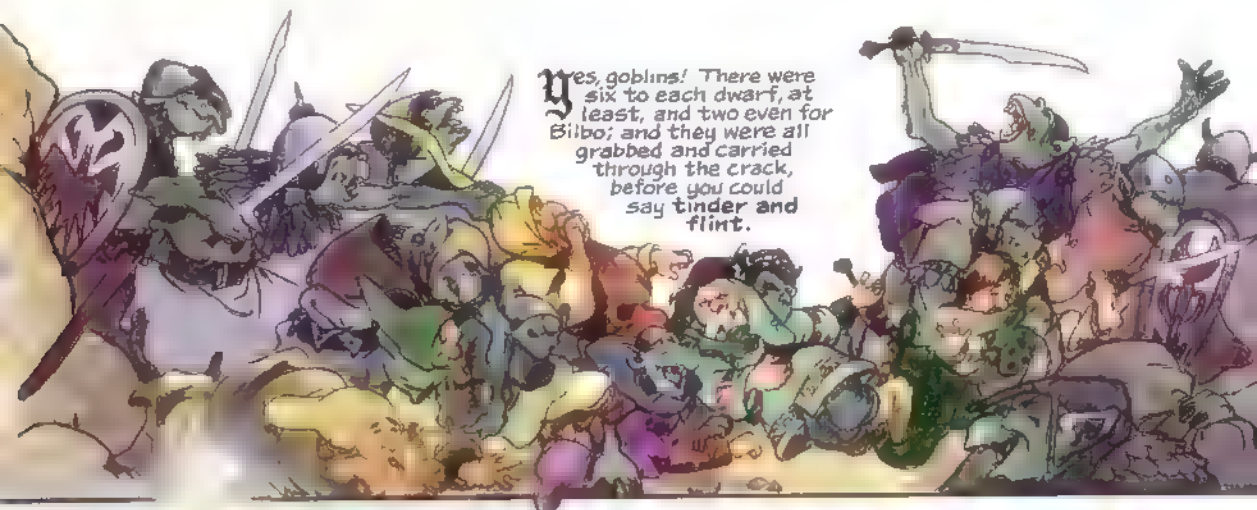


HAR HAR!

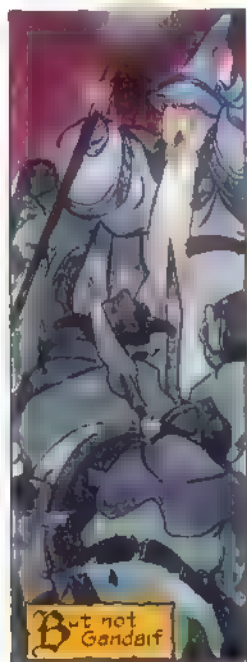
GOBLINS!

HO HO, ME LADS!

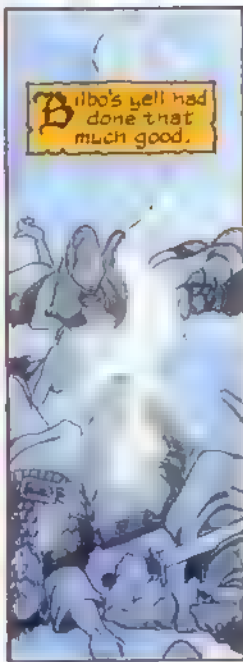
GOBLINS?



Yes, goblins! There were six to each dwarf, at least, and two even for Bilbo; and they were all grabbed and carried through the crack, before you could say tinder and flint.



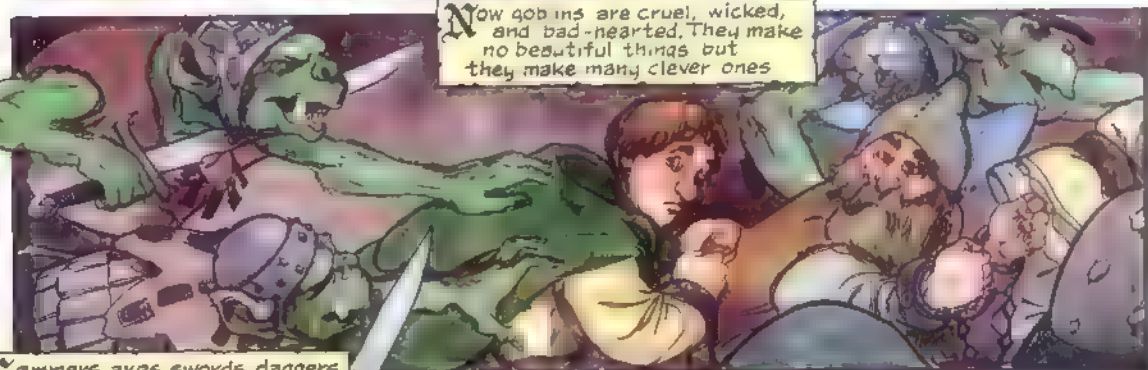
But not Gandalf



Bilbo's well had done that much good.



But the crack closed with a snap and Bilbo and the dwarves were on the wrong side of it



Now goblins are cruel, wicked, and bad-hearted. They make no beautiful things but they make many clever ones

Hammers, axes, swords, daggers, pickaxes, tongs, and also instruments of torture, they make very well.

It is not unlikely that they invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once.





WHO ARE THESE MISERABLE PERSONS?

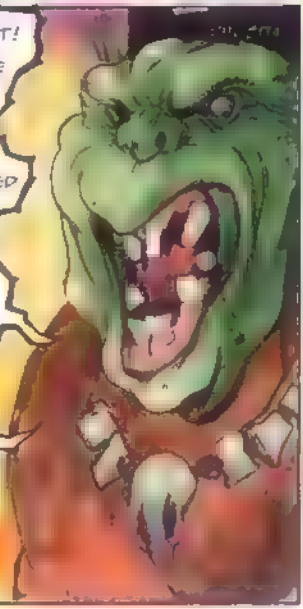
DWARVES, AND THIS!
WE FOUND THEM ON OUR FRONT PORCH!

UP TO NO GOOD, I'LL WARRANT!
SPYING ON THE PRIVATE BUSINESS OF MY PEOPLE I GUESS!

THIEVES, I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED TO LEARN!

MURDERERS AND FRIENDS OF ELVES, NOT UNLIKELY!

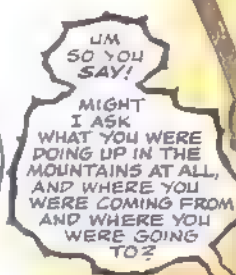
COME! WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO SAY?





THORIN THE DWARF AT YOUR SERVICE!

WE SHELTERED FROM A STORM IN WHAT SEEMED A CONVENIENT CAVE AND UNUSED; NOTHING WAS FURTHER FROM OUR THOUGHTS THAN INCONVENIENCING GOBLINS IN ANY WAY WHATEVER.

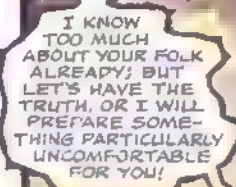


UM SO YOU SAY!

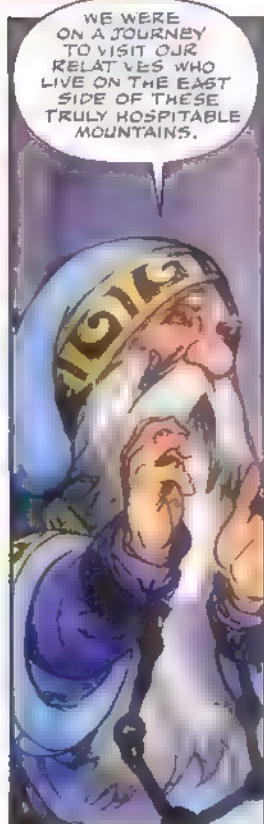
MIGHT I ASK WHAT YOU WERE DOING UP IN THE MOUNTAINS AT ALL, AND WHERE YOU WERE COMING FROM AND WHERE YOU WERE GOING TO?



IN FACT I SHOULD LIKE TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU THORIN OAKENSHIELD!



I KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT YOUR FOLK ALREADY; BUT LET'S HAVE THE TRUTH, OR I WILL PREPARE SOMETHING PARTICULARLY UNCOMFORTABLE FOR YOU!



WE WERE ON A JOURNEY TO VISIT OUR RELATIVES WHO LIVE ON THE EAST SIDE OF THESE TRULY HOSPITABLE MOUNTAINS.



HE IS A LIAR, A TRULY TREMENDOUS ONE!

SEVERAL OF OUR PEOPLE WERE STRUCK BY LIGHTNING IN THE CAVE WHEN WE INVITED THESE CREATURES TO COME BELOW; AND THEY ARE AS DEAD AS STONES.



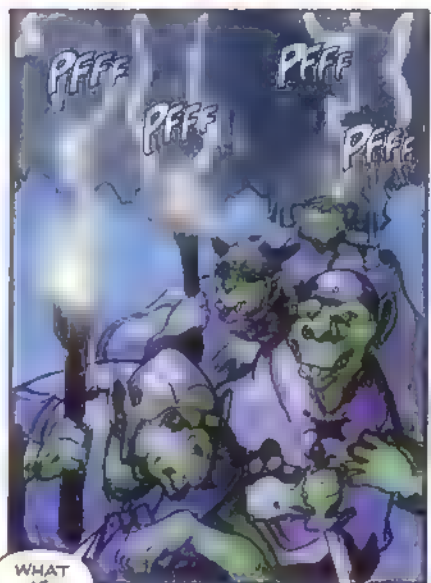
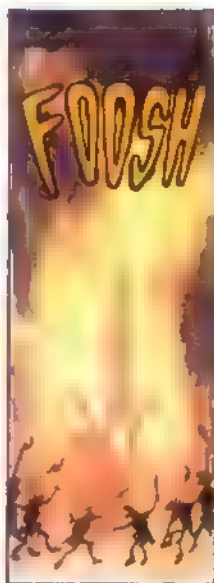
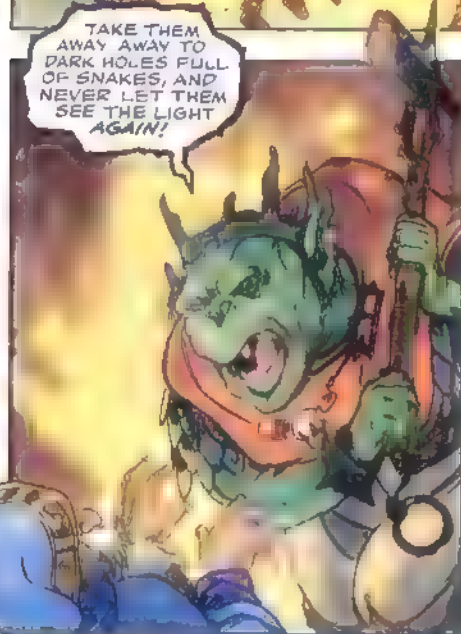
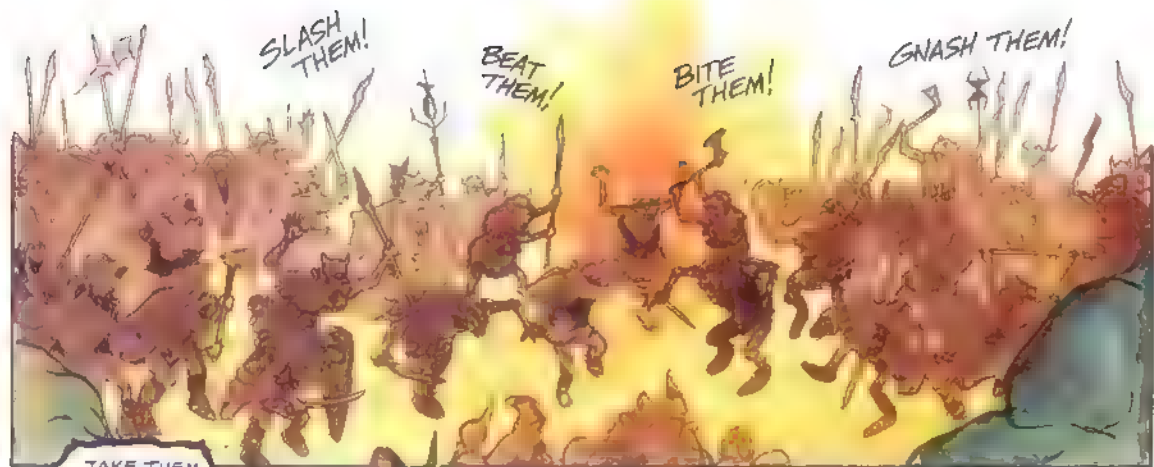
ALSO HE HAS NOT EXPLAINED THIS!



ORCRIST! THE GOBLIN-CLEAVER! BITER!

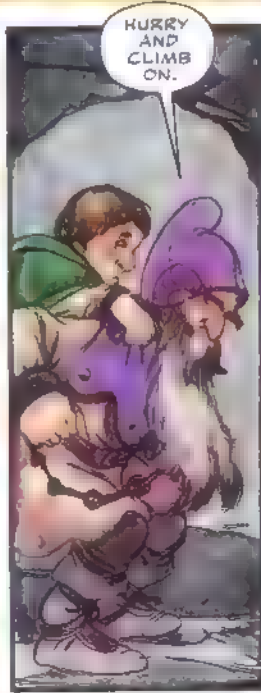
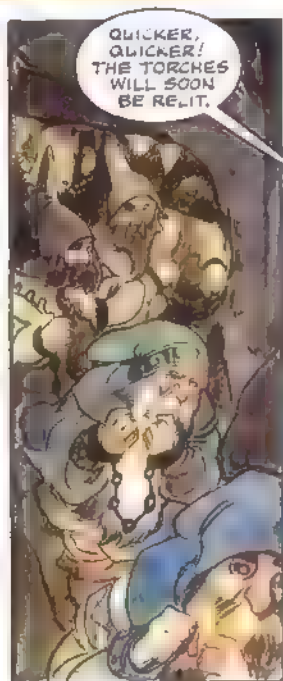
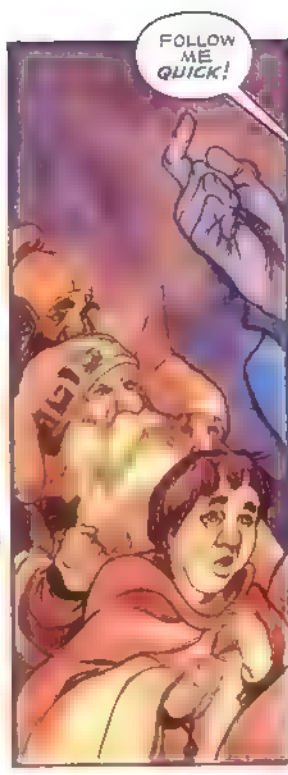
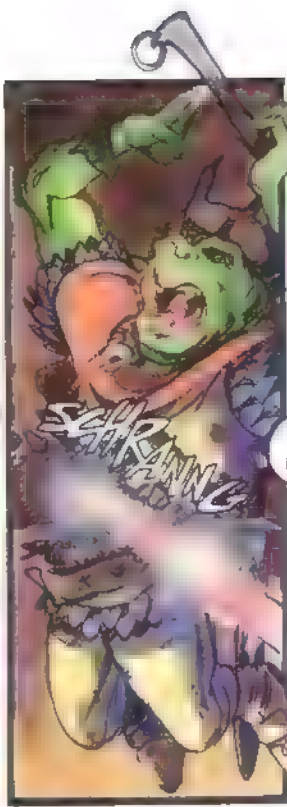
THE THRICE CURSED SWORD OF THE ELVES OF GONDOLIN!

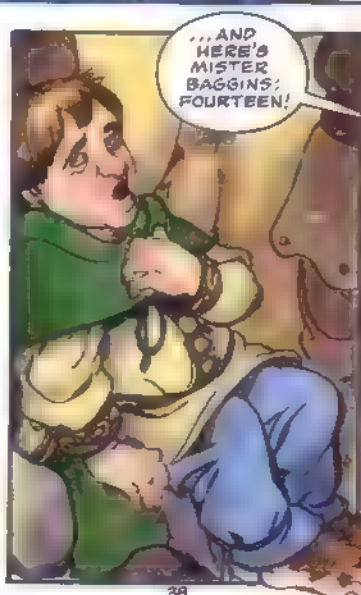
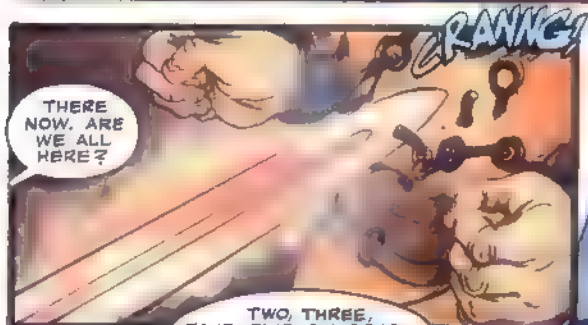
MURDERS AND ELF-FRIENDS!



WHAT IS THIS?







ON WE GO!

On they went.

And as 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 as the dwarves, they took it in turn to carry him on their backs.

WHY, O WHY
DID I EVER LEAVE
MY HOBBIT-HOLE!

WHY,
O WHY DID
I EVER BRING
A WRETCHED LITTLE
HOBBIT ON A
TREASURE
HUNT!

Still goblins go faster than dwarves, and soon they could hear the flap of the goblin feet, many many feet which seemed only just round the last corner.

ABOUT
TURN!
DRAW YOUR
SWORD,
THORIN!

URK!

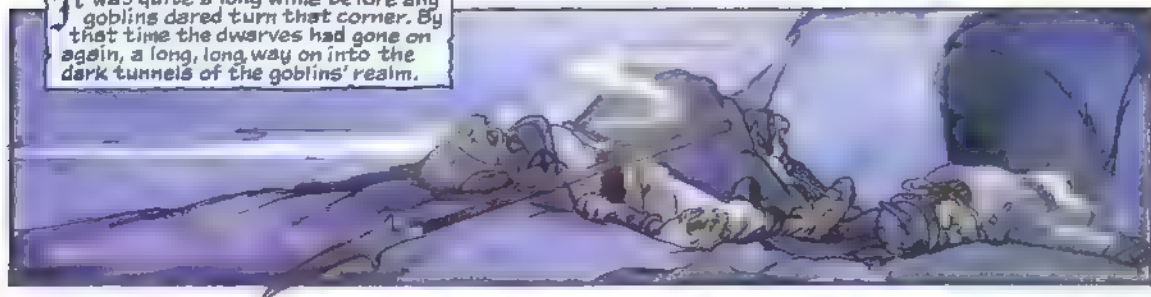
BITER!

BEATER!

BITER
AND
BEATER!

FLEE!

It was quite a long while before any goblins dared 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.

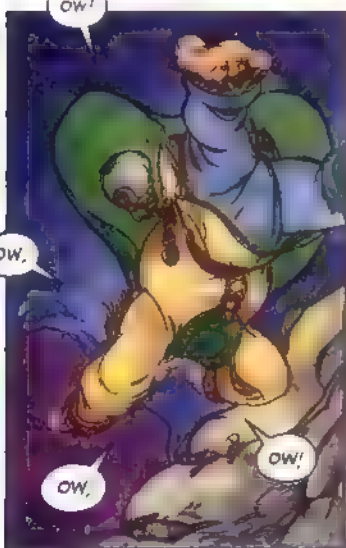


OH!

DORI!



SOME-BODY!

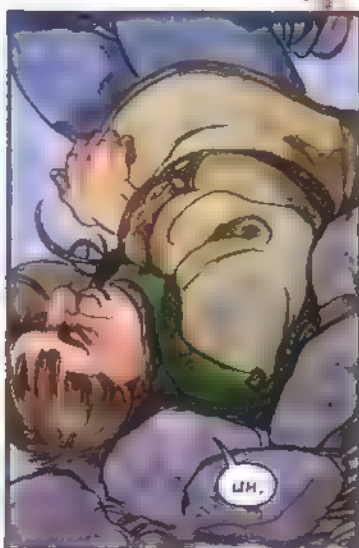


OW!

OW.

OW.

OW!



UM.



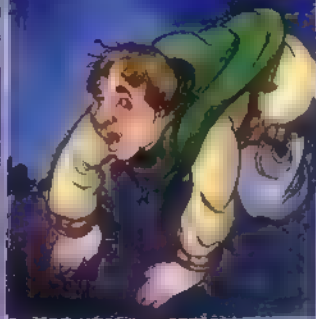
When Bilbo opened his eyes, he wondered if he had; for it was just as dark as with them shut. No one was anywhere near him. Just imagine his fright!



GANDALF?

THORIN?

DORI?



It was then that Bilbo's hand met a cold metal object in the dark.

HUH?



A RING?

NO TIME TO LOOK AT IT NOW. I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS TERRIBLE PLACE.



It was a turning point in his career, but he did not know it.

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

AM I THE ONLY ONE LEFT?



AT LEAST I STILL HAVE MY PIPE.

IF ONLY I CAN FIND SOME MATCH—

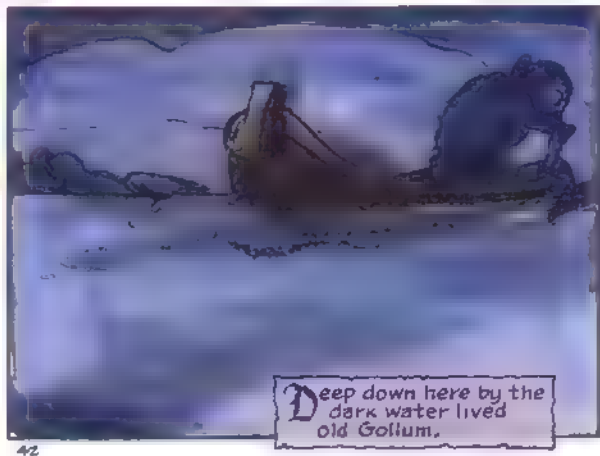
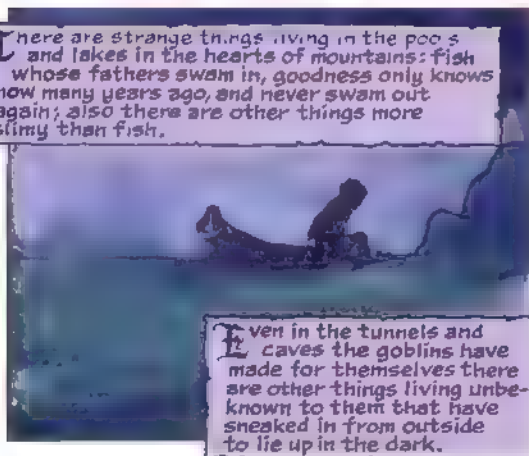
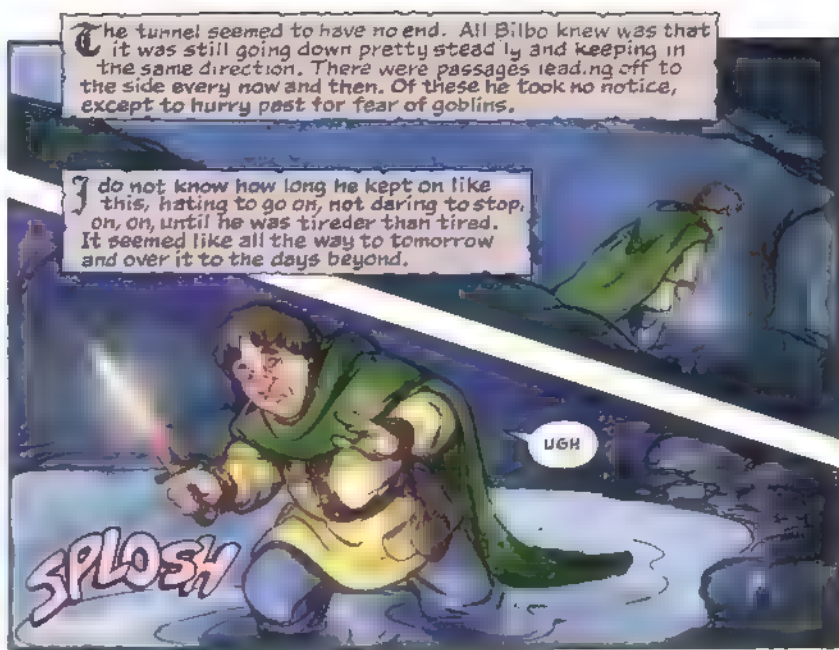
HMM? WHAT'S THIS?

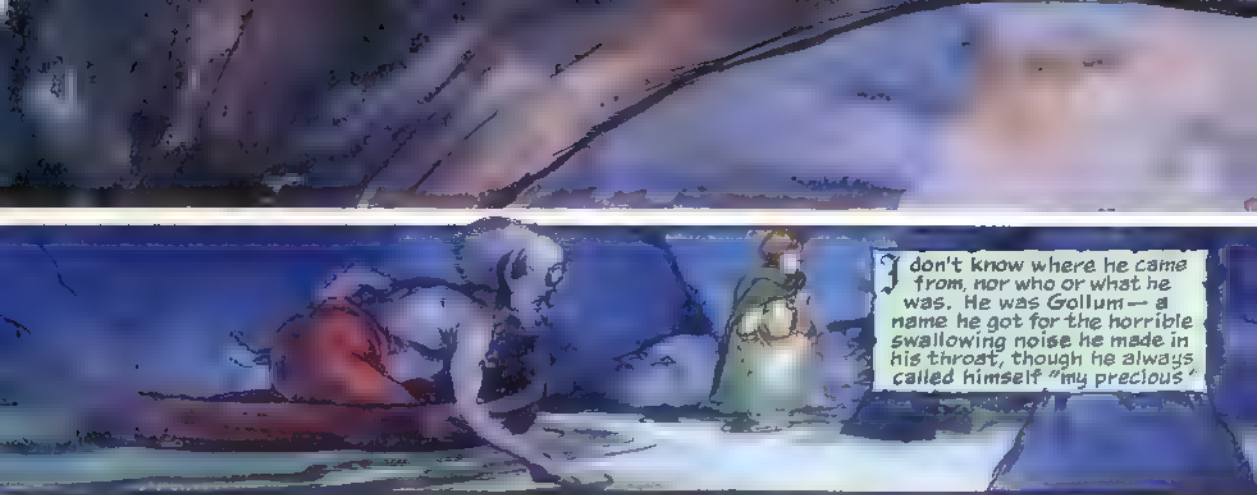


MY TROLL SWORD, SO IT'S AN ELVISH BLADE TOO.



AND FROM ITS GLOW I SEE GOBLINS ARE NOT VERY NEAR, AND YET NOT FAR ENOUGH.





I don't know where he came from, nor who or what he was. He was Gollum — a name he got for the horrible swallowing noise he made in his throat, though he always called himself "my precious"



BLESS US AND SPLASH US MY PRECIOUSSSSS! I GUESS IT'S A CHOICE FEAST; AT LEAST A TASTY MORSEL IT'D MAKE JS. gollum!

WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT ISS HE MY PRECIOUS?

I AM MISTER BILBO BAGGINS.

I HAVE LOST THE DWARVES AND I HAVE LOST THE WIZARD, AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM.

AND I DON'T WANT TO KNOW, IF ONLY I CAN GET AWAY.

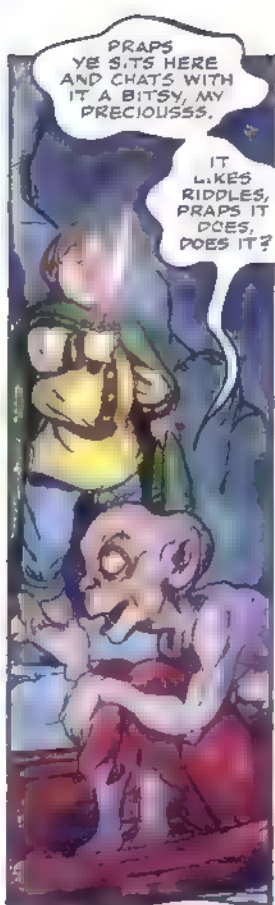




WHAT'S
HE GOT IN
HIS HANDSES
?

A
SWORD, A
BLADE WHICH
CAME OUT OF
GONDOLIN!

SSSS



PRAPS
YE SITS HERE
AND CHATS WITH
IT A BITSY, MY
PRECIOUSSS.

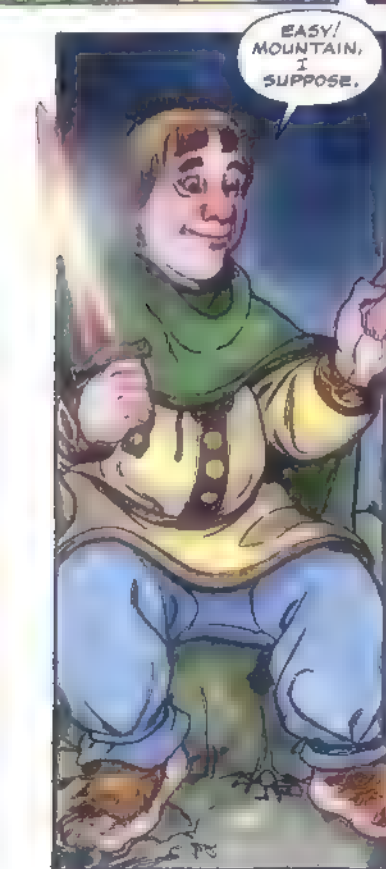
IT
LIKES
RIDDLES,
PRAPS IT
DOES,
DOES IT?



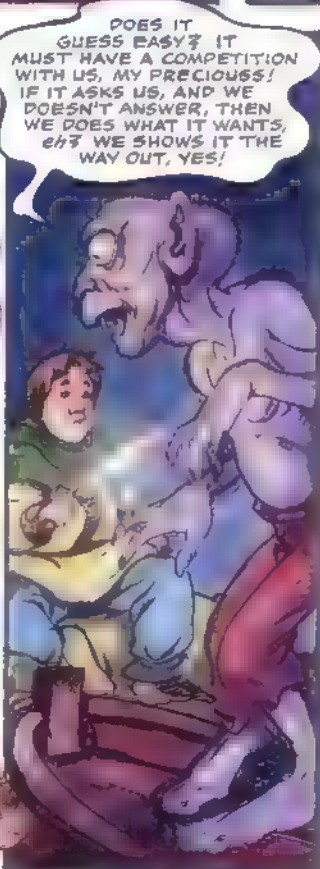
VERY WELL.

YOU ASK
FIRST.

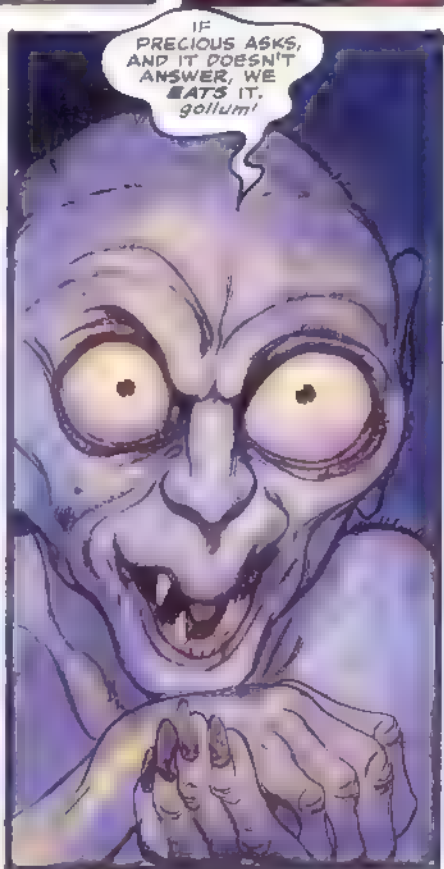
WHAT
HAS ROOTS AS
NOBODY SEES,
IS TALLER THAN TREES,
UP, UP IT GOES
AND YET NEVER
GROWS?



EASY!
MOUNTAIN,
I
SUPPOSE.



DOES IT
GUESS EASY? IT
MUST HAVE A COMPETITION
WITH US, MY PRECIOUS!
IF IT ASKS US, AND WE
DOESN'T ANSWER, THEN
WE DOES WHAT IT WANTS,
eh? WE SHOWS IT THE
WAY OUT, YES!



IF
PRECIOUS ASKS,
AND IT DOESN'T
ANSWER, WE
EATS IT.
gollum!



Bilbo didn't dare to disagree, and nearly burst his brain to think of riddles that could save him from being eaten.



THIRTY WHITE HORSES ON A RED HILL,
FIRST THEY CHAMP,
THEN THEY STAMP,
THEN THEY STAND STILL.



CHEST-NUTS
CHEST-NUTS.

TEETH! TEETH! MY PRECIOUSSES!
BUT WE HAS ONLY SIX!



VOICELESS IT CRIES,
WINGLESS FLUTTERS,
TOOTHLESS BITES
MOUTHLESS MUTTERS.

HALF A
MOMENT!

Fortunately Bilbo had
once heard something
rather like this before,
and getting his wits
back he thought of the
answer.

WIND,
WIND OF
COURSE

Bilbo was so pleased that he
made up one on the spot.
"This'll puzzle the nasty little
underground creature," he
thought:

AN EYE IN A BLUE FACE
SAW AN EYE IN A GREEN FACE.
"THAT EYE IS LIKE TO THIS EYE"
SAID THE FIRST EYE,
"BUT IN LOW PLACE,
NOT IN HIGH PLACE."

Gollum had been underground a
long long time, and was forget-
ting this sort of thing, but he
brought up memories of ages and
ages and ages before, when he
lived with his grandmother in a hole
in a bank by a river.

SS, SS
SS

SSS, SSS
MY PRECIOUS.
SUN ON THE
PASSES IT
MEANS, IT
DOES.

But these ordinary aboveground
everyday sort of riddles were
tiring for Gollum. What is more
they made him hungry; so this time
he tried something a bit more
difficult and more unpleasant:

IT CANNOT BE SEEN, CANNOT
BE FELT, CANNOT BE HEARD,
CANNOT BE SMELT.
IT LIES BEHIND STARS AND
UNDER HILLS, AND EMPTY
HOLES IT FILLS.
IT COMES FIRST AND FOLLOWS
AFTER, ENDS LIFE,
KILLS LAUGHTER.

Unfortunately for Gollum, Bilbo
had heard that sort of thing
before; and the answer was
all round him anyway.

PARK!

A BOX
WITHOUT HINGES,
KEY OR LID
YET GOLDEN
TREASURE INSIDE
IS HID.

Bilbo asked this one to gain time.
Until he could think of a really
hard one. Though he thought it a
dreadfully easy chestnut, it proved
a nasty poser for Gollum.

KEY
OR LID,
SSS,
GOLDEN
TREASURE
INSIDE,
SSSS

WELL,
WHAT
IS IT?

THE ANSWERS
NOT A KETTLE BOILING
OVER AS YOU SEEM TO
THINK FROM THE
NOISE YOU ARE
MAKING.

GIVE US
A CHANCE;
LET T GVE US
A CHANCE, MY
PRECIOUS—
SS—SS.

WELL, WHAT ABOUT YOUR GUESS?

Suddenly Gollum remembered thieving from nests long ago, and sitting under the river bank teaching his grandmother, teaching his grandmother to suck—

EGGSES!
EGGSES!
IT IS!

ALIVE WITHOUT BREATH,
AS COLD AS DEATH;
NEVER THIRSTY, EVER
DRINKING, ALL IN MAIL
NEVER CLINKING.

I imagine you know the answer of course, or can guess it as easy as winking since you are sitting comfortably at home and have not the danger of being eaten to disturb your thinking.

Bo sat and cleared his throat once or twice, but no answer came.

IS IT NICE,
MY PRECIOUSSES?
IS IT JUICY? IS IT
SCRUMPTIOUSLY
CRUNCHABLE?

HALF A
MOMENT. I
GAVE YOU A GOOD
LONG CHANCE
JUST NOW.

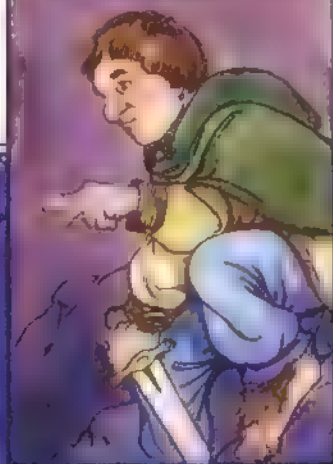
IT MUST
MAKE WASTE,
WASTE!

SPASH

UGH!
IT IS
COLD AND
CLAMMY!

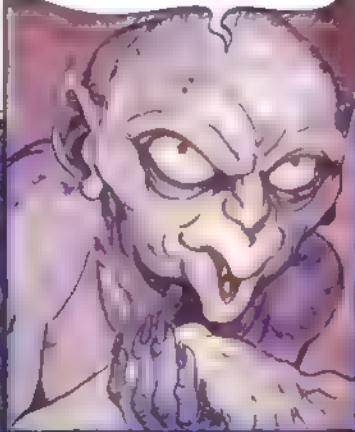
FISH!
FISH! IT
IS FISH!

NO-LEGS LAY ON
ONE-LEG,
TWO-LEGS SAT NEAR ON
THREE-LEGS,
FOUR-LEGS GOT SOME.



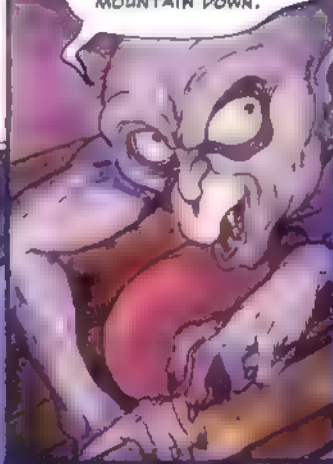
It was not really the right time for this riddle, but Bilbo was in a hurry. Gollum might have had some trouble guessing it, if Bilbo had asked it at another time. As it was, talking of fish, "no-legs" was not so very difficult and after that the rest was easy.

FISH ON A LITTLE TABLE, MAN
AT TABLE SITTING ON A STOOL.
THE CAT HAS THE BONES.



Then Gollum thought the time had come to ask something hard and horrible.

THIS THING ALL THINGS
DEVOURS: BIRDS, BEASTS,
TREES, FLOWERS.
GNAWS IRON, BITES STEEL;
GRINDS HARD STONES TO MEAL;
SLAYS KING, RUINS TOWN,
AND BEATS HIGH
MOUNTAIN DOWN.



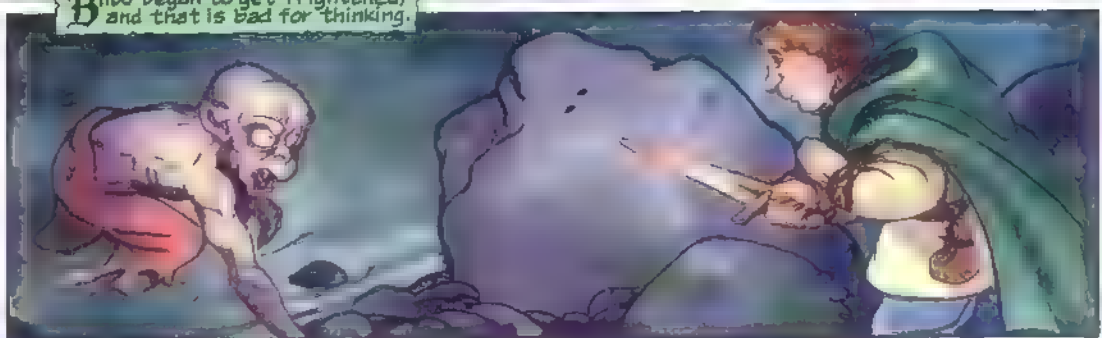
Poor Bilbo sat in the dark thinking of all the horrible names of all the giants and ogres he had ever heard told of in tales, but not one of them had done all these things.



He had a feeling that the answer was quite different and that he ought to know it, but he could not think of it.



Bilbo began to get frightened,
and that is bad for thinking.



His tongue seemed to stick in his
mouth; he wanted to shout out:
"Give me more time! Give me time!"
But all that came out with a sudden
squeal was:

TIME!
TIME!

Bilbo was saved by
pure luck. For
that of course was
the answer.



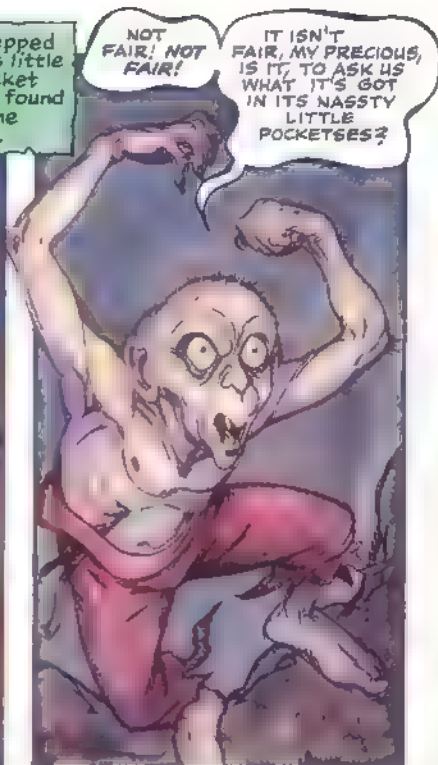
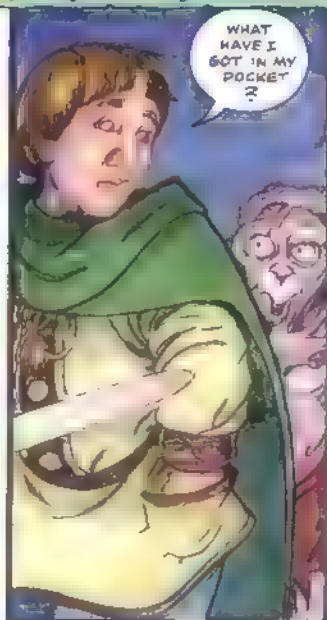
IT'S GOT TO ASK
USS A QUESTION, MY
PRECIOUS, YES,
YESS, YESS.
JUST ONE MORE
QUESTION TO
GUESS, YES,
YESS.

WMM...

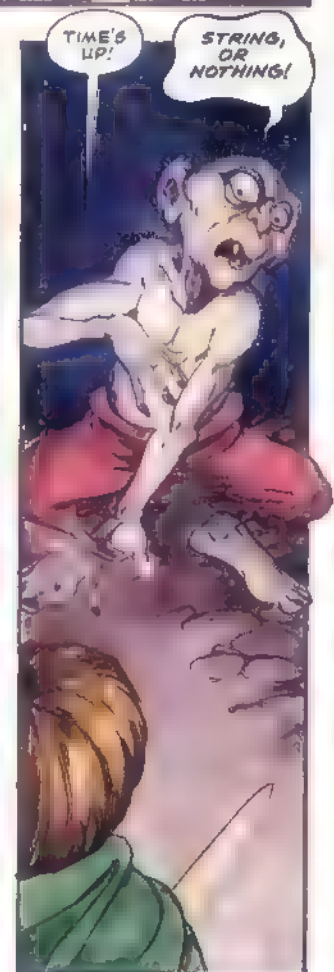
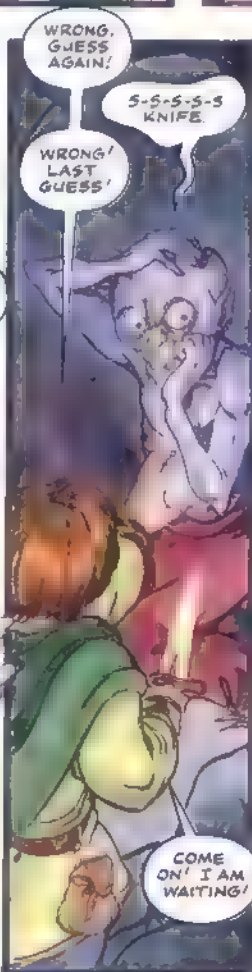
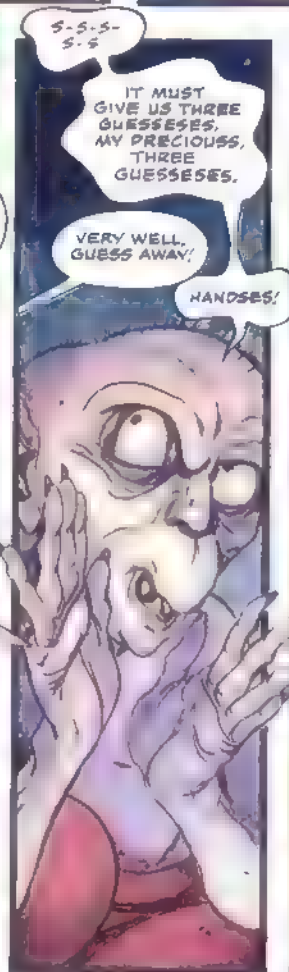


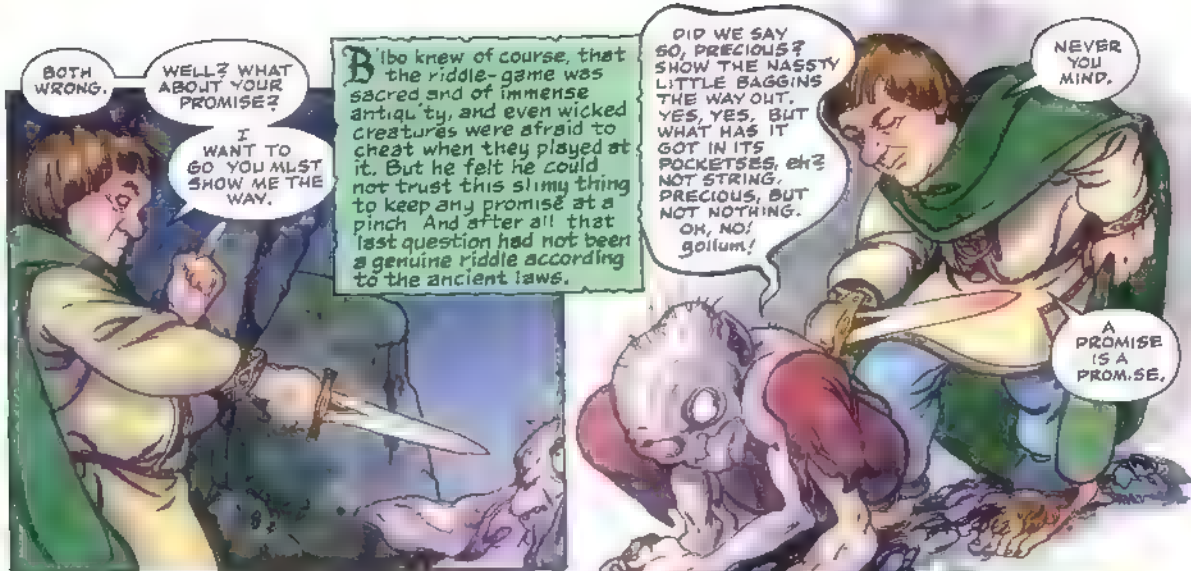


Bilbo pinched himself and slapped himself; he gripped on his little sword; he even felt in his pocket with his other hand. There he found the ring he had picked up in the passage and forgotten about.



Bilbo had been talking to himself. But seeing what had happened and having nothing better to ask, he stuck to his question.





BOTH
WRONG.

WELL? WHAT
ABOUT YOUR
PROMISE?

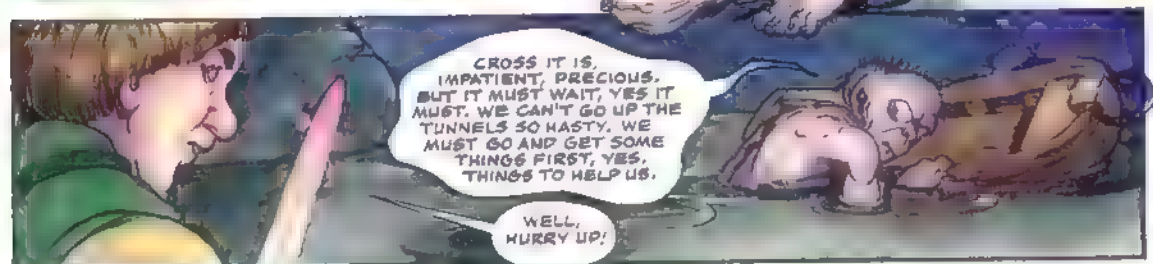
I
WANT TO
GO. YOU MUST
SHOW ME THE
WAY.

B'bo knew of course, that the riddle-game was sacred and of immense antiquity, and even wicked creatures were afraid to cheat when they played at it. But he felt he could not trust this slimy thing to keep any promise at a pinch. And after all that last question had not been a genuine riddle according to the ancient laws.

DID WE SAY
SO, PRECIOUS?
SHOW THE NASSTY
LITTLE BAGGINS
THE WAY OUT.
YES, YES, BUT
WHAT HAS IT
GOT IN ITS
POCKETSES, eh?
NOT STRING,
PRECIOUS, BUT
NOT NOTHING.
OH, NO!
gollum!

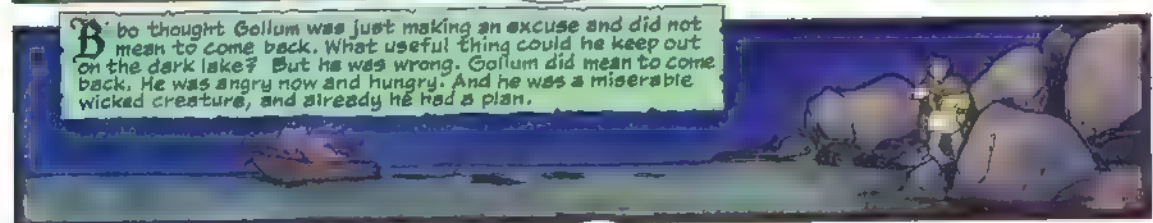
NEVER
YOU
MIND.

A
PROMISE
IS A
PROMISE.

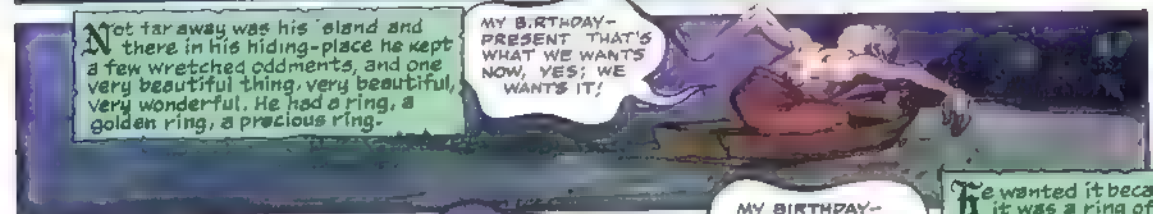


CROSS IT IS,
IMPATIENT, PRECIOUS.
BUT IT MUST WAIT, YES IT
MUST. WE CAN'T GO UP THE
TUNNELS SO HASTY. WE
MUST GO AND GET SOME
THINGS FIRST, YES,
THINGS TO HELP US.

WELL,
MURRY UP!



B'bo thought Gollum was just making an excuse and did not mean to come back. What useful thing could he keep out on the dark lake? But he was wrong. Gollum did mean to come back. He was angry now and hungry. And he was a miserable wicked creature, and already he had a plan.



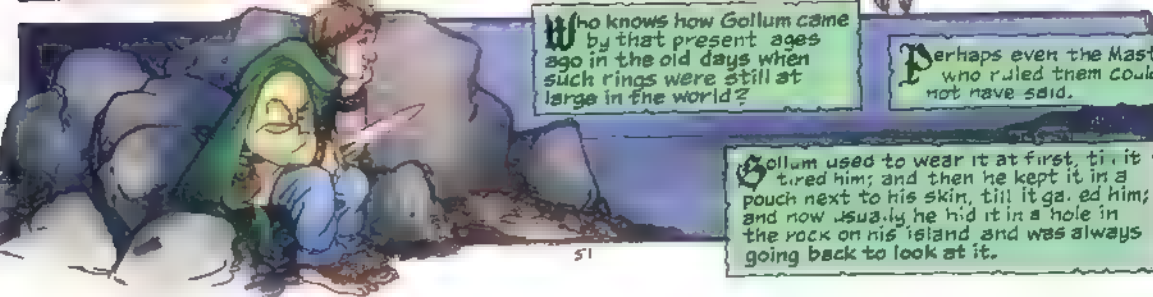
Not far away was his island and there in his hiding-place he kept a few wretched oddments, and one very beautiful thing, very beautiful, very wonderful. He had a ring, a golden ring, a precious ring.

MY BIRTHDAY-
PRESENT THAT'S
WHAT WE WANT
NOW, YES; WE
WANTS IT!



MY BIRTHDAY-
PRESENT! IT CAME
TO ME ON MY
BIRTHDAY, MY
PRECIOUS.

He wanted it because it was a ring of power and if you slipped that ring on your finger, you were invisible; only in the full sunlight could you be seen, and then only by your shadow, and that would be shaky and faint.



Who knows how Gollum came by that present ages ago in the old days when such rings were still at large in the world?

Perhaps even the Master who ruled them could not have said.

Gollum used to wear it at first, till it tired him; and then he kept it in a pouch next to his skin, till it ga. ed him; and now usually he hid it in a hole in the rock on his island and was always going back to look at it.

Only a few hours ago he had worn it, and caught a small goblin-imp. How it squeaked!

QUITE SAFE, YES. IT WON'T SEE US, WILL IT, MY PRECIOUS? NO. IT WON'T SEE US, AND ITS NAASTY LITTLE SWORD WILL BE USELESS, YES QUITE.

WHERE IS IT? WHERE IS IT?

LOSST IT IS, MY PRECIOUS, LOST, LOST! CURSE US AND CRUSH US, MY PRECIOUS IS LOST!

WELL, SO AM I, AND I WANT TO GET UNLOST. AND I WON THE GAME, AND YOU PROMISED. SO COME ALONG! COME AND LET ME OUT, AND THEN GO ON WITH YOUR LOOKING!

NO, NOT YET, PRECIOUS! WE MUST SEARCH FOR IT, IT'S LOST, gollum!

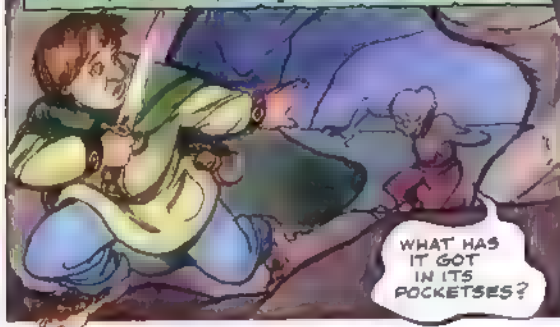
BUT YOU NEVER GUESSED MY LAST QUESTION, AND YOU PROMISED.

NEVER GUESSED!

Sssssss WHAT HAS IT GOT IN ITS POCKETSSSS?

WHAT HAVE YOU LOST? TELL ME THAT!

Bilbo could not guess what had maddened the wretched creature, but he saw that all was up, and that Gollum meant to murder him at any rate. Just in time he turned and ran blindly back up the dark passage down which he had come.



WHAT HAS IT GOT IN ITS POCKETSES?

WHAT HAVE I, I WONDER?

Bilbo put his left hand in his pocket. The ring felt very cold as it quietly slipped on to his groping forefinger.



AAGH!

In a moment, Gollum was on him.

But before Bilbo could do anything Gollum passed by, taking no notice of him. What could it mean?



IT'S NO GOOD GOING BACK THERE TO SEARCH, NO, THE BAGGINS HAS GOT IT IN ITS POCKETSES, THE NASTY, NOSY THING, WE SAYS.

BUT IT DOESN'T KNOW WHAT THE PRESENT CAN DO, DOES IT? IT DOESN'T KNOW, AND IT CAN'T GO FAR, IT'S LOST ITSELF, THE NASTY, NOSY THING.

YES, BUT IF IT'S GOT THE PRESENT, OUR PRECIOUS PRESENT, THEN GOBLINES WILL GET IT, gollum! THEY'LL FIND IT, THEY'LL FIND OUT WHAT IT DOES. WE SHAN'T EVER BE SAFE AGAIN, NEVER, gollum! ONE OF THE GOBLINES WILL PUT IT ON, AND THEN NO ONE WILL SEE HIM. HE'LL BE THERE BUT NOT SEEN; AND HE'LL COME CREEPSY AND TRICKSY AND CATCH US, gollum, gollum!

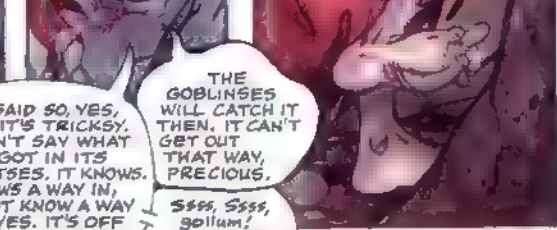
CURSE THE BAGGINS! IT'S GONE! WHAT HAS IT GOT IN ITS POCKETSES? OH WE GUESS, WE GUESS, MY PRECIOUS. HE'S FOUND IT, YES HE MUST HAVE, MY BIRTHDAY-PRESENT.

WE LOST IT WHEN WE CAME THIS WAY LAST, WHEN WE TWISTED THAT NASTY YOUNG SQUEAKER. THAT'S IT. CURSE IT! IT SLIPPED FROM US, AFTER ALL THESE AGES AND AGES! IT'S GONE, gollum!

IT SAID SO, YES, BUT IT'S TRICKSY. IT WON'T SAY WHAT IT'S GOT IN ITS POCKETSES. IT KNOWS. IT KNOWS A WAY IN, IT MUST KNOW A WAY OUT, YES. IT'S OFF TO THE BACK-DOOR.

THE GOBLINES WILL CATCH IT THEN. IT CAN'T GET OUT THAT WAY, PRECIOUS.

Ssss, Ssss, gollum! GOBLINES!



THEN LET'S STOP TALKING, PRECIOUS, AND MAKE HASTE, IF THE BAGGINS HAS GONE THAT WAY, WE MUST GO QUICK AND SEE. GO, NOT FAR NOW. MAKE HASTE! ONE LEFT, YES. ONE RIGHT, YES.

Bilbo hurried after Gollum. His head was in a whirl of hope and wonder. It seemed that the ring he had was a magic ring: it made you invisible!

As Gollum's count grew he slowed down, and he began to get shaky and weepy; for he was leaving the water further and further behind, and he was getting afraid.

SEVEN RIGHT, YES. SIX LEFT, YES!

THIS IS IT. THIS IS THE WAY TO THE BACK-DOOR, YES. HERE'S THE PASSAGE!

BUT WE DURSTN'T GO IN, PRECIOUS, NO WE DURSTN'T. GOBLINSES DOWN THERE. LOTS OF GOBLINSES. WE SMELL THEM. SSSS!

WE MUST WAIT HERE, PRECIOUS, WAIT A BIT AND SEE.

So they came to a dead stop. Gollum had brought Bilbo to the way out after all, but Bilbo could not get in! Bilbo crept away from the wall more quietly than a mouse; but Gollum stiffened at once, and sniffed, and his eyes went green!

He had heard of such things, of course, in old tales; but it was hard to believe that he really had found one, by accident. Still there it was: Gollum with his bright eyes had passed him by, only a yard to one side.

Bilbo almost stopped breathing, and went stiff himself. He was desperate. He must get away while he had any strength left. He must fight. He must stab the foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill him.

No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost.

A sudden understanding a pity mixed with horror welled up in Bilbo's heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment. And then quite suddenly, as if lifted by a new strength and resolve he leaped.

EEEEEE!

Straight over Gollum's head he leaped, seven feet forward and three in the air.

Falling fair on his sturdy feet, Bilbo sped off down the new tunnel.

THIEF, THIEF, THIEF! BAGGINS! WE HATES IT, WE HATES IT, WE HATES IT FOR EVER!

IF GOBLINS ARE SO NEAR THAT HE SMELL THEM, THEN THEY'LL HAVE HEARD HIS SHRIEKING AND CURSING. CAREFUL NOW, OR THIS WAY WILL LEAD YOU TO WORSE THINGS.

Then Bilbo began to run.

Soon he saw, filtering round another corner—a glimpse of light. Not red light as of fire or lantern, but a pale out-of-doors sort of light.

Scuttling as fast as his legs would carry him he turned the last corner...

...and came suddenly right into an open space, where the light, after all that time in the dark, seemed dazzlingly bright.



HA HA?

The goblins saw Bilbo sooner than he saw them. Yes, they saw him. Whether it was an accident, or a last trick of the ring before it took a new master, it was not on his finger.

Arr!
HERE'S ONE
OF THEM!

HAR
HAR

Forgetting even to draw his sword Bilbo struck his hands into his pockets. And there was the ring still in his left pocket, and it slipped on his forefinger.

Bilbo was dreadfully frightened, but he had the sense to understand what had happened and to get out of the way.

WHERE
IS IT?

GO BACK
UP THE
PASSAGE.

LOOK
OUT FOR
THE
POOR!

THIS
WAY

THAT
WAY!

WHERE'S
IT
GONE?

The poor little hobbit dodged this way and that, was knocked over by a goblin, scrambled away on all fours just in time, got up and ran for the door.

The door was still ajar, but a goblin had pushed it nearly to. Bilbo struggled but he could not move it. He tried to squeeze through the crack. He squeezed and squeezed, and he stuck! His buttons had got wedged on the edge of the door. He could see outside into the open air—but he could not get through.

THERE
IS A SHADOW
BY THE DOOR
SOMETHING
IS OUTSIDE!

Bilbo was through, with a torn coat and waistcoat, leaping down the steps like a goat. Of course the goblins soon came down after him, hooting and hallooing. 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; so soon they went back grumbling and cursing to guard the door.

Bilbo had
escaped.

GOOD
HEAVENS!

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!

Biibo wandered on, out of
the little high valley,
over its edge, and down
the slopes beyond; but all
the while a very uncom-
fortable 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 mis-
erable he felt
about it—
when he heard—

VOICES?

IT'S BALIN,
AND HE DOESN'T
SEE ME.

THE
RING! OF COURSE
HE DOESN'T
SEE ME!

I WILL
GIVE THEM
ALL A
SURPRISE.

AFTER ALL HE
IS MY FRIEND, AND
NOT A BAD LITTLE
CHAP. I FEEL
RESPONSIBLE FOR
HIM. I WISH TO
GOODNESS YOU HAD
NOT LOST HIM.

HE HAS
BEEN MORE
TROUBLE
THAN USE
SO FAR. IF
WE HAVE GOT
TO GO BACK NOW
INTO THOSE ABOMINABLE TUNNELS
TO LOOK FOR
HIM, THEN
DEAT HIM,
I SAY.

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

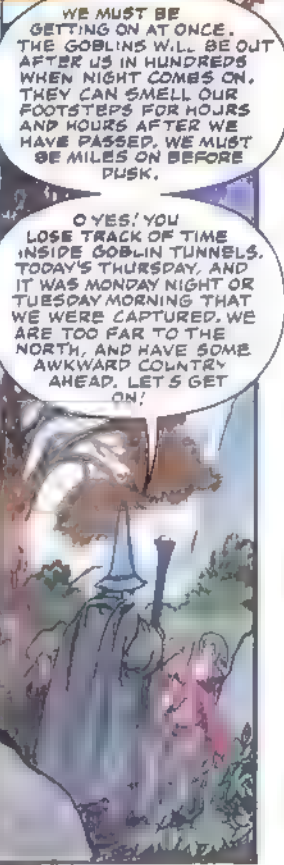
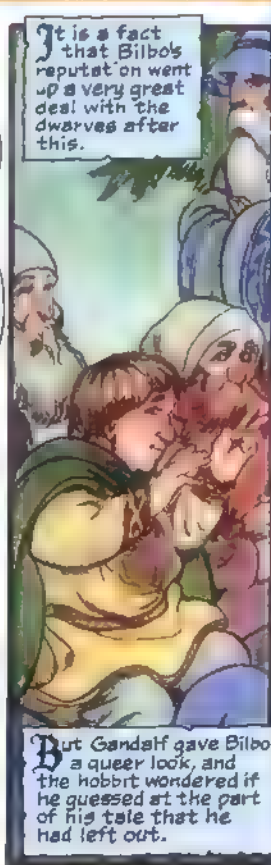
YOU WOULD
HAVE DROPPED HIM
IF A GOBLIN HAD
SUDDENLY GRABBED
YOUR LEG FROM
BEHIND IN
THE DARK!

THEN WHY
DIDN'T YOU
PICK HIM UP
AGAIN?

GOOD HEAVENS!
CAN YOU ASK? GOBLINS
FIGHTING AND BITING
IN THE DARK, EVERY-
BODY FALLING OVER
BODIES AND HITTING
ONE ANOTHER!

WHATEVER
DID YOU WANT
TO GO AND
PROP HIM FOR,
DORI?

YOU SHOUTED 'FOLLOW
ME EVERYBODY!' AND EVERY-
BODY OUGHT TO HAVE FOLLOWED.
AND HERE WE ARE—WITHOUT
THE BURGLAR, CONFUSI-
CATE HIM!



As they went on the shadows deepened about them. Still they marched along as fast as they were able; and all the while the forest-gloom got heavier and the forest's fence deeper.

MUST WE GO ANY FURTHER? MY TOES ARE ALL BRUISED AND BENT, AND MY LEGS ACHE, AND MY STOMACH IS WAGGING LIKE AN EMPTY SACK.

A BIT FURTHER.

AARROOOO...
WOLVES!

ROO ROO
ARROOOO...

WHAT SHALL WE DO, WHAT SHALL WE DO!

ESCAPING GOBLINS TO BE CAUGHT BY WOLVES!

UP THE TREES QUICK!

There was no wind that evening to bring even a sea-sighing into the branches of the trees.

YOU'VE LEFT THE BURGLAR BEHIND AGAIN!

I CAN'T BE ALWAYS CARRYING BURGLARS ON MY BACK DOWN TUNNELS AND UP TREES! WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM? A PORTER?

HE'LL BE EATEN IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING.

DORI, BE QUICK, AND GIVE MISTER BAGGINS A HAND UP.

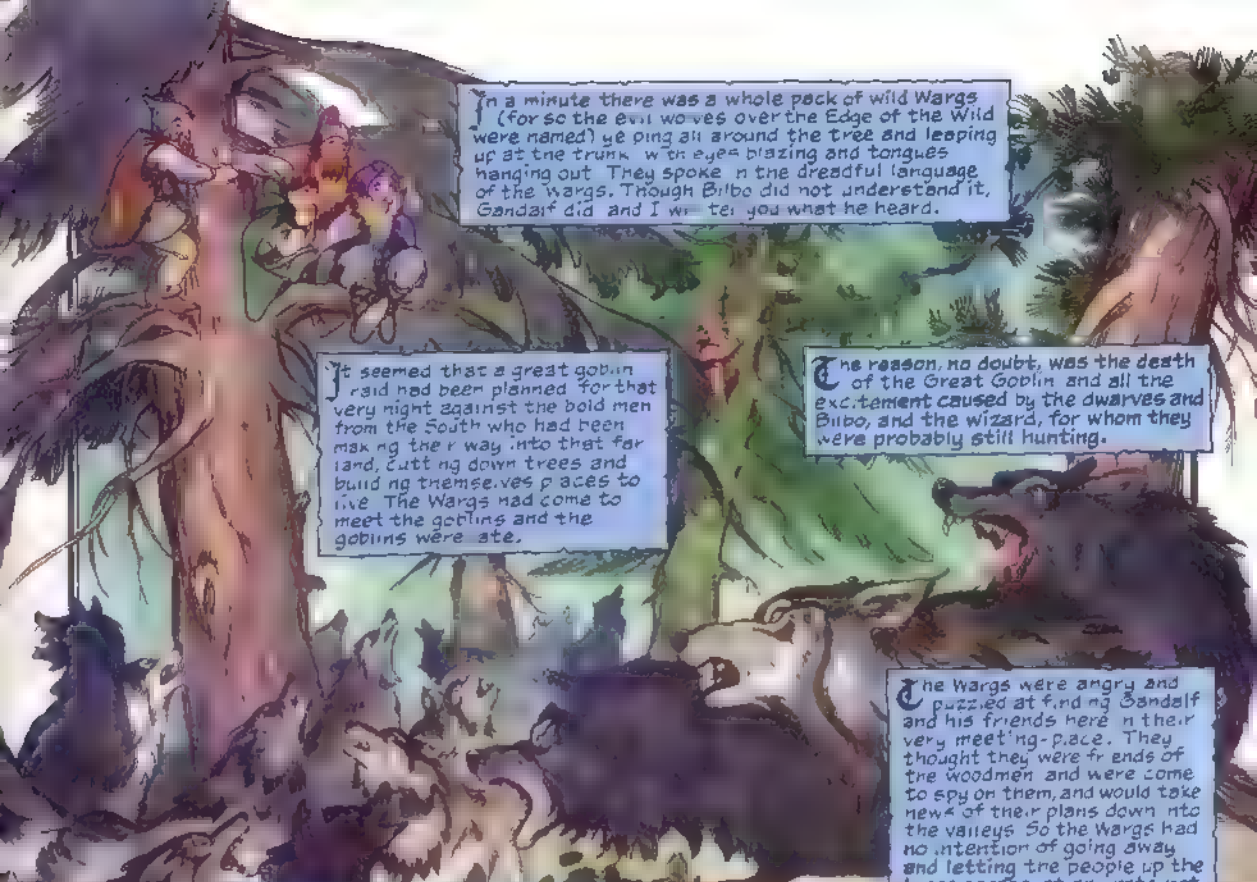
OH!

PLEASE HURRY, MISTER BAGGINS!

GRRR
GRRR

GRRR

GRRR GRRR
GRRR



In a minute there was a whole pack of wild Wargs (for so the evil wolves over the Edge of the Wild were named) ye ping all around the tree and leaping up at the trunk with eyes blazing and tongues hanging out. They spoke in the dreadful language of the Wargs. Though Bilbo did not understand it, Gandalf did, and I will tell you what he heard.

It seemed that a great goblin raid had been planned for that very night against the bold men from the South who had been making their way into that far land, cutting down trees and building themselves places to live. The Wargs had come to meet the goblins and the goblins were late.

The reason, no doubt, was the death of the Great Goblin and all the excitement caused by the dwarves and Bilbo, and the wizard, for whom they were probably still hunting.

The Wargs were angry and puzzled at finding Gandalf and his friends here in their very meeting-place. They thought they were friends of the Woodmen and were come to spy on them, and would take news of their plans down into the valleys. So the Wargs had no intention of going away and letting the people up the trees escape at any rate not until morning.

And long before that, goblin soldiers would be coming down from the mountains; and goblins can climb trees, or cut them down.

WHAT'S ALL THIS UPROAR IN THE FOREST TONIGHT?

I HEAR WOLVES VOICES

ARE THE GOBLINS AT MISCHIEF IN THE WOODS?

So though he could not see the people in the trees he could make out the commotion among the wolves and see tiny flashes of fire.

The lord of the eagles of the Misty Mountains had eyes that could look at the sun unblinking, and could see a rabbit moving on the ground a mile below even in the moonlight.

Tonight he was filled with curiosity to know what was afoot; so he summoned many other eagles to him and slowly they circled down down, down.

Now you can understand why Gandalf listening to their growling and ye ping began to be dreadfully afraid, wizard though he was. All the same he was not going to let them have it all their own way.

FRROOM

RAR

Maddened and angry the Wargs were leaping and howling round the trees. Then suddenly goblins came running up yelling.

SLASH THEM

BEAT THEM

They thought a battle with the woodmen was going on, but they soon learned what had really happened. Goblins are not afraid of fire, and they soon had a plan which seemed to them most amusing.

FLY AWAY, LITTLE BIRDS! FLY AWAY IF YOU CAN!

They rushed round and stamped and beat, and beat and stamped, until nearly all the flames were put out - but they did not put out the fire nearer to the trees where the dwarves were. That fire they fed with leaves and dead branches and bracken.

GO AWAY! LITTLE BOYS!

IT ISN'T BIRD-NESTING TIME. ALSO NAUGHTY LITTLE BOYS THAT PLAY WITH FIRE GET PUNISHED.

FIFTEEN BIRDS IN FIVE FIRE TREES, THEIR FEATHERS WERE FANNED IN A FIERY BREEZE!

SING, SING LITTLE BIRDS! WHY DON'T YOU SING?

BURN BURN TREE AND FERN! SHRIVEL AND SCORCH! A FIZZLING TORCH TO LIGHT THE NIGHT FOR OUR DELIGHT

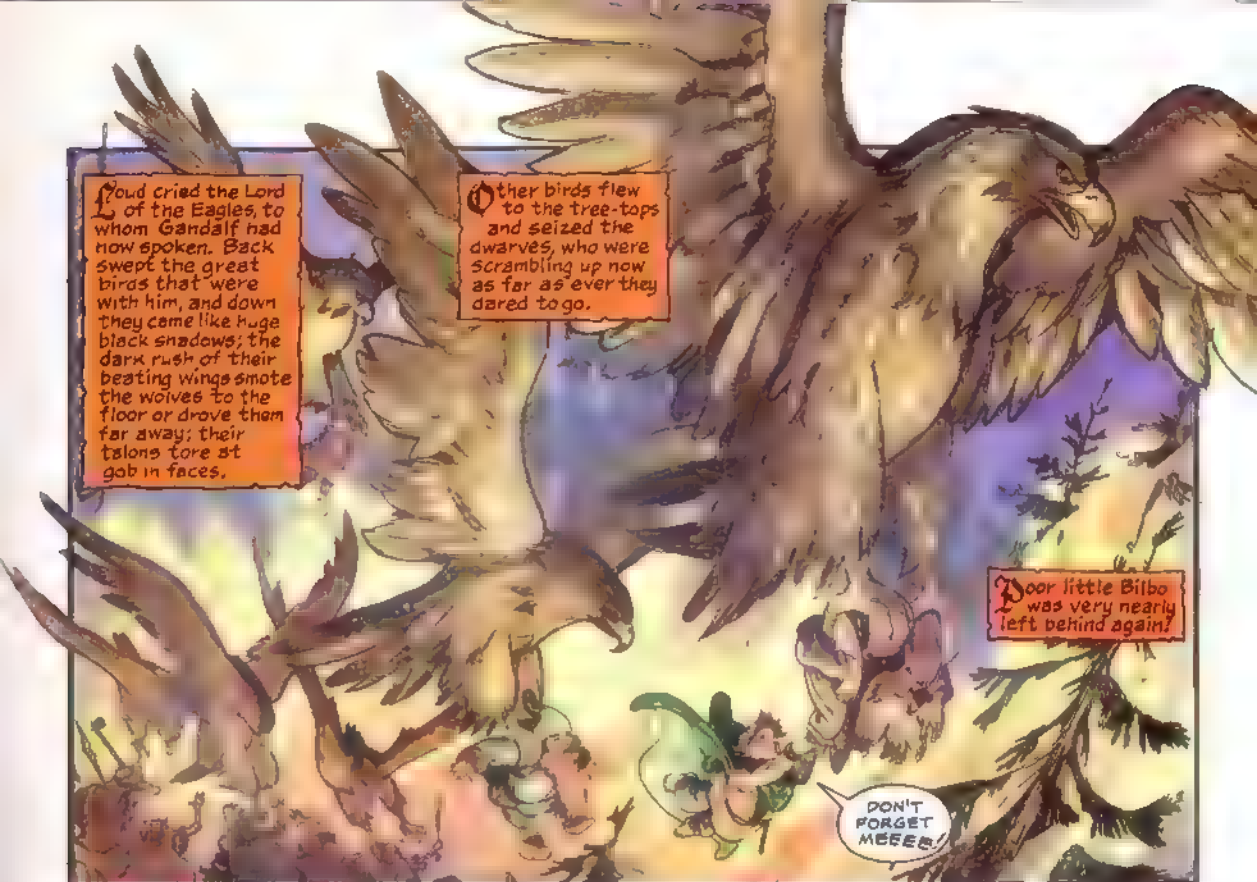
YA HEY!

And with that Ya hey! the flames were under Gandalf's tree. In a moment it spread to the others. The bark caught fire, the lower branches cracked.

KA-KA ZZZAZZZ

Then Gandalf climbed to the top of his tree. The sudden splendour flashed from his wand like lightning, as he got ready to spring down from on high right among the spears of the goblins.

But he never leaped.



Lord cried the Lord of the Eagles, to whom Gandalf had now spoken. Back swept the great birds that were with him, and down they came like huge black shadows; the dark rush of their beating wings smote the wolves to the floor or drove them far away; their talons tore at gob in faces.

Other birds flew to the tree-tops and seized the dwarves, who were scrambling up now as far as ever they dared to go.

Poor little Bilbo was very nearly left behind again!

DON'T FORGET MEES!

Soon they were high up in the sky, rising all the time.

At the best of times heights made Bilbo giddy. So you can imagine how his head swam now. He shut his eyes and wondered if he could hold on any longer. Then he imagined what would happen if he did not. He felt sick.

MY ARMS MY ARMS

MY POOR LEGS MY POOR LEGS!

Bilbo was surprised to discover the wizard and the eagle-lord appeared to know one another slightly, and even to be on friendly terms. As a matter of fact Gandalf had once rendered a service to the eagles and healed their lord from an arrow-wound.

Gandalf was discussing plans with the Great Eagle for setting them all down well on their journey across the plains below. But the Lord of the Eagles would not take them anywhere near where men lived.

THEY WOULD SHOOT AT US WITH THEIR GREAT BOWS OF YEW FOR THEY WOULD THINK WE WERE AFTER THEIR SHEEP. AND AT OTHER TIMES THEY WOULD BE RIGHT.

The flight ended only just in time for him, just before his arms gave way.

NO! WE ARE GLAD TO CHEAT THE GOBLINS OF THEIR SPORT, AND GLAD TO REPAY OUR THANKS TO YOU BUT WE WILL NOT RISK OURSELVES FOR DWARVES IN THE SOUTHWARD PLAINS.

VERY WELL. TAKE US WHERE AND AS FAR AS YOU WILL. WE ARE ALREADY DEEPLY OBLIGED TO YOU, BUT IN THE MEANTIME WE ARE FAMISHED WITH HUNGER.

I AM NEARLY DEAD OF IT.

THAT CAN PERHAPS BE MENDED.

The eagles brought up fuel and rabbits, and a small sheep. Soon Bilbo's stomach was full, and he slept curled up on the hard rock more soundly than ever before. And so ended the adventure of the Misty Mountains.

The next morning Bilbo woke up with the early sun in his eyes. He jumped up to look at the time and to go and put his kettle on—

—and found he was not home at all.

Bilbo had to get ready for a fresh start, and soon the mountains were falling back behind him into the distance.

DON'T PINCH! YOU NEED NOT BE FRIGHTENED LIKE A RABBIT, EVEN IF YOU LOOK RATHER LIKE ONE.

IT IS A FAIR MORNING WITH LITTLE WIND. WHAT IS FINER THAN FLYING?

Wh...

After a good while the eagles saw the point they were making for. Cropping out of the ground, right in the path of the stream which looped itself about it, was a great rock, almost a hill of stone. Quickly now they swooped one by one and set down their passengers.

FAREWELL! WHEREVER YOU FARE TILL YOUR EYRIES RECEIVE YOU AT THE JOURNEY'S END!

MAY THE WIND UNDER YOUR WINGS BEAR YOU WHERE THE SUN SAILS AND THE MOON WALKS.

And so they parted. And though the lord of the eagles became in after days the King of All Birds and wore a golden crown, and his fifteen chieftains golden collars (made of the gold that the dwarves gave them), Bilbo never saw them again—except high and far off in the battle of Five Armies. But as that comes in at the end of this tale we will say no more about it just now.

I ALWAYS MEANT TO SEE YOU ALL SAFE, IF POSSIBLE, OVER THE MOUNTAINS AND NOW BY GOOD MANAGEMENT AND GOOD LUCK I HAVE DONE IT.

INDEED WE ARE NOW A GOOD DEAL FURTHER EAST THAN I EVER MEANT TO COME WITH YOU, FOR AFTER ALL THIS IS NOT MY ADVENTURE.

I MAY LOOK IN ON IT AGAIN BEFORE IT IS ALL OVER, BUT IN THE MEANWHILE I HAVE SOME OTHER PRESSING BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO.

BUT WE THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO COME ALL THE WAY WITH US.

I AM NOT GOING TO DISAPPEAR THIS VERY INSTANT. PROBABLY I CAN HELP YOU OUT OF YOUR PRESENT PLIGHT AND I NEED A LITTLE HELP MYSELF.

A VERY GREAT PERSON. HE MADE THE STEPS ON THE GREAT ROCK—THE CARROCK I BELIEVE HE CALLS IT. HE CALLS THINGS LIKE THAT CARROCKS, AND THIS ONE IS THE CARROCK BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY ONE NEAR HIS HOME AND HE KNOWS IT WELL.

WE HAVE NO FOOD, AND NO BAGGAGE AND NO PONIES TO RIDE. BUT THERE IS **SOMEBODY** I KNOW OF, WHO LIVES NOT FAR AWAY. WE MUST GO AND FIND HIM; AND IF ALL GOES WELL AT OUR MEETING, I THINK I SHALL BE OFF!

YOU MUST ALL BE VERY POLITE WHEN I INTRODUCE YOU. HE CAN BE APPALLING WHEN HE IS ANGRY, THOUGH HE IS KIND ENOUGH IF HUMORED. STILL I WARN YOU HE GETS ANGRY EASILY.

WHO IS THAT SOMEBODY?

IF YOU MUST KNOW MORE, HIS NAME IS BEORN. HE IS VERY STRONG AND HE IS A SKIN-CHANGER.

WHAT? A FURRIER A MAN THAT CALLS RABBITS CONIES, WHEN HE DOESN'T TURN THEIR SKINS INTO SQUIRRELS?

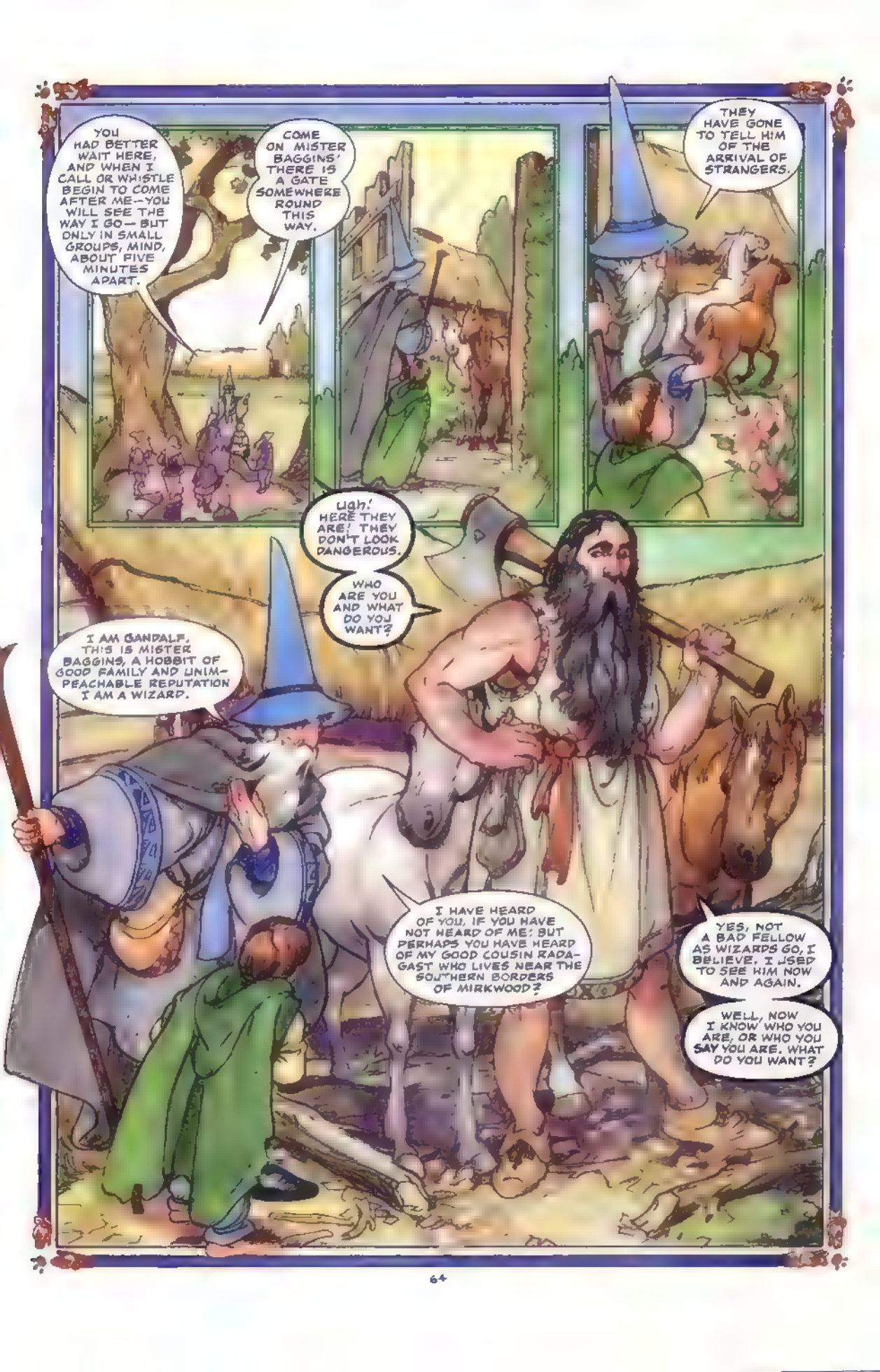
GOOD GRACIOUS HEAVENS, NO, NO, NO, NO! DON'T BE A FOOL MISTER BAGGINS IF YOU CAN HELP IT! HE CHANGES HIS SKIN; SOMETIMES HE IS A HUGE BLACK BEAR, SOMETIMES HE IS A GREAT STRONG BLACK-HAIRED MAN WITH HUGE ARMS AND A GREAT BEARD.

AS A MAN HE KEEPS CATTLE AND HORSES AND HIVES AND HIVES OF GREAT FIERCE BEES, AND LIVES MOST ON CREAM AND HONEY. AS A BEAR HE RANGES FAR AND WIDE.

I CANNOT TELL YOU MUCH MORE, THOUGH THAT OUGHT TO BE ENOUGH. HE IS NOT THE SORT OF PERSON TO ASK QUESTIONS OF. AT ANY RATE HE IS UNDER NO ENCHANTMENT BUT HIS OWN.

THESE BEES ARE SO BIG, IF ONE WAS TO STING ME I SHOULD SWELL UP AS BIG AGAIN AS I AM!

WE ARE GETTING NEAR. WE ARE ON THE EDGE OF HIS BEE PASTURES.



YOU HAD BETTER WAIT HERE, AND WHEN I CALL OR WHISTLE BEGIN TO COME AFTER ME—YOU WILL SEE THE WAY I GO—BUT ONLY IN SMALL GROUPS, MIND, ABOUT FIVE MINUTES APART.

COME ON MISTER BAGGINS! THERE IS A GATE SOMEWHERE ROUND THIS WAY.

THEY HAVE GONE TO TELL HIM OF THE ARRIVAL OF STRANGERS.

Ugh! HERE THEY ARE! THEY DON'T LOOK DANGEROUS.

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I AM GANDALF. THIS IS MISTER BAGGINS, A HOBBIT OF GOOD FAMILY AND UNIMPEACHABLE REPUTATION. I AM A WIZARD.

I HAVE HEARD OF YOU, IF YOU HAVE NOT HEARD OF ME; BUT PERHAPS YOU HAVE HEARD OF MY GOOD COUSIN RADAGAST WHO LIVES NEAR THE SOUTHERN BORDERS OF MIRKWOOD?

YES, NOT A BAD FELLOW AS WIZARDS GO, I BELIEVE. I USED TO SEE HIM NOW AND AGAIN.

WELL, NOW I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, OR WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WE HAVE LOST OUR LUGGAGE AND NEARLY LOST OUR WAY, AND ARE RATHER IN NEED OF HELP. I MAY SAY WE HAVE HAD RATHER A BAD TIME WITH GOBLINS IN THE MOUNTAINS.

GOBLINS? WHAT DID YOU GO NEAR THEM FOR?

WE DID NOT MEAN TO. WE WERE COMING— IT IS A LONG TALE.

THEN YOU HAD BETTER COME INSIDE AND TELL ME ABOUT IT, IF IT WON'T TAKE ALL DAY.

WE WERE COMING OVER THE MOUNTAINS AND TOOK REFUGE IN A CAVE. AS SOON AS WE WERE ASLEEP GOBLINS APPEARED AND GRABBED THE HOBBIT AND OUR TROOP OF PONIES—

TROOP OF PONIES? WHAT WERE YOU— A TRAVELLING CIRCUS? OR DO YOU ALWAYS CALL TWO A TROOP?

OH NO! THERE WERE MORE THAN TWO PONIES, FOR THERE WERE MORE THAN TWO OF US. I DID NOT LIKE TO BOTHER YOU WITH A LOT OF US, UNTIL I FOUND OUT IF YOU WERE BUSY, I WILL GIVE YOU A CALL, IF I MAY.

GO ON, CALL AWAY!

WHEELLET

WHERE WAS I? O YES— I WAS NOT GRABBED! I KILLED A GOBLIN OR TWO WITH A FLASH AND FOLLOWED DOWN INTO THE MAIN HALL. I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, WHAT CAN A DOZEN DO AGAINST SO MANY?

OH HERE ARE THE OTHERS NOW.

THESE ARE NOT HOBBITS BUT DWARVES AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE HEARD EIGHT CALLED A DOZEN!

THEY DON'T SEEM ALL TO HAVE COME.

WHEELLET

So Gandalf went on with the tale, how Mister Baggins had been misled, and the hobbit's reappearance...

...their scramble in the woods and their climbing into the trees with goblins below yelling "Fifteen birds in five fir-trees..."

WELL, NOW THERE ARE FIFTEEN OF YOU; AND SINCE GOBLINS CAN COUNT, NOW PERHAPS WE CAN FINISH THIS STORY WITHOUT ANY MORE INTERRUPTIONS.

Mister Baggins saw then how clever Gandalf had been. The interruptions had really made Beorn more interested in the story, and the story had kept him from sending the dwarves off at once like suspicious beggars.

GOOD HEAVENS! DON'T PRETEND THAT GOBLINS CAN'T COUNT. THEY CAN, TWELVE ISN'T FIFTEEN AND THEY KNOW IT.

AND SO DO I.

THERE WERE BIFUR AND BOFUR AS WELL. I HAVEN'T VENTURED TO INTRODUCE THEM BEFORE, AND HERE THEY ARE

AND ME!

By the time the wizard had finished his tale the sun had fallen behind the peaks of the Misty Mountains and Beorn had invited them to supper.

It was a supper, or a dinner such as they had not had since they left the Last Homey House in the West and said good bye to Elrond.

All the time they ate, Beorn told tales of the wild lands on this side of the mountains, and especially of the terrible forest of Mirkwood.



When dinner was over the dwarves began to tell tales of their own of gold and silver and smith craft but Beorn paid little heed to them—he did not appear to care for such things.

IT IS TIME FOR US TO SLEEP, BUT NOT I THINK FOR BEORN.

IN THIS HALL WE CAN REST SOUND AND SAFE. BUT I WARN YOU ALL NOT TO FORGET WHAT BEORN SAID BEFORE HE LEFT US: YOU MUST

NOT STRAY OUTSIDE UNTIL THE SUN IS UP ON YOUR PERIL.

Bilbo woke in the night and heard a growling sound outside and wondered whether it could be Beorn in enchanted shape, and if he would come with a beer and with them. He dived under the blankets and hid his head and fell asleep at last in spite of his fears.

It was full morning when he awoke to find there was no sign of Beorn or Gandalf. It was just before sunset when the wizard walked into the hall.

WHERE IS OUR HOST, AND WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL DAY YOURSELF?

I WILL ANSWER THE SECOND QUESTION FIRST—BUT BLESS ME! THIS IS A SLENDID PLACE FOR SMOKE-RINGS!

I HAVE BEEN PICKING OUT BEAR-TRACKS. THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A REGULAR BEARS' MEETING OUTSIDE HERE LAST NIGHT. I SOON SAW THAT BEORN COULD NOT HAVE MADE THEM ALL. THERE WERE FAR TOO MANY OF THEM, AND THEY WERE OF VARIOUS SIZES TOO. THEY CAME FROM ALMOST EVERY DIRECTION, EXCEPT FROM THE MOUNTAINS. IN THAT DIRECTION ONLY ONE SET OF FOOTPRINTS LED.

I FOLLOWED THOSE AS FAR AS I COULD. THEY WENT STRAIGHT OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF THE PINE-WOODS, WHERE WE HAD OUR PLEASANT LITTLE PARTY WITH THE WARGS THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST.

AND NOW I THINK I HAVE ANSWERED YOUR FIRST QUESTION TOO.

The dawn light came on outside. Soon Bilbo began to nod with sleep.

Indeed for a long time they could get nothing more out of him.



WHAT SHALL WE DO IF HE LEADS ALL THE WARGS AND GOBLINS DOWN HERE? WE SHALL ALL BE CAUGHT AND KILLED!

DON'T BE SILLY! YOU HAD BETTER GO TO BED, YOUR WITS ARE SLEEPY.

The hobbit felt quite crushed and as there seemed nothing else to do he did go to bed and while the dwarves were still singing songs he dropped asleep. Then he woke up when everyone else was asleep and he heard the same scraping, scuffling, snuffling, and growling as before.

SO HERE YOU ALL ARE STILL! NOT EATEN UP BY WARGS OR GOBLINS OR WICKED BEARS YET I SEE. LITTLE BUNNY IS GETTING NICE AND FAT AGAIN ON BREAD AND HONEY. COME AND HAVE SOME MORE.

So they all went to breakfast with him. He set them laughing with his funny stories, then told them where he had been and why.

He had been over the river and right up into the mountains. From the burnt wolf-glade he had soon found out that part of their story was true; then he caught a Warg and a goblin wandering in the woods. From these he had got news: the goblin patrols were still hunting with Wargs for the dwarves, the Great Goblin was dead, and a raid might soon be made to find the dwarves.

IT WAS A GOOD STORY, THAT OF YOURS BUT I LIKE IT STILL BETTER NOW I AM SURE IT IS TRUE. AS IT IS, I HAVE HURRIED HOME AS FAST AS I COULD TO SEE THAT YOU WERE SAFE AND TO OFFER YOU ANY HELP THAT I CAN.

I SHALL THINK MORE KINDLY OF DWARVES AFTER THIS. KILLED THE GREAT GOBLIN, KILLED THE GREAT GOBLIN!

WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE GOBLIN AND THE WARG?

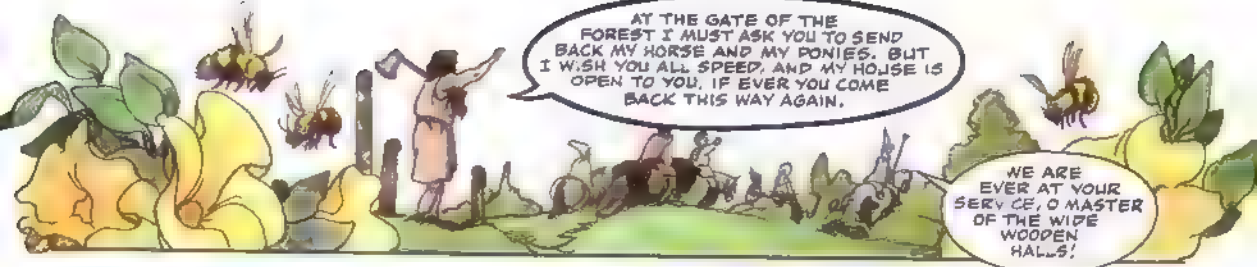
COME AND SEE!

Beorn was a fierce enemy. But now he was their friend and Gandalf thought it wise to tell him their whole story and the reason of their journey, so that they could get the most help he could offer.

This is what he promised to do for them. He would provide ponies for each of them and a horse for Gandalf, and he would feed them with food to last them for weeks with care.

BUT YOUR WAY THROUGH Mirkwood is dark and dangerous and difficult. Water is not easy to find. I will provide you with skins for carrying water. There is one stream there, I know, black and strong, which crosses the path. That you should neither drink of, nor bathe in; for I have heard that it carries enchantment and a great drowsiness and forgetfulness.

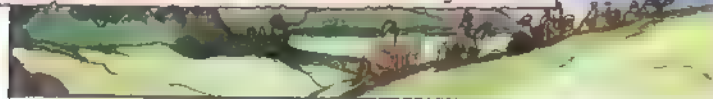
AND NEVER LEAVE THE PATH, FOR YOU MUST NOT DO, FOR ANY REASON. THAT IS ALL THE ADVICE I CAN GIVE YOU. YOU MUST DEPEND ON YOUR LUCK AND YOUR COURAGE AND THE FOOD I SEND WITH YOU.



AT THE GATE OF THE FOREST I MUST ASK YOU TO SEND BACK MY HORSE AND MY PONIES. BUT I WISH YOU ALL SPEED, AND MY HOUSE IS OPEN TO YOU, IF EVER YOU COME BACK THIS WAY AGAIN.

WE ARE EVER AT YOUR SERVICE, O MASTER OF THE WIDE WOODEN HALLS!

By Beorn's advice they were no longer making for the main forest-road to the south of his land. He had warned them that that way was now often used by the goblins, while the forest-road itself, he had heard, was overgrown and disused at the eastern end and led to impassable marshes where the paths had long been lost.



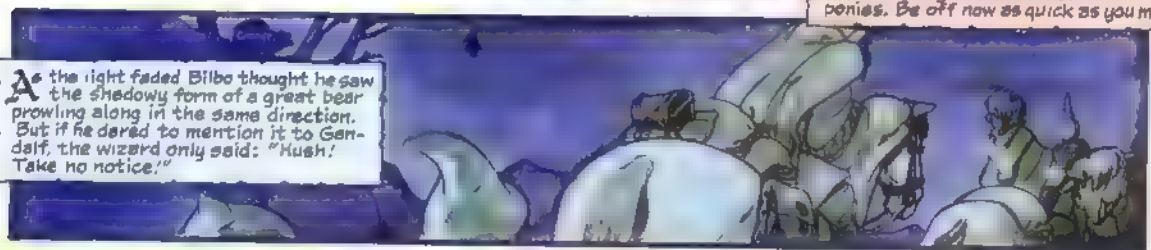
Its eastern opening had also always been far to the south of the Lonely Mountain, and would have left them still with a long and difficult northward march when they got to the other side.

Beorn advised them to head north; for at a place a few days' ride due north of the Carrock was the gate of a little-known pathway through Mirkwood that led almost straight towards the Lonely Mountain.



"But I should ride fast," Beorn had said, "for if the goblins make their raid soon they will cross the river and scour all the edge of the forest so as to cut you off, and Wargs run swifter than ponies. Be off now as quick as you may!"

As the light faded Bilbo thought he saw the shadowy form of a great bear prowling along in the same direction. But if he dared to mention it to Gandalf, the wizard only said: "Hush! Take no notice."



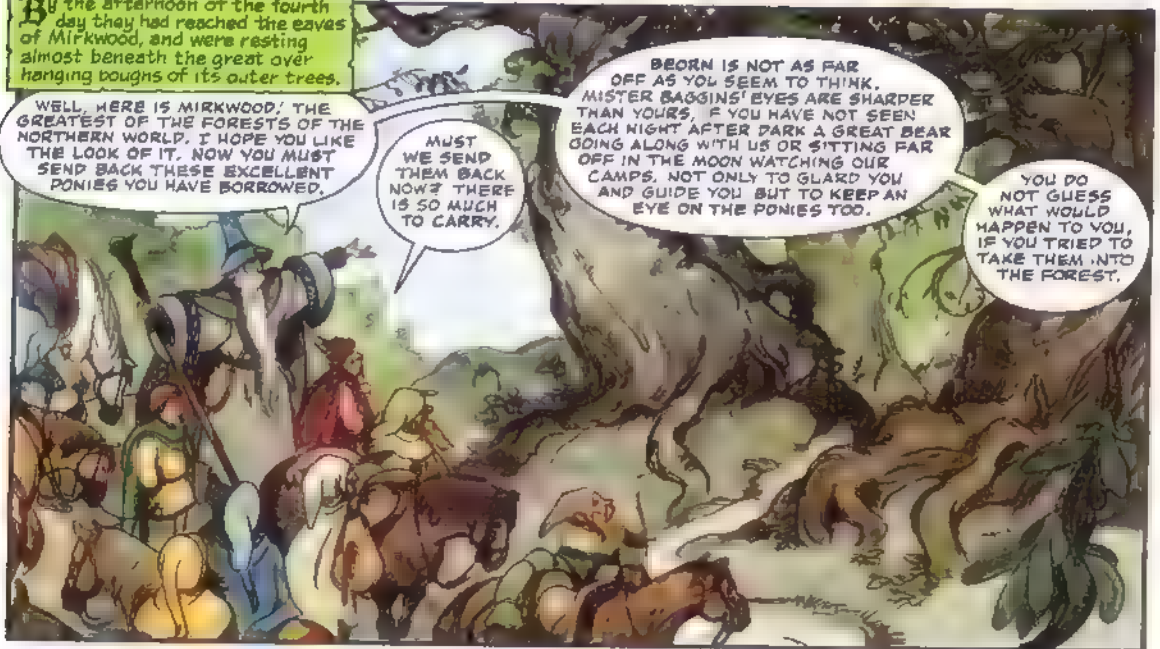
By the afternoon of the fourth day they had reached the eaves of Mirkwood, and were resting almost beneath the great overhanging boughs of its outer trees.

WELL, HERE IS MIRKWOOD! THE GREATEST OF THE FORESTS OF THE NORTHERN WORLD. I HOPE YOU LIKE THE LOOK OF IT. NOW YOU MUST SEND BACK THESE EXCELLENT PONIES YOU HAVE BORROWED.

MUST WE SEND THEM BACK NOW? THERE IS SO MUCH TO CARRY.

BEORN IS NOT AS FAR OFF AS YOU SEEM TO THINK. MISTER BAGGINS' EYES ARE SHARPER THAN YOURS, IF YOU HAVE NOT SEEN EACH NIGHT AFTER DARK A GREAT BEAR GOING ALONG WITH US OR SITTING FAR OFF IN THE MOON WATCHING OUR CAMPS. NOT ONLY TO GLARD YOU AND GUIDE YOU BUT TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE PONIES TOO.

YOU DO NOT GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO YOU, IF YOU TRIED TO TAKE THEM INTO THE FOREST.



YOU DON'T MENTION SENDING THE HORSE BACK. WHAT ABOUT YOUR PROMISE THEN?

I WILL LOOK AFTER THAT. I AM NOT SENDING THE HORSE BACK, I AM RIDING IT!

THEN YOU REALLY MEAN TO LEAVE US AFTER ALL?

IT IS NO USE ARGUING. I HAVE, AS I TOLD YOU, SOME PRESSING BUSINESS AWAY SOUTH; AND I AM ALREADY LATE THROUGH BOTHERING WITH YOU PEOPLE. BUT I AM SENDING MASTER BAGGINS WITH YOU. I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE THAT HE HAS MORE ABOUT HIM THAN YOU GUESS, AND YOU WILL FIND THAT OUT BEFORE LONG.

SO CHEER UP THORIN AND COMPANY!

THIS IS YOUR EXPEDITION AFTER ALL. THINK OF THE TREASURE AT THE END!

So now there was nothing left to do but to fill their waterskins and unpack the ponies. They distributed the packages as fairly as they could, though Bilbo thought his lot was wearisomely heavy.

DON'T YOU WORRY! BEFORE LONG I EXPECT WE SHALL ALL WISH OUR PACKS HEAVIER, WHEN THE FOOD BEGINS TO RUN SHORT.

Then at last they said good-bye to their ponies who turned their heads for home. As they went away Bilbo could have sworn that a thing like a bear left the shadow of the trees and sham-bled off quickly after them.

GOOD-BYE TO YOU ALL. GOOD-BYE! STRAIGHT THROUGH THE FOREST IS YOUR WAY NOW. DON'T STRAY OFF THE TRACK!— IF YOU DO, IT'S A THOUSAND TO ONE YOU WILL NEVER FIND IT AGAIN AND NEVER GET OUT OF Mirkwood!

AND THEN I DON'T SUPPOSE I, OR ANYONE ELSE, WILL EVER SEE YOU AGAIN.

YOU MUST EITHER GO THROUGH OR GIVE UP YOUR QUEST.

BEFORE YOU COULD GET ROUND Mirkwood IN THE NORTH YOU WOULD BE RIGHT AMONG THE SLOPES OF THE GREY MOUNTAINS, AND THEY ARE SO MOUNTAIN STIFF WITH GOBLINS, HOBOGOLINS, AND ORCS OF THE WORST DESCRIPTION.

BEFORE YOU COULD GET ROUND IT IN THE SOUTH, YOU WOULD GET INTO THE LAND OF THE NECROMANCER; AND EVEN YOU, BILBO, WON'T NEED ME TO TELL YOU TALES OF THAT BLACK SORCERER.

STICK TO THE FOREST TRACK, AND WITH A TREMENDOUS SLICE OF LUCK YOU MAY COME OUT ONE DAY AND SEE, HIGH IN THE EAST, THE LONELY MOUNTAIN WHERE DEAR OLD SMAG LIVES, THOUGH I HOPE HE IS NOT EXPECTING YOU.

VERY COMFORTING YOU ARE TO BE SURE. GOOD-BYE. IF YOU WON'T COME WITH US, YOU HAD BETTER GET OFF WITH— OUT ANY MORE TALK!

GOOD-BYE THEN, AND REALLY GOOD-BYE!

BE GOOD TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES— AND DON'T LEAVE THE PATH!

DO WE REALLY HAVE TO GO THROUGH? I MEAN, IS THERE NO WAY ROUND?

Soon the light at the gate to the forest was like a little bright hole far behind, and the quiet was so deep that their feet seemed to thump along while all the trees leaned over them and listened.

It was as dark in the forest in the morning as at night and very secret; "a sort of watching and waiting feeling," Bilbo said to himself.

There were black squirrels in the wood and Bilbo caught glimpses of them scuttling behind tree trunks. There were queer noises too, grunts, scuffings and hurrying in the undergrowth, but what made the noises even Bilbo's sharp inquisitive eyes could not see.

The nastiest things he and the dwarves saw were the cobwebs stretched from tree to tree. There were none across the path but whether because some magic kept it clear or for what other reason they could not guess.

It was not long before they grew to hate the forest as heartily as they had hated the tunnels of the goblins and it seemed to offer even less hope of any ending. But they had to go on and on long after they were sick for a sight of the sun and of the sky and longed for the feel of wind on their faces.

The nights were the worst. It then became pitch dark — not what you call pitch dark, but really pitch, so black that you really could see nothing. Well, perhaps it is not true to say that they could see nothing; they could see eyes. And the eyes that Bilbo liked the least were horrible pale burrowing sort of eyes. "Insect eyes," he thought, "not animal eyes, only they are much too big."

As days followed days and still the forest seemed just the same, they began to get anxious. The food would not last forever. It was in fact already beginning to get low. They tried shooting at the squirrels and they wasted many arrows before they managed to bring one down on the path. But when they roasted it, it proved horrible to taste and they shot no more so the mice.

They were thirsty, too, for they had none too much water, and in all the time they had seen neither spring nor stream.

This was their state when one day they found the path blocked by a running water. It flowed fast and strong and it was back or look at the gnom.

It was well that Beorn had warned them against it, or they would have drunk from it, whatever its colour, and filled some of their emptied skins at its bank. As it was they only thought of how to cross it without wetting themselves in its water.

THERE IS A BOAT AGAINST THE FAR BANK;

NOW WHY COULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN ON THIS SIDE!

CAN ANY OF YOU THROW A ROPE? I DON'T BELIEVE THE BOAT IS TIED, THOUGH OF COURSE I CAN'T BE SURE IN THIS LIGHT; BUT IT LOOKS TO ME AS IF IT WAS JUST DRAWN UP ON THE BANK.

I thought he could see the boat. So the others brought him a rope and on the end they fastened one of the large iron hooks they had used for catching the sheep to the straps about their shoulders.

CAREFULLY! IT IS LYING ON THE BOAT; LET'S HOPE THE HOOK WILL CATCH.

HOW FAR AWAY DO YOU THINK IT IS?

NOT AT ALL FAR, I SHOULDN'T THINK ABOVE TWELVE YARDS.

TWELVE YARDS I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT WAS THIRTY AT LEAST, BUT MY EYES DON'T SEE AS WELL AS THEY USED TO A HUNDRED YEARS AGO. WE CAN'T JUMP IT, AND WE PARENT TRY TO WADE OR SWIM.

It did. The rope went taut, and F... pulled again.

He came to his help and then Oin and Goin.

WHOA!

HELP!

OOOF!

IT WAS TIED AFTER ALL.

THAT WAS A GOOD PULL, MY LADS AND A GOOD JOB THAT OUR ROPE WAS THE STRONGER.

WHO'LL CROSS FIRST?

I SHALL, AND YOU WILL COME WITH ME, AND FILI AND BALIN. THAT'S AS MANY AS THE BOAT WILL HOLD AT A TIME. AFTER THAT KILI AND OIN AND GLOIN AND DORI; NEXT OR! AND NORI, BIFUR AND BOFUR; AND LAST DWALIN AND BOMBUR.

I'M ALWAYS LAST AND I DON'T LIKE IT. IT'S SOMEBODY ELSE'S TURN TODAY.

YOU SHOULD NOT BE SO FAT. AS YOU ARE, YOU MUST BE WITH THE LAST AND LIGHTEST BOAT-LOAD. DON'T START GRUMBING AGAINST ORDERS, OR SOMETHING BAD WILL HAPPEN TO YOU.

THERE AREN'T ANY DARS HOW ARE YOU GOING TO PUSH THE BOAT BACK TO THE FAR BANK?

GIVE ME ANOTHER LENGTH OF ROPE AND ANOTHER HOOK.

GET IN NOW, AND ONE OF YOU HAUL ON THE ROPE I'VE THROWN INTO THE TREE ON THE OTHER SIDE. ONE OF THE OTHERS MUST KEEP HOLD OF THE HOOK WE USED AT FIRST, AND WHEN WE ARE SAFE ON THE OTHER SIDE HE CAN HOOK IT ON, AND YOU CAN DRAW THE BOAT BACK.

...when something bad did happen.

In this way they were all soon on the far bank safe across the enchanted stream...

BOMBUR HAS FALLEN IN!

BOMBUR IS DROWNING!

SPOOOOSH

Quickly they flung a rope with a hook towards him, and they pulled him to shore. He was drenched from hair to boots, of course, but that was not the worst.

When they laid him on the bank he was already fast asleep, and fast asleep he remained in spite of all they could do.

TA RUMM
TA RUMM

Then they became aware of the dim blowing of horns in the wood and the sound as of dogs baying far off.

They were a gloomy party that night, and the gloom gathered still deeper on them in the following days. Yet if they had known more about it and considered the meaning of the hunt and the white deer, they would have known that they were at last drawing towards the eastern edge of the forest.

Suddenly on the path ahead appeared some white deer, but before Thorin could cry out, the dwarves had loosed off their last arrows from their bows. None seemed to find their mark, and now the bows that Beorn had given them were useless.

But they did not know this, and they were burdened with the heavy body of Bombur and in a few days a time came when there was practically nothing left to eat or drink. Nothing wholesome could they see growing in the woods, only fungus and herbs with pale leaves and unpleasant smell.

At times they heard a quieting laughter. Sometimes there was singing in the distance too. The laughter was the laughter of fair voices not of goblins and the singing was beautiful, but it sounded eerie and strange, and they were not comforted, rather they hurried on from those parts with what strength they had left.

Two nights later they ate their very last scraps and crumbs of food, and the next morning when they woke they noticed that they were still gnawingly hungry.

The only scrap of comfort there was, came unexpectedly from Bombur.

HUH?

WHY DID I EVER WAKE UP! I WAS HAVING SUCH BEAUTIFUL DREAMS. THERE WAS A WOODLAND KING WITH A CROWN OF LEAVES, AND THERE WAS A MERRY SINGING, AND I COULD NOT COUNT OR DESCRIBE THE THINGS THERE WERE TO EAT AND DRINK.

YOU NEED NOT TRY. IN FACT IF YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE, YOU HAD BETTER BE SILENT.

WE ARE QUITE ANNOYED ENOUGH WITH YOU AS IT IS.

Bombur could not make out where he was at all for he had forgotten everything that had happened since they started their journey that May morning long ago. When he heard that there was nothing to eat he wept.

There was nothing now to be done but to tighten the belts round their empty stomachs, and trudge along the track without any great hope of ever getting to the end before they lay down and died of starvation.

WHAT WAS THAT? I THOUGHT I SAW A TWINKLE OF LIGHT IN THE FOREST.

IT LOOKS AS IF MY DREAMS WERE COMING TRUE. THERE MUST BE THINGS TO EAT AND DRINK THERE. LET'S GO SEE.

A FEAST WOULD BE NO GOOD, IF WE NEVER GOT BACK ALIVE FROM IT. GANDALF AND BEORN BOTH WARNED US ABOUT STRAYING FROM THE PATH.

BUT WITHOUT A FEAST WE SHAN'T REMAIN ALIVE MUCH LONGER ANYWAY.

They argued about it backwards and forwards for a long while. In the end, in spite of warnings, hunger decided them, because Bombur kept on describing all the good things that were being eaten, according to his dream, in the woodland feast, so they all plunged into the forest together.

After a good deal of creeping and crawling they peered round the trunks. There were many people there, elvish-looking folk, but the most splendid sight of all, they were eating and drinking and laughing merrily.

NO RUSHING FORWARD! NO ONE IS TO STIR FROM HIDING TILL I SAY. I SHALL SEND MISTER BAGGINS ALONE FIRST TO TALK TO THEM. THEY WON'T BE FRIGHTENED OF HIM, AND ANYWAY I HOPE THEY WON'T DO ANYTHING NASTY TO HIM.

Before he had time to slip on his ring Bilbo was pushed forward into the full blaze of the fire and torches.

FWOOOF

Out went all the lights as if by magic. They were lost in a completely nightless dark and they could not find one another not for a long time at any rate, and of course they had quite forgotten in which direction the path lay.

BILBO BAGGINS! HOBBIT! YOU DRATTED HOBBIT!

HI! HOBBIT, CONFUSCATE YOU, WHERE ARE YOU?

BILBO!

MM—I WAS HAVING SUCH A LOVELY DREAM, ALL ABOUT HAVING A MOST GORGEOUS DINNER.

GOOD HEAVENS! HE HAS GONE LIKE BOMBUR!

THERE'S A REGULAR BLAZE OF LIGHT BEGUN NOT FAR AWAY—HUNDREDS OF TORCHES AND MANY FIRES MUST HAVE BEEN LIT SUDDENLY AND BY MAGIC. AND HARK TO THE SINGING AND THE HARPS.

After lying and listening for a while they found they could not resist the desire to go nearer and try once more to get help, and in a time the result was disastrous.



The feast that they now saw was greater and more magnificent than before; and at the head of a long line of feasters stood a woodland king with a crown of leaves upon his golden hair very much as Bombur had described the figure in his dream. The faces of the elvish folk and their songs were filled with mirth. Loud and clear and fair were those songs...

...and out stepped Thorin into their midst.



Ashes and cinder were in the eyes of the dwarves and the wood was filled again with their clamour and their cries.

DORI!
NORI?
ORI?

OIN. GLOIN
FILI. KILI.

BOMBUR!
BIFUR!
BOFUR!

DWALIN!
BALIN! THORIN
OAKENSHIELD!



The cries of the dwarves got steadily further and fainter. After a while it seemed to him they changed to yells and cries for help in the far distance, then he was left alone in complete silence and darkness.

That was one of Bilbo's most miserable moments. But he soon made up his mind that it was no good trying to do anything till day came with some little light. Not for the last time he fell to thinking of his far-distant hobbit hole with its beautiful pantries.



Somenow the killing of the giant spider, all alone by himself, in the dark without the help of the wizard or the dwarves or of anyone else, made a great difference to Mister Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder in spite of an empty stomach.

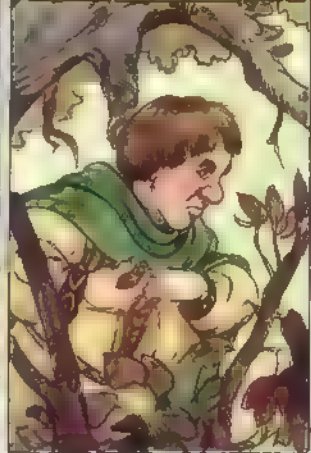


He crept along as cleverly as he could, also he slipped on his ring. That's why the spiders neither saw nor heard him coming.

I WILL GIVE YOU A NAME AND I SHALL CALL YOU STING.



After that he set out to explore. He made as good a guess as he could at the direction from which the cries for help had come in the night — and by luck (he was born with a good share of it) he guessed more or less right as you will see.



IT WAS A SHARP STRUGGLE BUT WORTH IT. WHAT NASTY THICK SKINS THEY HAVE TO BE SURE BUT I'LL WAGER THERE IS GOOD JUICE INSIDE.

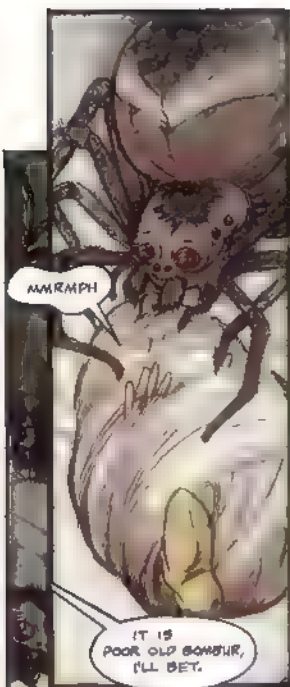
AYE, THEY'LL MAKE FINE EATING, WHEN THEY'VE HUNG A BIT.

DON'T HANG 'EM TOO LONG. THEY'RE NOT AS FAT AS THEY MIGHT BE. BEEN FEEDING NONE TOO WELL OF LATE, I SHOULD GUESS.

KILL 'EM, I SAY. KILL 'EM NOW AND HANG 'EM DEAD FOR A WHILE.

THEY'RE DEAD NOW, I'LL WARRANT.

THAT THEY ARE NOT. I SAW ONE A-STRUGGLING JUST NOW. JUST COMING ROUND AGAIN. I SHOULD SAY, AFTER A BEAUTIFUL SLEEP, I'LL SHOW YOU.



MMMPH

IT IS
POOR OLD BOMBUR,
I'LL BET.

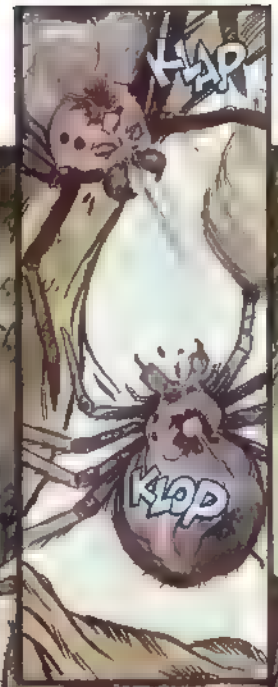


RHOD



YOU WERE
QUITE RIGHT.
THE MEAT'S
ALIVE AND
KICKING!

I'LL
SOON
PUT AN
END TO
THAT.



KAP

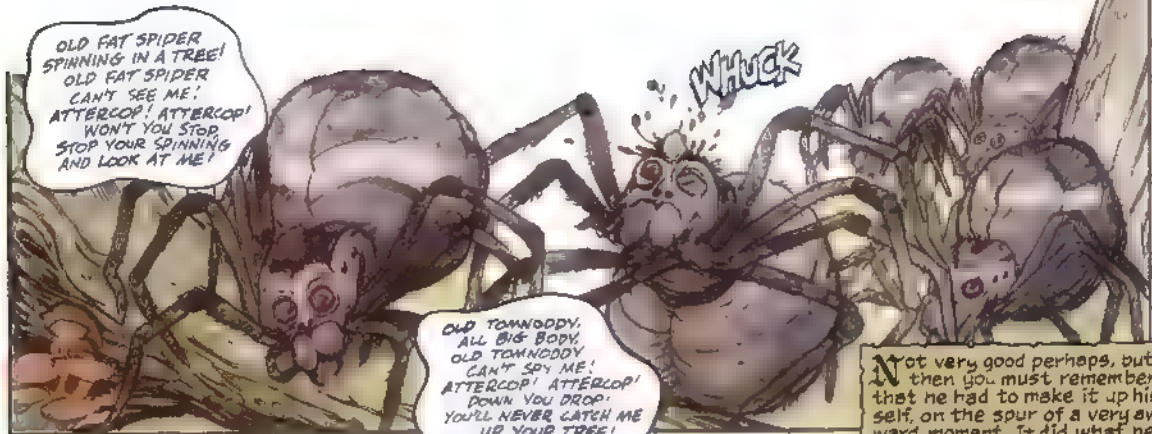
KLOP



After the two spiders fed dead there was a deal of commotion in the spider-colony, and they forgot the dwarves for a bit. I can tell you. They could not see Bilbo but they could make a good guess at the direction from which the stores were coming.



Bilbo, however, soon slipped away to a different place. The idea came to him to lead the furious spiders further and further away from the dwarves, if he could.



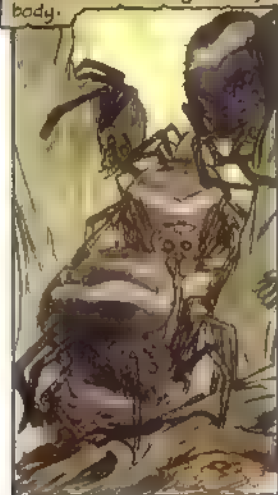
The spiders made for his noise far quicker than he had expected. They were frightfully angry. Quite apart from the stones no spider has ever liked being called Attercop, and Tommoddy of course is insulting to any body.

The whole lot of them came hurrying after the hobbit along the ground and the branches hairy legs waving, nippers and spinners snapping, eyes popping, full of froth and rage.

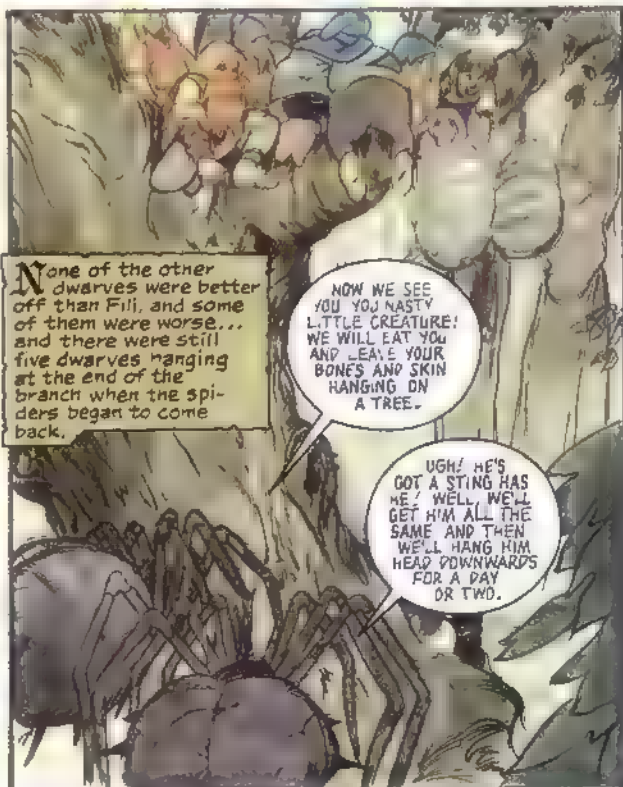
They followed him into the forest until Bilbo had gone as far as he dared. Then quieter than mouse he stole back.

Not very good perhaps, but then you must remember that he had to make it up himself, on the spur of a very awkward moment. It did what he wanted anyway.

Bilbo had precious little time, he knew, before the spiders were disgusted and came back to their trees where the dwarves were hung. In the meanwhile he had to rescue them.



Somehow or other Fili was got on to the branch, and then he did his best to help the hobbit, although he was feeling very sick and ill from spider-poison.



None of the other dwarves were better off than Fili, and some of them were worse... and there were still five dwarves hanging at the end of the branch when the spiders began to come back.

NOW WE SEE YOU YOU NASTY LITTLE CREATURE! WE WILL EAT YOU AND LEAVE YOUR BONES AND SKIN HANGING ON A TREE.

UGH! HE'S GOT A STING HAS HE! WELL, WE'LL GET HIM ALL THE SAME AND THEN WE'LL HANG HIM HEAD DOWNWARDS FOR A DAY OR TWO.



COME DOWN! COME DOWN! I AM GOING TO DISAPPEAR

I SHALL DRAW THE SPIDERS OFF, IF I CAN, AND YOU MUST KEEP TOGETHER AND MAKE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. TO THE LEFT THERE, THAT IS MORE OR LESS THE WAY TOWARDS THE PLACE WHERE WE LAST SAW THE ELF-FIRES.



WHERE HAS MISTER BAGGINS GONE?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT HURRY AND DO AS HE SAID OR WE SHALL ALL BE NETTED.

LAZY LOS AND CRAZY COB ARE WEAVING WEBS TO WIND ME I AM FAR MORE SWEET THAN OTHER MEAT BUT STILL THEY CANNOT FIND ME.

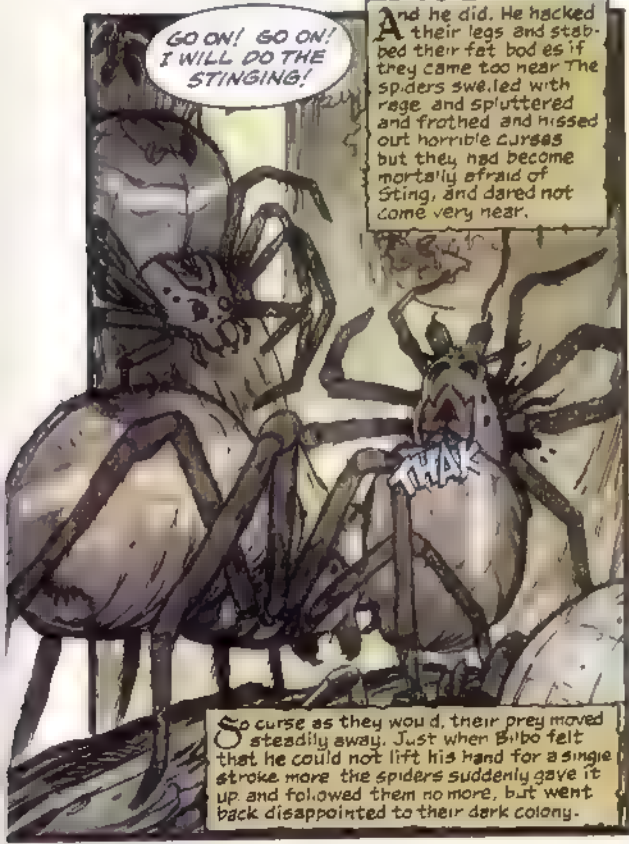


KEEP A-SINGING, AND WE'LL FIND YOU...



...YET! AURK!

THOK



GO ON! GO ON! I WILL DO THE STINGING!

And he did. He hacked their legs and stabbed their fat bodies if they came too near. The spiders swelled with rage and spluttered and frothed and hissed out horrible curses but they had become mortally afraid of Sting, and dared not come very near.

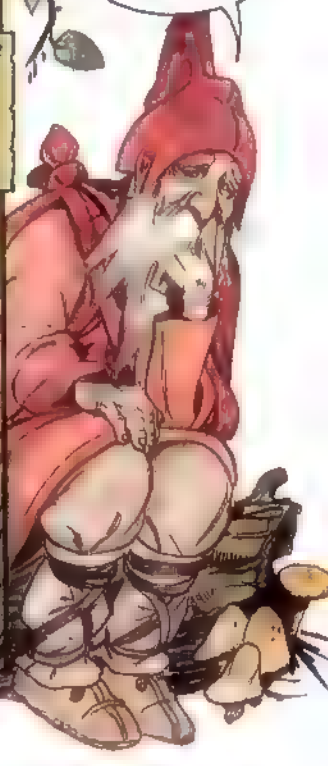
So curse as they would, their prey moved steadily away. Just when Bilbo felt that he could not lift his hand for a single stroke more the spiders suddenly gave it up and followed them no more, but went back disappointed to their dark colony.

The dwarves soon began to ask questions. They had to have the whole vanishing business carefully explained, and the finding of the ring interested them so much that for a while they forgot their own troubles.

Knowing the truth about the vanishing did not lessen their opinion of Bilbo at all, for they saw that he had some wits, as well as luck and a magic ring — and all three are very useful possessions.



GOLLUM? WELL I'M BLEST! NOW I KNOW! BUTTONS ALL OVER THE DOORSTEP! GOOD OLD BILBO - BILBO - BO - bo - bo -





It was a terrible shock. Of course there were only thirteen of them, twelve dwarves and the hobbit. Where indeed was Thorin? They wondered what evil fate had befallen him, magic or dark monsters, and shuddered as they lay lost in the forest, and there we must leave them for the present too sick and weary to set guards or take turns watching.



Thorin had been caught much faster than they had. You remember Bilbo falling like a log into sleep, as he stepped into the light of the elven fires and torches? The next time it had been Thorin who stepped forward and as the lights went out he fell like a stone enchanted. All the sounds of the battle had passed over him unheard. Then the Wood-elves had come to him, and bound him and carried him away.



The feasting people were Wood-elves, of course. These are not wicked folk. If they have a fault it is distrust of strangers. Though their magic was strong, even in those days they were wary.

They differed from the High Elves of the West and were more dangerous and less wise. For most of them (together with the scattered relations in the hills and mountains) were descended from the ancient tribes that never went to Faerie in the West.

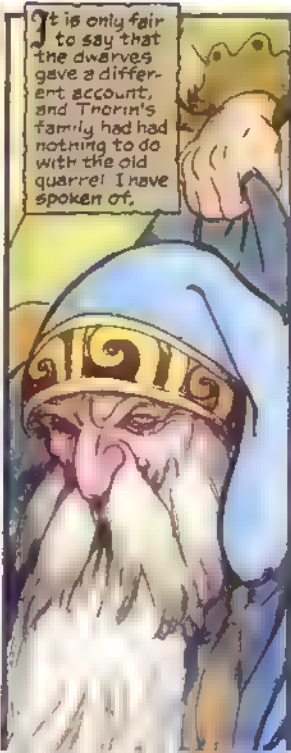


The subjects of the king mostly lived and hunted in the open woods, and had houses or huts on the ground and in the branches. The beeches were their favourite trees. The king's cave was his palace, and the strong place of his treasure, and the fortress of his people against their enemies.

It was also the dungeon of his prisoners. So to the cave they dragged Thorin — not too gently, for they did not love dwarves, and thought he was an enemy. In ancient days they had had wars with some of the dwarves, whom they accused of stealing their treasure.



It is only fair to say that the dwarves gave a different account, and Thorin's family had had nothing to do with the old quarrel. I have spoken of.



Consequently Thorin was angry at their treatment of him when they took their spell off him and he came to his senses; and also he was determined that no word of gold or jewels should be dragged out of him.



WHY DID YOU AND YOUR FOLK TWICE TRY TO ATTACK MY PEOPLE AT THEIR MERRY-MAKING?

WE DID NOT ATTACK THEM. WE CAME TO BEG, BECAUSE WE WERE STARVING.

WHERE ARE YOUR FRIENDS NOW, AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

I DON'T KNOW, BUT I EXPECT STARVING IN THE FOREST.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THE FOREST?

LOOKING FOR FOOD AND DRINK, BECAUSE WE WERE STARVING.

BUT WHAT BROUGHT YOU INTO THE FOREST AT ALL?



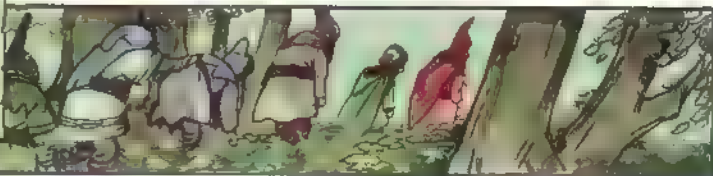
VERY WELL! TAKE HIM AWAY AND KEEP HIM SAFE, UNTIL HE FEELS INCLINED TO TELL THE TRUTH. EVEN IF HE WAITS A HUNDRED YEARS.



There in the king's dungeon poor Thorin lay; and after he had got over his thankfulness for bread and meat and water he began to wonder what had become of his unfortunate friends. It was not very long before he discovered.



The day after the battle with the spiders Bilbo and the dwarves made one last despairing effort to find a way out before they died of hunger and thirst. They got up and staggered on in the direction which eight out of the thirteen of them guessed to be the one in which the path lay; but they never found out if they were right.



There was no thought of a fight. Even if the dwarves had not been in such a state that they were actually glad to be captured, their small knives the only weapons they had, would have been of no use against the arrows of the elves that could hit a bird's eye in the dark.



Bilbo popped on his ring and slipped quickly to one side. That is why the elves never found or counted the hobbit.

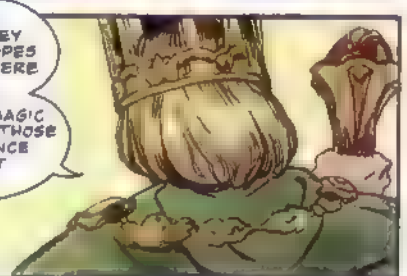
Each dwarf was blindfolded, but that did not make much difference, for even Bilbo with the use of his eyes could not see where they were going, and neither he nor the others knew where they had started from anyway.



Across the bridge that led to the king's doors the elves thrust their prisoners, but Bilbo hesitated in the rear. He only made up his mind not to desert his friends just in time to scuttle over at the heels of the last elves, before the great gates of the king closed behind them with a clang.



UNBIND THEM. THEY NEED NO ROPES IN HERE, THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM MY MAGIC DOORS FOR THOSE WHO ARE ONCE BROUGHT INSIDE.



WHAT HAVE WE DONE O KING? IS IT A CRIME TO BE LOST IN THE FOREST, TO BE HUNGRY AND THIRSTY, TO BE TRAPPED BY SPIDERS? ARE THE SPIDERS YOUR TAME BEASTS OR YOUR PETS? KILLING THEM MAKES YOU ANGRY?



IT IS A CRIME TO WANDER IN MY REALM, WITHOUT LEAVE, USING THE ROAD THAT MY PEOPLE MADE. DID YOU NOT PURSUE AND TROUBLE MY PEOPLE IN THE FOREST AND ROUSE THE SPIDERS WITH YOUR RIOT AND CLAMOUR?

AFTER ALL THE DISTURBANCE YOU HAVE MADE I HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE. AND IF YOU WILL NOT TELL ME NOW, I WILL KEEP YOU ALL IN PRISON, IN SEPARATE CELLS, UNTIL YOU HAVE LEARNED SENSE AND MANNERS!



Poor Mister Baggins— it was a weary long time that he lived in that place all alone, and always in hiding, never daring to take off his ring, hardly dar'ng to sleep, even tucked away in the darkest and remotest corners he could find. For something to do he took to wandering about the Elvenking's palace.

I AM LIKE A BURGLAR THAT CAN'T GET AWAY, BUT MUST GO ON MISERABLY BURGLING THE SAME HOUSE DAY AFTER DAY.

THIS IS THE DREAKEST AND DULLEST PART OF ALL THIS WRETCHED, TIREISOME, UNCOMFORTABLE ADVENTURE!

I WISH I WAS BACK IN MY HOBBIT-HOLE BY MY OWN WARM FIRESIDE WITH THE LAMP SHINING.

He often wished, too, that he could get a message for help sent to the wizard, but that of course was quite impossible; and he soon realized that if anything was to be done it would have to be done by Mister Baggins, alone and unaided.

Eventually, after a week or two of this sneaking sort of life by watching and following the guards, he managed to find out where each dwarf was kept. What was his surprise one day to learn that there was another dwarf in prison too, in a 'specially deep dark place'.

Thorin had a long whispered talk with the hobbit, and so it was that Bilbo was able to take secret y Thorin's message to each of the other mprisoned dwarves, telling them that Thorin their chief was also in prison close at hand, and that no one was to reveal their errand to the king, not yet, not before Thorin gave the word.

He guessed at once, of course, that that was Thorin; and after a while he found that his guess was right.

For Thorin had taken heart again hearing how the hobbit had rescued his companions from the spiders and was determ ned not to ransom himself with promises to the king of a share n the treasure until all hope of escap ng n any other way had disappeared—

—until in fact the remarkable Mister Invisible Baggins (of whom he began to have a very high opinion indeed) had altogether failed to think of something clever.

Bilbo, however, did not feel so hopeful as they did. He sat and thought and thought until his head nearly burst, but no bright idea would come. One invisible ring was a very fine thing, but it was not much good among fourteen.

The other dwarves quite agreed when they got the message.

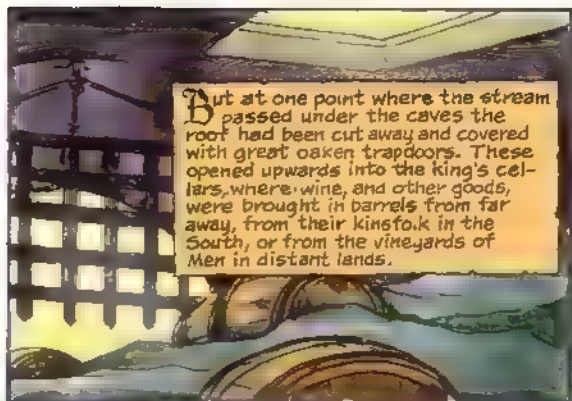
But of course as you have guessed he did rescue his friends in the end, and this is how it happened.

One day, nosing and wandering about, Bilbo discovered a very interesting thing: the great gates were not the only entrance to the caves.

A stream flowed under a part of the lowest regions of the palace, and joined the Forest River some way further to the east. Where this underground watercourse came forth from the hillside there was a water-gate, and from it a portcullis could be dropped right to the bed of the river to prevent anyone coming in or out that way.



But at one point where the stream passed under the caves the roof had been cut away and covered with great oaken trapdoors. These opened upwards into the king's cellars, where wine, and other goods, were brought in barrels from far away, from their kinsfolk in the South, or from the vineyards of Men in distant lands.

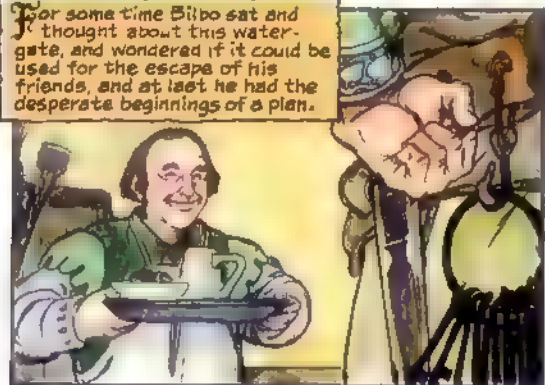


When the barrels were empty the elves cast them through the trapdoors, opened the water-gate, and out the barrels floated on the stream, bobbing along, until they were carried by the current to a place far down the river, near to the very eastern edge of Mirkwood. There they were collected and tied together and floated back to Lake-town—



—a town of Men, built out on bridges far into the water as a protection against enemies of all sorts, and especially against the dragon of the Mountain.

For some time Bilbo sat and thought about this water-gate, and wondered if it could be used for the escape of his friends, and at last he had the desperate beginnings of a plan.



NOW COME WITH ME AND TASTE THE NEW WINE THAT HAS JUST COME IN. I SHALL BE HARD AT WORK TONIGHT CLEARING THE CELLARS OF THE EMPTY WOOD, SO LET US HAVE A DRINK FIRST TO HELP THE LABOUR.

VERY GOOD, I'LL TASTE WITH YOU, AND SEE IF IT IS FIT FOR THE KING'S TABLE. THERE IS A FEAST TONIGHT AND IT WOULD NOT DO TO SEND UP POOR STUFF!



Luck of an unusual kind was with Bilbo then. It must be potent wine to make a wood-elf drowsy; but this wine, it would seem, was the heady vintage of the great gardens of Dorwinion, not meant for his soldiers or his servants, but for the king's feasts only, and for smaller bowls, not for the butler's great flagons.



First Bilbo unlocked Balin's door, and locked it again carefully as soon as the dwarf was outside.

YOU MUST FOLLOW ME! ALL OF US MUST ESCAPE OR NONE, AND THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE, IF THIS IS FOUND OUT, GOODNESS KNOWS WHERE THE KING WILL PUT YOU NEXT. DON'T ARGUE, THERE'S A GOOD FELLOW!

Then off he went from door to door, until his following had grown to twelve. At last after much blundering they came to Thorin's dungeon, far down in a deep place and fortunately not far from the cellars.

UPON MY WORD! GANDALF SPOKE TRUE, AS USUAL. A PRETTY FINE BURGLAR YOU MAKE, IT SEEMS, WHEN THE TIME COMES.

Bilbo saw that the time had come to explain his idea as far as he would, but he did not feel at all sure how the dwarves would take it. His fears were quite justified, for they did not like it a bit.

WE SHALL BE BRUISED AND BATTERED TO PIECES, AND DROWNED TOO, FOR CERTAIN!

WE THOUGHT YOU HAD GOT SOME SENSIBLE NOTION, WHEN YOU MANAGED TO GET HOLD OF THE KEYS.

THIS IS A MAD IDEA!

I AM SURE WE ARE ALL FOR EVER AT YOUR SERVICE, WHATEVER HAPPENS AFTER THIS. BUT WHAT COMES NEXT?

VERY WELL! COME ALONG BACK TO YOUR NICE CELLS, AND I WILL LOCK YOU ALL IN AGAIN, AND YOU CAN SIT THERE COMFORTABLY AND THINK OF A BETTER PLAN — BUT I DON'T SUPPOSE I SHALL EVER GET HOLD OF THE KEYS AGAIN, EVEN IF I FEEL INCLINED TO TRY.

That was too much for them, and they calmed down. So following the hobbit down into the lowest cellars they crept.

THAT WILL SAVE HIM SOME OF THE TROUBLE HE IS IN FOR. HE WASN'T A BAD FELLOW AND QUITE DECENT TO THE PRISONERS. IT WILL PUZZLE THEM ALL TOO. THEY WILL THINK WE HAD A VERY STRONG MAGIC TO PASS THROUGH ALL THOSE LOCKED DOORS AND DISAPPEAR.

DISAPPEAR!

...but as they passed by the snoring guard Bilbo stooped and kindly put the keys back on his belt.

WE HAVE GOT TO GET BUSY VERY QUICK, IF THAT IS TO HAPPEN.

There was little time to lose. Before long, as Bibo knew, some elves were under orders to come down and help the butler get the empty barrels through the doors into the stream.

Some of them were wine-barrels, and these were not much use, as they could not easily be opened at the end without a deal of noise, nor could they easily be secured again. But among them were several others which had been used for bringing other stuffs, butter, apples, and all sorts of things, to the king's palace.

They soon found thirteen with room enough for a dwarf in each.

Bibo did his best to find straw and other stuff to pack them in as cosily as could be managed in a short time.

Palin, who came last, made a great fuss about his air-holes and said he was stifling, even before his lid was on.

WHERE'S OLD GALION, THE BUTLER? I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM AT THE TABLES TONIGHT. HE OUGHT TO BE HERE NOW TO SHOW US WHAT IS TO BE DONE.

I SHALL BE ANGRY IF THE OLD SLOWCOACH IS LATE. I HAVE NO WISH TO WASTE TIME DOWN HERE WHILE THE SONG IS UP!

HA, HA! HERE'S THE OLD VILLAIN WITH HIS HEAD ON A JUG! HE'S BEEN HAVING A LITTLE FEAST ALL TO HIMSELF AND HIS FRIEND THE CAPTAIN.

SHAKE HIM! WAKE HIM!

YOU'RE ALL LATE. HERE AM I WAITING AND WAITING DOWN HERE, WHILE YOU FELLOWS DRINK AND MAKE MERRY AND FORGET YOUR TASKS. SMALL WONDER IF I FALL ASLEEP FROM WEARINESS!

SMALL WONDER, WHEN THE EXPLANATION STANDS CLOSE AT HAND IN A JUG!

SAVE US, GALION! YOU BEGAN YOUR FEASTING EARLY AND Muddled YOUR WITS! YOU HAVE STACKED SOME FULL CASKS HERE INSTEAD OF THE EMPTY ONES IF THERE IS ANYTHING IN WEIGHT.

VERY WELL, VERY WELL! ON YOUR HEAD BE IT, IF THE KING'S FULL BUTTERTUBS AND HIS BEST WINE IS PUSHED INTO THE RIVER FOR THE LAKE-MEN TO FEAST ON FOR NOTHING!

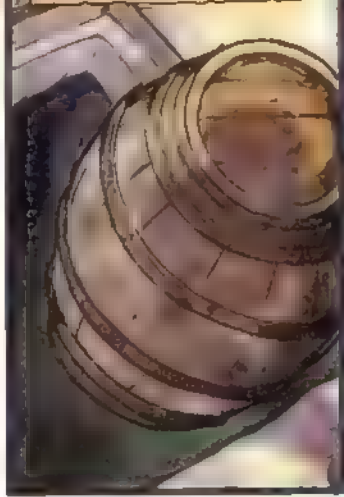
GET ON WITH THE WORK! THERE IS NOTHING IN THE FEELING OF WEIGHT IN AN IDLE TOSS-POT'S ARMS. THESE ARE THE ONES TO GO AND NO OTHERS, DO AS I SAY!

ROLL-ROLL-ROLL-ROLL, ROLL-ROLL-ROLLING DOWN THE HOLE! HEAVE HO! SPLASH PLUMP! DOWN THEY GO, DOWN THEY BUMP!

It was just at this moment that Bilbo suddenly discovered the weak point in his plan. Most likely you saw it some time ago and have been laughing at him; but I don't suppose you would have done half as well yourselves in his place. Of course ~~he~~ was not in a barrel himself, nor was there anyone to pack him in, even if there had been a chance!



Now the very last barrel was being rolled to the doors! In despair and not knowing what else to do, poor little Bilbo caught hold of it and was pushed over the edge with it.



He came up again spluttering and clinging to the wood like a rat, but for all his efforts he could not scramble on top. He was in the dark tunnel, floating in icy water, all alone — for you cannot count friends that are all packed up in barrels.



He heard the creak of the water-gate being hauled up, and he found that he was in the midst of a bobbing and bumping mass of casks and tubs all pressing together to pass under the arch and get out into the open stream.

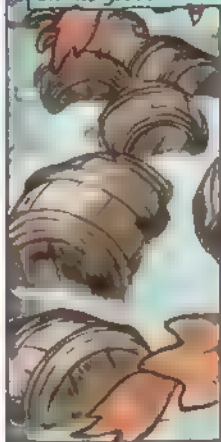
I DO
HOPE I PUT
THE LIDS ON
TIGHT
ENOUGH!



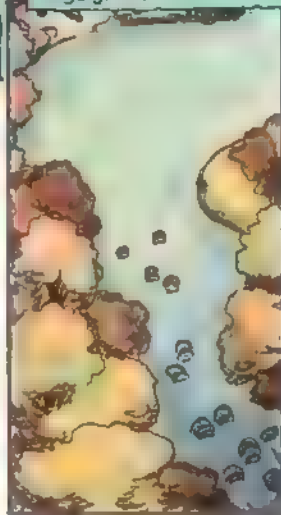
Bilbo took the opportunity of scrambling up the side of his barrel while it was held steady against another. Up he crawled like a drowned rat and lay on the top spread out to keep the balance as best he could.



Luckily he was very light, and the barrel was a good big one and being rather leaky had now shipped a small amount of water. All the same it was like trying to ride, without bridle or stirrups, a round-bellied pony that was always thinking of rolling on the grass.



In this way at last Mister Baggins came to a place where the trees on either hand grew thinner. The dark river opened suddenly wide, and there it joined to the main water of the Forest River flowing down in haste from the king's great doors.



There were people on the look-out on the banks. They quickly poled and pushed all the barrels together into the shallows and when they had counted them they roped them together and left them till the morning.



The breeze was cold but better than the water, and he hoped he would not suddenly roll off again when they started off once more.

Poor dwarves! Bilbo was not so badly off now. He slipped from his barrel and waded ashore. He no longer thought twice about picking up a supper uninvited if he got the chance, he had been obliged to do it for so long, and he knew only too well what it was to be really hungry.

There is no need to tell you much of his adventures that night, for now we are drawing near the end of the eastward journey and coming to the last and greatest adventure, so we must hurry on.

Very soon there was a fine commotion, but Bilbo escaped into the woods. The rest of the night he had to pass wet as he was and far from a fire, and he actually dozed a little on some dry leaves, even though the year was getting late and the air was chilly.

Of course helped by his magic ring he got on very well at first, but he was given away in the end by his wet footsteps and the trail of drippings that he left wherever he went or sat; and also he began to snivel, and he was found out by the terrific explosions of his suppressed sneezes.

Also he had caught a glimpse of a fire through the trees, and that appealed to him with his dripping and ragged clothes clinging to him cold and clammy.

He awoke again with a specially loud sneeze. It was already grey morning, and there was a merry racket down by the river.

They were making up a raft of barrels to steer down the stream to Lake-Town. Bilbo scrambled down as fast as his stiff legs would take him and managed just in time to get on to the mass of casks without being noticed in the general bustle.

THIS IS A HEAVY LOAD THEY FLOAT TOO DEEP—SOME OF THESE ARE NEVER EMPTY. IF THEY HAD COME ASHORE IN THE DAYLIGHT, WE MIGHT HAVE HAD A LOOK INSIDE.

NO TIME NOW SHOVE OFF!

And off they went at last, slowly at first and then quicker and quicker as they caught the main stream and went sailing away down, down towards the Lake.

They had escaped the dungeons of the king and were through the wood, but whether alive or dead still remains to be seen.

The day grew lighter and warmer as they floated along.

After a while the river rounded a steep shoulder of land that came down upon their left. Under its rocky feet like an inland cliff the deepest stream had flowed lapping and bubbling.

Suddenly the cliff fell away. The shores sank. The trees ended.

Then Bilbo saw a sight:



Far away, its dark head in a torn cloud, there loomed the Mountain! Its nearest neighbors to the North-East and the tumbled land that joined it to them could not be seen. All alone it rose and looked across the marshes to the forest.

The Lonely Mountain! Bilbo had come far and through many adventures to see it, and now he did not like the look of it in the least.

Dreary as had been Bilbo's imprisonment and unpleasant as was his position (to say nothing of the poor dwarves in the barrels underneath him) still, he had been more lucky than he had guessed.

The elf-road which the dwarves had followed now came to a doubtful and little used end at the eastern edge of the forest; only the river offered any longer a safe way from the skirts of Mirkwood in the North to the mountain-shadowed plains beyond.

All he knew was that the river seemed to go on and on and on for ever, and he was hungry, and had a nasty cold in the nose, and did not like the way the Mountain seemed to frown at him and threaten him as it drew ever nearer.

Those lands had changed much since the days when dwarves dwelt in the Mountain. Great floods and rains had swollen the waters that flowed east. The marshes and bogs had spread wider and wider on either side.

So you see Bilbo had come in the end by the only road that was any good. But Bilbo did not know it.

After a while, however, the river took a more southerly course and the Mountain receded again.

The sun had set when turning with another sweep towards the East the forest-river rushed into the Long Lake.

The Long Lake! Bilbo had never imagined that any water that was not the sea could look so big. It was so wide that the opposite shore looked small and far, but it was so long that its northerly end, which pointed towards the Mountain, could not be seen at all.

Not far from the mouth of the Forest River was the strange town he heard the elves speak of in the King's cellars. It was not built on shore, but right out on the surface of the lake. And it was not a town of elves but of Men, who still dared to dwell here under the shadow of the distant dragon-mountain.

They still thrived on the trade that came up the great river from the South but in the great days of old, when Dale in the North was rich and prosperous, they had been wealthy and powerful.

But men remembered little of all that, though some still sang old songs of the dwarf-kings of the Mountain and the coming of the Dragon. Some sang too that Thrór and Thráin would come back one day and gold would flow in rivers through the mountain-gates. But this pleasant legend did not much affect their daily business.

As soon as the raft of barrels came in sight boats rowed out from the piles of the town, and voices hailed the raftsteerers, and the raft was drawn out of the current of the forest River and moored not far from the shoreward head of the great bridge which ran out to where the town was built.



Soon men would come up from the South and take some of the casks away, and others they would fill with goods they had brought to be taken back up the stream to the Wood-elves' home. In the meanwhile the barrels were left afloat while the elves of the raft and the boatmen went to feast in Lake-town.



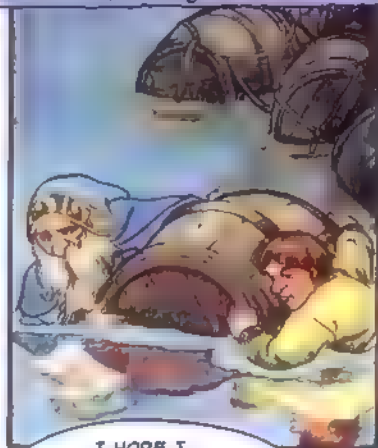
They would have been surprised, if they could have seen what happened down by the shore, after they had gone and the shades of night had fallen.



WELL, ARE YOU ALIVE OR ARE YOU DEAD? IF YOU WANT FOOD, AND IF YOU WANT TO GO ON WITH THIS SILLY ADVENTURE — IT'S YOURS AFTER ALL AND NOT MINE — YOU HAD BETTER SLAP YOUR ARMS AND RUB YOUR LEGS AND TRY AND HELP ME GET THE OTHERS OUT WHILE THERE IS A CHANCE!



Thorin of course saw the sense of this, so after a few more groans he got up and helped the hobbit as well as he could. In the darkness, floundering in the cold water, they had a difficult and very nasty job finding which were the right barrels.



I HOPE I NEVER SMELL THE SMELL OF APPLES AGAIN! MY TUB WAS FULL OF IT! TO SMELL APPLES EVERLASTINGLY WHEN YOU CAN SCARCELY MOVE AND ARE COLD AND SICK WITH HUNGER IS MADDENING. I COULD EAT ANYTHING IN THE WIDE WORLD NOW, FOR HOURS ON END — BUT NOT AN APPLE!



Dwalin and Balin were two of the most unhappy. Bifur and Bofur were less knocked about and drier. Fili and Kili came out more or less smiling, with only a bruise or two.

Poor fat Bombur was asleep or senseless; Pori, Nori, Ori, Oin and Gloin were waterlogged and seemed only half alive; they all had to be carried one by one and aid helpless on the shore.

WELL! HERE WE ARE!
AND I SUPPOSE WE OUGHT TO
THANK OUR LUCKY STARS AND MISTER
BAGGINS. I AM SURE HE HAS A RIGHT TO
EXPECT IT, THOUGH I WISH HE COULD HAVE
ARRANGED A MORE COMFORTABLE JOURNEY.
STILL — ALL VERY MUCH AT YOUR SERVICE
ONCE MORE, MISTER BAGGINS. NO DOUBT
WE SHALL FEEL PROPERLY GRATEFUL
WHEN WE ARE FED AND
RECOVERED.



IN THE
MEANWHILE,
WHAT NEXT?

I SUGGEST
LAKE TOWN.
WHAT ELSE IS
THERE?

Nothing a se could, of course,
be suggested: so leaving
the others, Thorin and Fili
and Kili, and the hobbit
went along the shore to
the great bridge.

There were guards at the
head of it, but they were
not keeping very careful
watch, for it was so long
since there had been any
real need. That being so it
is not surprising that the
guards were drinking and
laughing by a fire in their
hut, and did not hear the
noise of the unpacking of
the dwarves.



WHO ARE
YOU AND WHAT
DO YOU WANT?

THORIN SON
OF THRAIN SON OF
THOR KING UNDER
THE MOUNTAIN. I
HAVE COME BACK.
I WISH TO SEE THE
MASTER OF YOUR
TOWN!

There was tremen-
dous excitement.
Some of the more
foolish ran out of
the hut as if they
expected the Moun-
tain to go golden
in the night and
all the waters of
the lake to turn
yellow right away.



AND
WHO ARE
THESE?

THE SONS
OF MY FATHER'S
DAUGHTER, FILI AND
KILI OF THE RACE OF
DURIN, AND MISTER
BAGGINS WHO HAS TRAV-
ELLED WITH US OUT
OF THE WEST.

IF YOU
COME IN PEACE
LAY DOWN YOUR
ARMS!



WE
HAVE
NONE.

And it was
true enough,
their knives
had been taken
from them by
the Wood-elves,
and the great
sword Orcrist
too.

Bilbo had his short
sword, hidden as
usual, but he said
nothing about that.



WE HAVE NO
NEED OF WEAPONS,
WHO RETURN AT
LAST TO OUR OWN
AS SPOKEN OF OLD.
NOR COULD WE
FIGHT AGAINST
SO MANY.

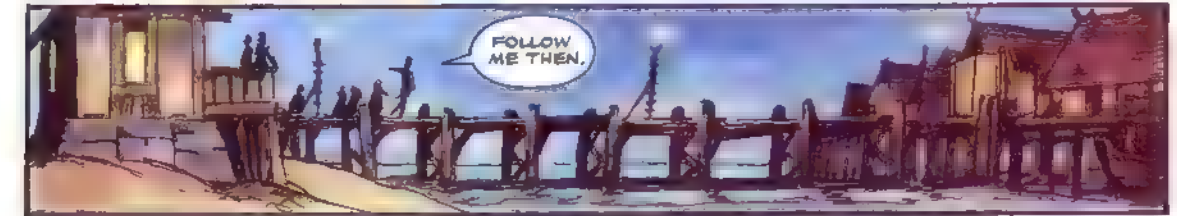
TAKE
US TO YOUR
MASTER!



THEN ALL THE MORE
REASON FOR TAKING US TO
HIM. WE ARE WORN AND FAM-
ISHED AFTER OUR LONG ROAD
AND WE HAVE SICK
COMRADES.

HE IS
AT FEAST.

NOW MAKE
HASTE AND LET US
HAVE NO MORE WORDS,
OR YOUR MASTER MAY
HAVE SOMETHING TO
SAY TO YOU.



FOLLOW
ME THEN.



I AM
THORIN SON
OF THRAIN SON
OF THROR KING
UNDER THE
MOUNTAIN!

I
RETURN!!

THESE ARE
PRISONERS OF OUR
KING THAT HAVE ESCAPED,
WANDERING VAGABOND
DWARVES THAT COULD NOT
GIVE ANY GOOD ACCOUNT OF
THEMSELVES, SNEAKING
THROUGH THE WOODS
AND MOLESTING
OUR PEOPLE.

IS THIS
TRUE?

IT IS TRUE
THAT WE WERE
WRONGLY WAY-
LAID BY THE ELVEN-
KING AND IMPRISONED
WITHOUT CAUSE AS
WE JOURNEYED BACK
TO OUR OWN LAND.

BUT LOCK
NOR BAR MAY HIN-
DER THE HOMECOMING
SPOKEN OF OLD. NOR
IS THIS TOWN IN THE
WOOD-ELVES' REALM, I
SPEAK TO THE MASTER
OF THE TOWN OF THE
MEN OF THE LAKE,
NOT TO THE CAPT-
MEN OF THE
KING.

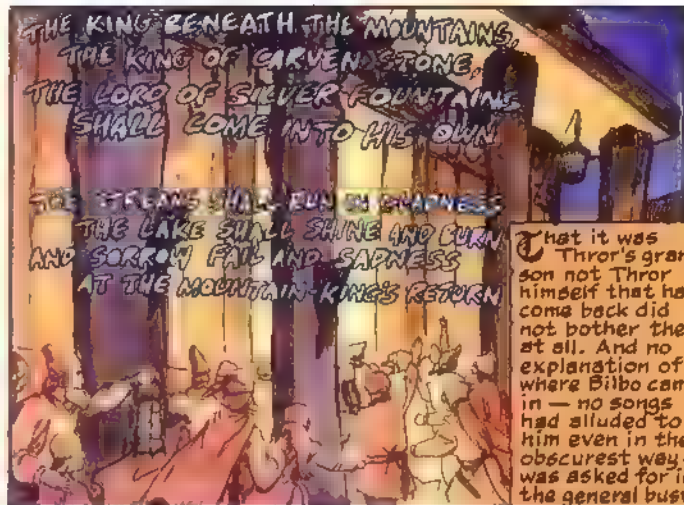
Then the Master hesitated. The Elven-king was very powerful in those parts and the Master wished for no enmity with him, nor did he think much of old songs, giving his mind to trade and toils, to cargoes and gold, to which habit he owed his position.

Others were of different mind, however and quickly the matter was settled without him.



THE KING BENEATH THE MOUNTAINS,
THE KING OF CARVEN STONE,
THE LORD OF SILVER FOUNTAINS
SHALL COME INTO HIS OWN.

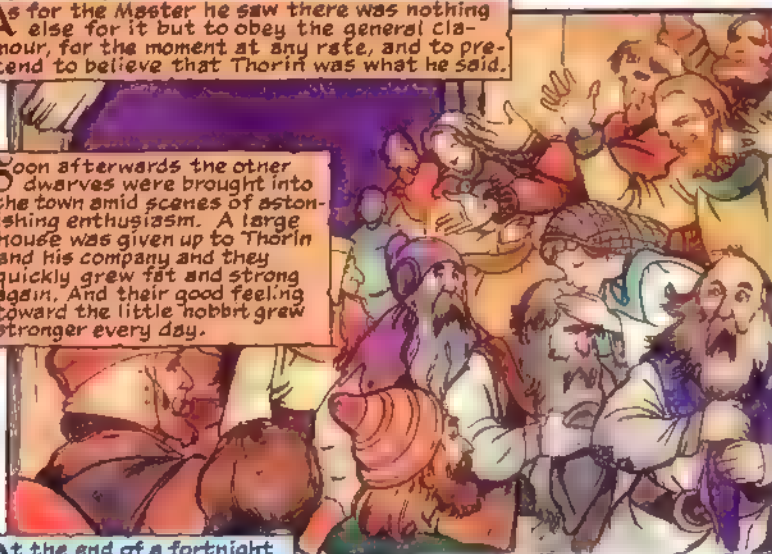
THE TREASURES SHALL RUN IN RICHNESS
THE LAKE SHALL SHINE AND CURVE
AND SORROW FALL AND SADNESS
AT THE MOUNTAIN-KING'S RETURN.



That it was Thror's grandson not Thror himself that had come back did not bother them at all. And no explanation of where Bilbo came in — no songs had alluded to him even in the obscurest way — was asked for in the general bustle.

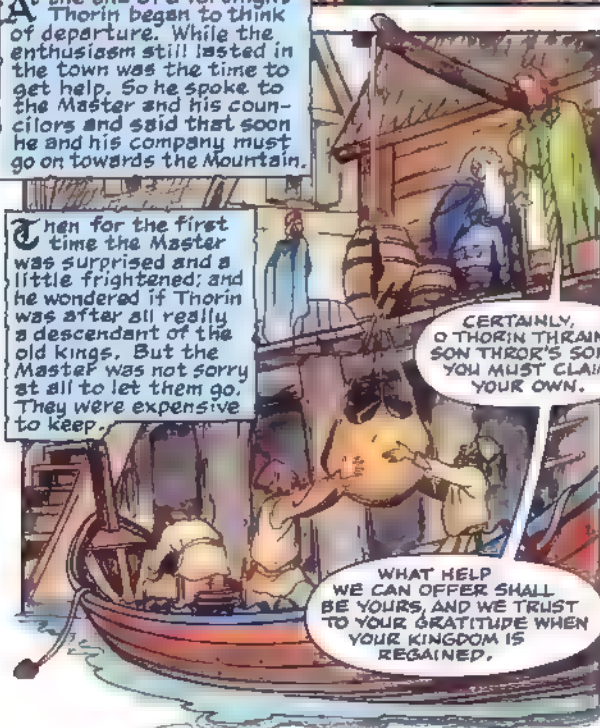
As for the Master he saw there was nothing else for it but to obey the general clamour, for the moment at any rate, and to pretend to believe that Thorin was what he said.

Soon afterwards the other dwarves were brought into the town amid scenes of astonishing enthusiasm. A large house was given up to Thorin and his company and they quickly grew fat and strong again. And their good feeling toward the little hobbit grew stronger every day.



At the end of a fortnight of departure. While the enthusiasm still lasted in the town was the time to get help. So he spoke to the Master and his councilors and said that soon he and his company must go on towards the Mountain.

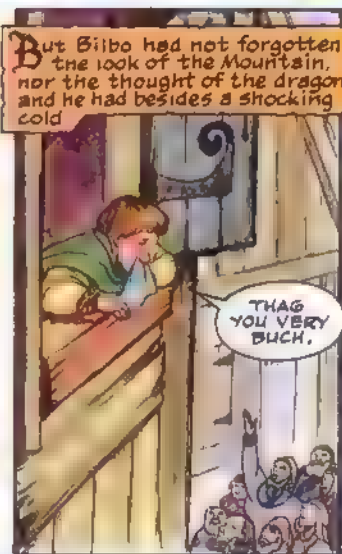
Then for the first time the Master was surprised and a little frightened; and he wondered if Thorin was after all really a descendant of the old kings. But the Master was not sorry at all to let them go. They were expensive to keep.



CERTAINLY,
O THORIN THRAIN'S
SON THORR'S SON!
YOU MUST CLAIM
YOUR OWN.

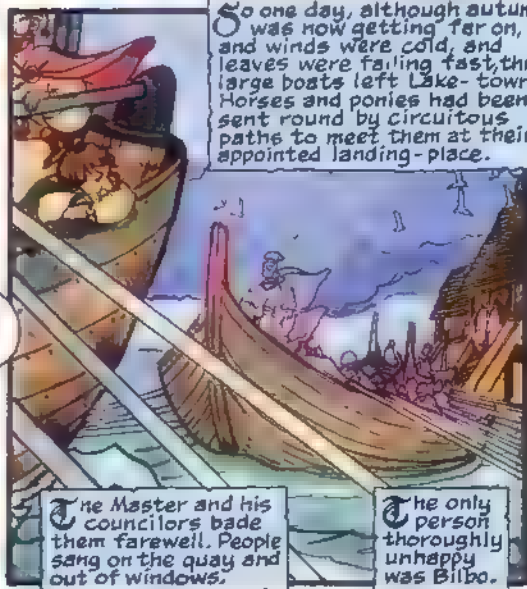
WHAT HELP
WE CAN OFFER SHALL
BE YOURS, AND WE TRUST
TO YOUR GRATITUDE WHEN
YOUR KINGDOM IS
REGAINED.

But Bilbo had not forgotten the look of the Mountain, nor the thought of the dragon, and he had besides a shocking cold.



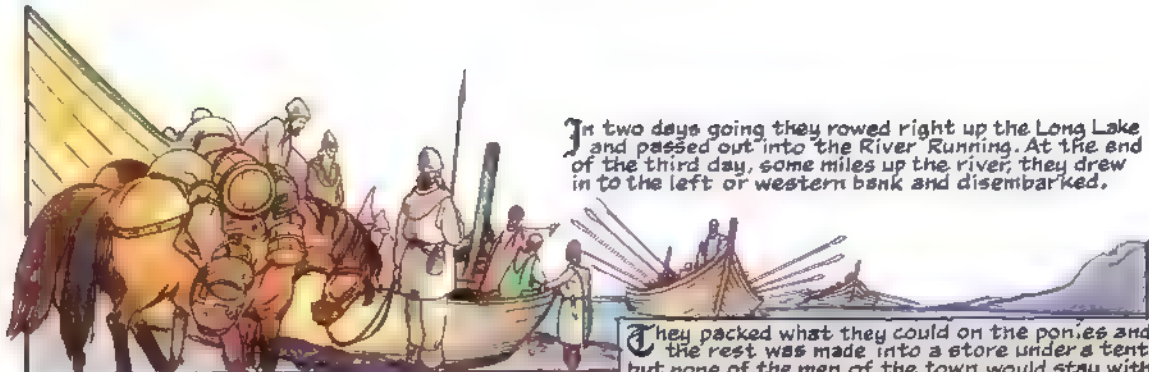
THAG
YOU VERY
BUCH.

So one day, although autumn was now getting far on, and winds were cold, and leaves were falling fast, three large boats left Lake-town. Horses and ponies had been sent round by circuitous paths to meet them at their appointed landing-place.



The Master and his councilors bade them farewell. People sang on the quay and out of windows.

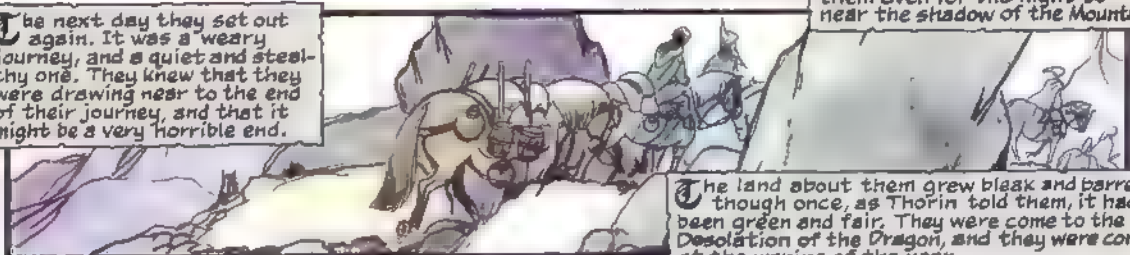
The only person thoroughly unhappy was Bilbo.



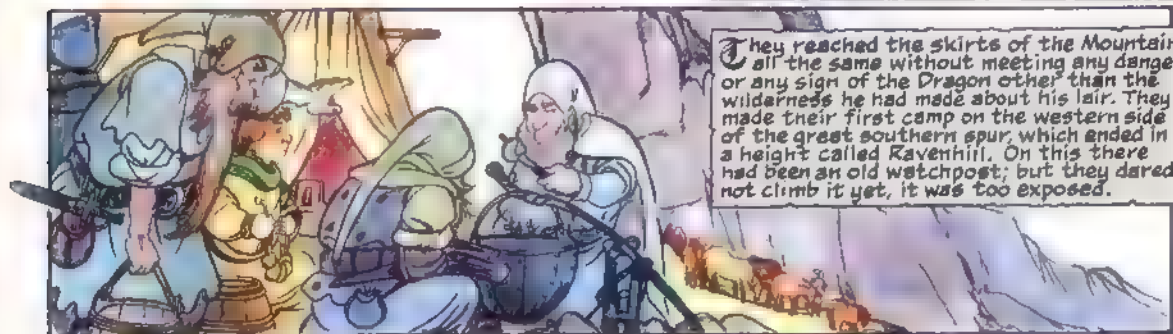
In two days going they rowed right up the Long Lake and passed out into the River Running. At the end of the third day, some miles up the river, they drew in to the left or western bank and disembarked.

They packed what they could on the ponies and the rest was made into a store under a tent, but none of the men of the town would stay with them even for the night so near the shadow of the Mountain.

The next day they set out again. It was a weary journey, and a quiet and stealthy one. They knew that they were drawing near to the end of their journey, and that it might be a very horrible end.



The land about them grew bleak and barren, though once, as Thorin told them, it had been green and fair. They were come to the Desolation of the Dragon, and they were come at the waning of the year.

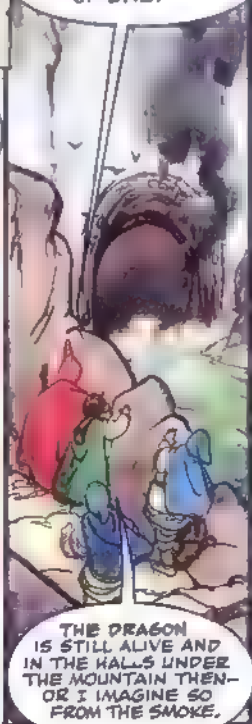


They reached the skirts of the Mountain all the same without meeting any danger or any sign of the Dragon other than the wilderness he had made about his lair. They made their first camp on the western side of the great southern spur, which ended in a height called Ravenhill. On this there had been an old watchpost; but they dared not climb it yet, it was too exposed.

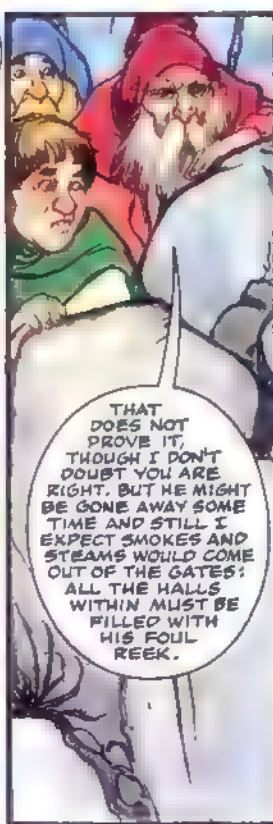
Before setting out to search the western spurs of the Mountain for the hidden door, on which all their hopes rested, Thorin sent out a scouting expedition to spy out the land to the South where the Front Gate stood.

THERE LIES ALL THAT IS LEFT OF DALE. THE MOUNTAIN'S SIDES WERE GREEN WITH WOODS AND ALL THE SHELTERED VALLEY RICH AND PLEASANT IN THE DAYS WHEN THE BELLS RANG IN THAT TOWN.

LET US RETURN! WE CAN DO NO GOOD HERE! AND I DON'T LIKE THESE DARK BIRDS, THEY LOOK LIKE SPIES OF EVIL.



THE DRAGON IS STILL ALIVE AND IN THE HALLS UNDER THE MOUNTAIN THEN—OR I IMAGINE SO FROM THE SMOKE.



THAT DOES NOT PROVE IT, THOUGH I DON'T DOUBT YOU ARE RIGHT. BUT HE MIGHT BE GONE AWAY SOME TIME AND STILL I EXPECT SMOKE AND STEAMS WOULD COME OUT OF THE GATES! ALL THE HALLS WITHIN MUST BE FILLED WITH HIS FOUL REEK.

With such gloomy thoughts, followed ever by croaking crows above them, they made their weary way back to the camp. Only in June they had been guests in the fair house of Elrond, and though autumn was now crawling towards winter, that pleasant time now seemed years ago. They were at the end of their journey, but as far as ever, it seemed, from the end of their quest.



None of them had much spirit left.

Now strange to say Mister Baggins had more than the others. He would often borrow Thorin's map and gaze at it, pondering over the runes and the message of the moon-letters Elrond had read.

They moved their camp to the western side of the Mountain, where there were fewer signs of the dragon's marauding feet, and there was some grass for their ponies.

From this western camp, shadowed all day by cliff and wall until the sun began to sink towards the forest, day by day they toiled in parties searching for paths up the mountain-side. If the map was true, somewhere high above the cliff at the valley's head must stand the secret door.

But at last unexpectedly they found what they were seeking. Bilbo with Fili and Kili found traces of a narrow track, often lost, often rediscovered, that wandered on to the top of the southern ridge and brought them at last to a still narrower ledge.

It was he that made the dwarves begin the dangerous search on the western slopes for the secret door.

Day by day they came back to their camp without success.

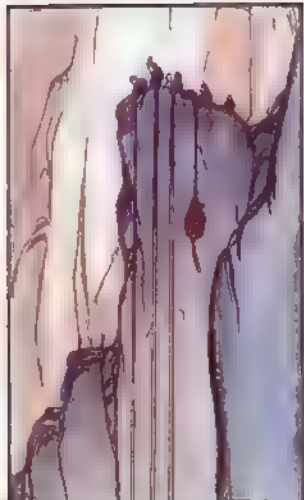
Looking down they saw that they were at the top of the cliff at the valley's head and were gazing down on to their own camp below.

Then the wall opened and they turned into a little steep-walled bay, grassy-floored, still and quiet. Its entrance which they had found could not be seen from below because of the overhang of the cliff, nor from further off because it was so small that it looked like a dark crack and no more.

At its inner end a flat wall rose up that was as smooth and upright as masons work, but without joint or crevice to be seen. No sign was there of post or lintel or threshold, nor any sign of bar or bolt or key-hole; yet they did not doubt that they had found the door at last.

They beat on it, they thrust and pushed at it they implored it to move, they spoke fragments of broken spells of opening, and nothing stirred.

At last tired out they began their long climb down.



They had brought picks and tools of many sorts from Lake-town and at first they tried to use these. But when they struck the stone the handles splintered and jarred their arms cruelly, and the steel heads broke or bent like lead.



Minning work, they saw clearly, was no good against the magic that had shut this door, and they grew terrified, too, of the echoing noise.

Bibo found sitting on the doorstep lonesome and wearisome - there was not a doorstep, of course, really, but they used to call the little grassy space between the wall and the opening the "doorstep" in fun, remembering Bibo's words long ago at the unexpected party in his hobbit-hole.

If the dwarves asked him what he was doing he answered: "You said sitting on the doorstep and thinking would be my job, not to mention getting inside, so I am sitting and thinking."



There was excitement in the camp that night. In the morning Bofur and Bombur were left behind to guard the ponies as the others went up the newly found path to the little grassy bay. There they made their third camp, hauling up what they needed from below with their ropes.

Down the same way they were able occasionally to lower one of the more active dwarves, such as Kili, to exchange such news as there was, or to take a share in the guard below.

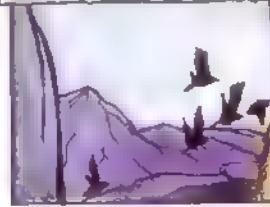
I'LL STAY HERE.
I AM TOO FAT FOR SUCH FLYWALKS. AND THE KNOTTED ROPES ARE TOO SLENDER FOR MY WEIGHT.



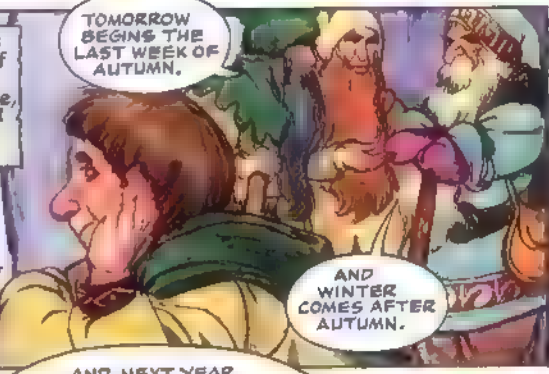
Luckily for him that was not true, as you will see.

But I am afraid he was not thinking much of the job, but of what lay beyond the blue distance, the quiet Western Land and the Hill and his hobbit-hole under it.

TOMORROW BEGINS THE LAST WEEK OF AUTUMN.



AND WINTER COMES AFTER AUTUMN.



AND NEXT YEAR AFTER THAT, AND OUR BEARDS WILL GROW TILL THEY HANG DOWN THE CLIFF TO THE VALLEY BEFORE ANYTHING HAPPENS HERE. WHAT IS OUR BURGLAR DOING FOR US? SINCE HE HAS GOT AN INVISIBLE RING, AND OUGHT TO BE A SPECIALLY EXCELLENT PERFORMER NOW, I AM BEGINNING TO THINK HE MIGHT GO THROUGH THE FRONT GATE AND SPY THINGS OUT A BIT!!



GOOD GRACIOUS! SO THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE BEGINNING TO THINK, IS IT? IT IS ALWAYS POOR ME THAT HAS TO GET THEM OUT OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES AT LEAST SINCE THE WIZARD LEFT. WHATEVER AM I GOING TO DO?

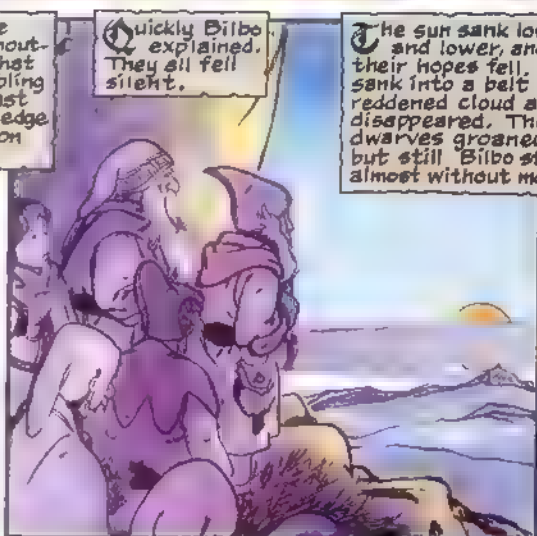




There on a grey stone in the center of the grass was an enormous thrush. It had caught a snail and was knocking it on the stone.



Forgetting all danger he hailed the dwarves, shouting and waving. Those that were nearest came tumbling over the rocks and as fast as they could along the ledge to him, wondering what on earth was the matter.

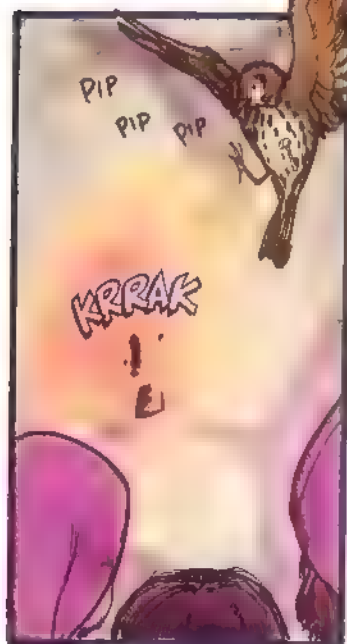


Quickly Bilbo explained. They all fell silent.

The sun sank lower and lower, and their hopes fell. It sank into a belt of reddened cloud and disappeared. The dwarves groaned, but still Bilbo stood almost without moving.



Then suddenly when their hope was lowest a red ray of the sun escaped like a finger through a rent in the cloud. A gleam of light came straight through the opening into the bay and fell on the smooth rock face.



THE KEY! THE KEY! THE KEY THAT WENT WITH THE MAP! TRY IT NOW WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME!

Now they all pushed together, and slowly a part of the rock-wall gave way. Long straight cracks appeared and widened. A door five feet high and three broad was outlined, and slowly without a sound swung inwards.

It seemed as if darkness flowed out like a vapour from the hole in the mountain-side, and deep darkness in which nothing could be seen lay before their eyes, a yawning mouth leading in and down.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR OUR ESTEEMED MISTER BAGGINS, WHO HAS PROVED HIMSELF A GOOD COMPANION ON OUR LONG ROAD, AND A HOBBIT FULL OF COURAGE AND RESOURCE FAR EXCEEDING HIS SIZE — NOW IS THE TIME FOR HIM TO PERFORM THE SERVICE FOR WHICH HE WAS INCLUDED IN OUR COMPANY; NOW IS THE TIME FOR HIM TO EARN HIS REWARD.

IF YOU MEAN YOU THINK IT IS MY JOB TO GO INTO THE SECRET PASSAGES FIRST, O THORIN THRAIN'S SON OAKENSHIELD, MAY YOUR BEARD GROW EVER LONGER, SAY SO AT ONCE AND HAVE DONE!

I MIGHT REFUSE, I HAVE GOT YOU OUT OF TWO MESSES ALREADY, SO THAT I AM, I THINK, ALREADY OWED SOME REWARD.

BUT 'THIRD TIME PAYS FOR ALL' AS MY FATHER USED TO SAY, AND SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK I SHALL REFUSE. PERHAPS I HAVE BEGUN TO TRUST MY LUCK MORE THAN I USED TO IN THE OLD DAYS, BUT ANYWAY I THINK I WILL GO AND HAVE A PEEK AT ONCE AND GET IT OVER.

Bilbo did not expect a chorus of volunteers, so he was not disappointed, but old Balin, the look-out man, was rather fond of the hobbit.

NOW WHO IS COMING WITH ME?

I WILL COME INSIDE AT LEAST AND PERHAPS A BIT OF THE WAY TOO, READY TO CALL FOR HELP IF NECESSARY.

The most that can be said for the dwarves is this, they intended to pay Bilbo really handsomely for his services; they had brought him to do a nasty job for them, and they did not mind the poor little fellow doing it if he would; but they would all have done their best to get him out of trouble, if he got into it.



There it is; dwarves are not heroes, but calculating folk with a great idea of the value of money; some are tricky and treacherous and pretty bad lots; some are not, but are decent enough people like Thorin and company, if you don't expect too much.



It was far easier going than Bilbo expected. This was no goblin entrance or rough wood-elves' cave. It was a passage made by dwarves at the height of their wealth and skill.



Balin stopped where he could still see the faint outline of the door, and by a trick of the echoes of the tunnel hear the rustle of the whispering voices of the others just outside.



GOOD LUCK, MISTER BAGGINS.

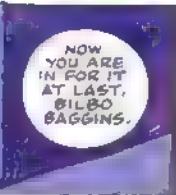
It was. As he went forward it grew and grew. Also it was now undoubtedly not in the tunnel. A sound, too, began to throb in his ears a sound that grew to the unmistakable gurgling noise of some vast animal shoring in its sleep down there in the red glow in front of him.

It was at this point that Bilbo stopped. Going on was the bravest thing he ever did. The tremendous things that happened afterward were as nothing compared to it. He fought the real battle in the tunnel alone before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait.



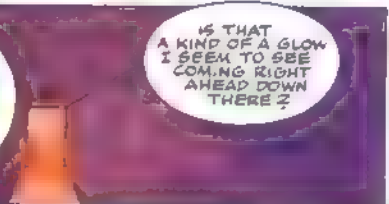
At any rate after a short halt go on he did coming to the end of the tunnel. It was almost dark, but rising from the near side of the rocky floor there was a great glow.

Then the hobbit slipped on his ring and warned by the echoes to take more than hobbits care to make no sound, he crept noiselessly down down, down into the dark. He was trembling with fear but his little face was set and grim. Already he was a very different hobbit than the one that had run out without a pocket-handkerchief from Bag-End long ago.

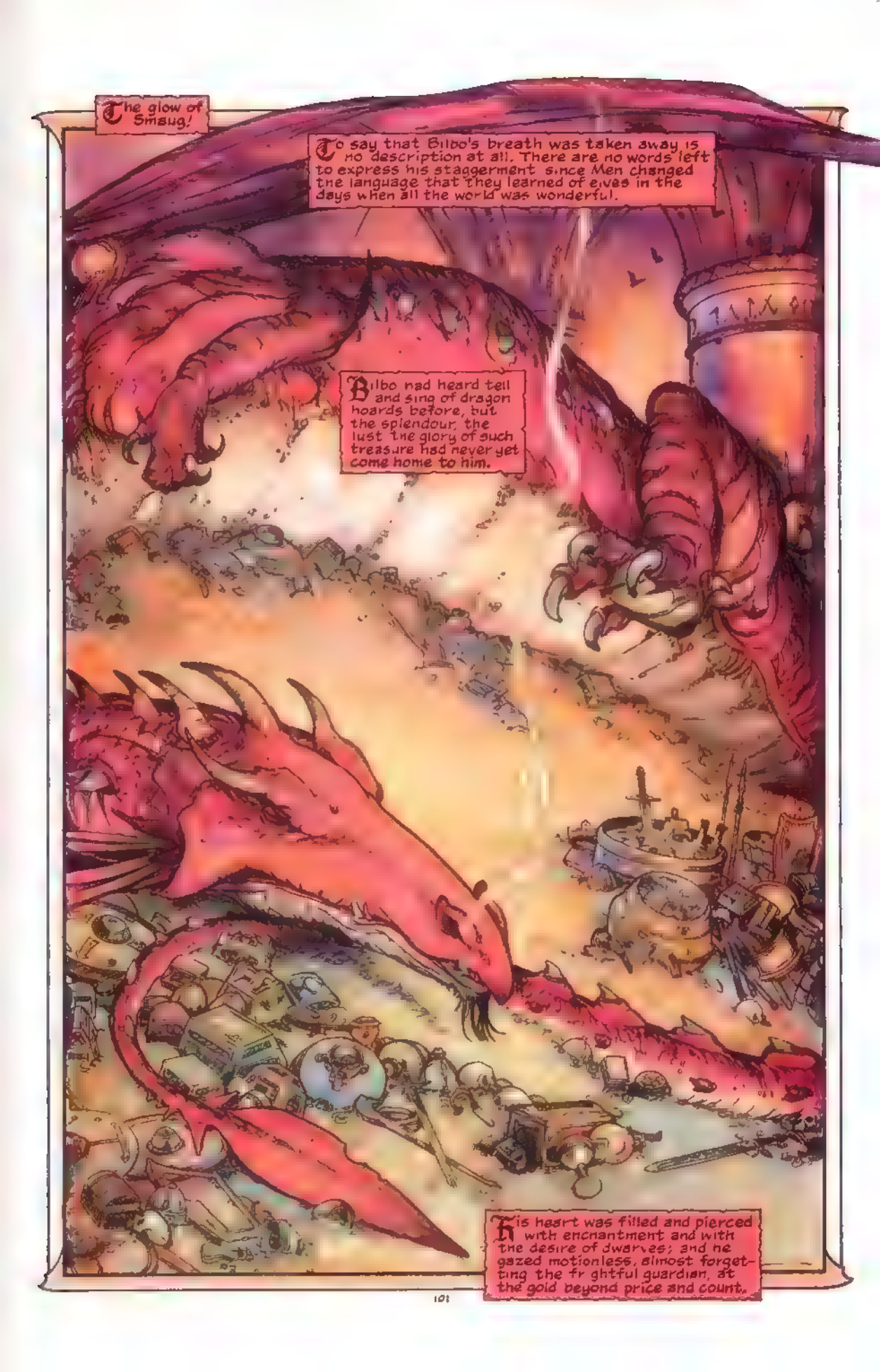


NOW YOU ARE IN FOR IT AT LAST, MISTER BAGGINS.

YOU WENT AND PUT YOUR FOOT RIGHT IN IT THAT NIGHT OF THE PARTY. I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO USE FOR DRAGON-GUARDED TREASURES, AND THE WHOLE LOT COULD STAY WHERE FOREVER, IF ONLY I COULD WAKE UP AND FIND THIS BEASTLY TUNNEL WAS MY OWN FRONT-HALL AT HOME!



IS THAT A KIND OF A GLOW I SEEM TO SEE COMING RIGHT AHEAD DOWN THERE?

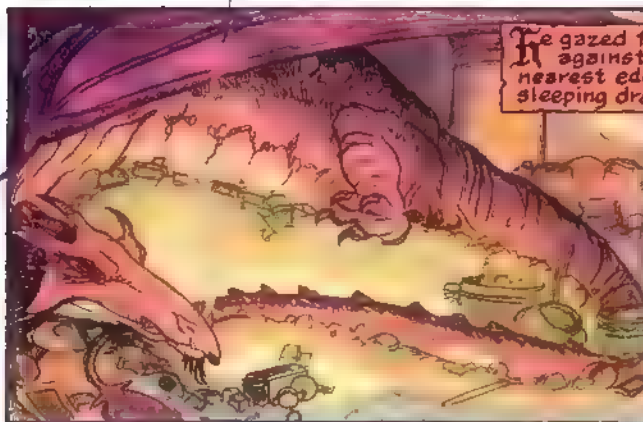


The glow of
Smaug!

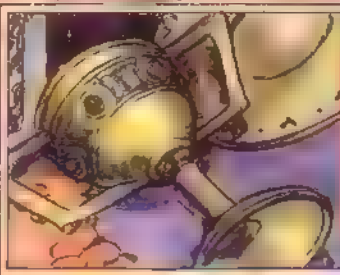
To say that Bilbo's breath was taken away is no description at all. There are no words left to express his staggerment since Men changed the language that they learned of elves in the days when all the world was wonderful.

Bilbo had heard tell and sing of dragon hoards before, but the splendour, the lust, the glory of such treasure had never yet come home to him.

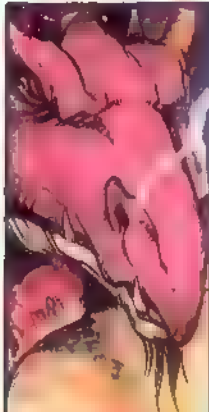
His heart was filled and pierced with enchantment and with the desire of dwarves; and he gazed motionless, almost forgetting the frightful guardian, at the gold beyond price and count.



He gazed for what seemed an age, before drawn almost against his will, he stole across the floor to the nearest edge of the mounds of treasure. Above him the sleeping dragon lay, a dire menace even in his sleep.



He grasped a great two-handled cup, as heavy as he could carry, and cast one fearful eye upwards.



Smaug's snoring changed its note.

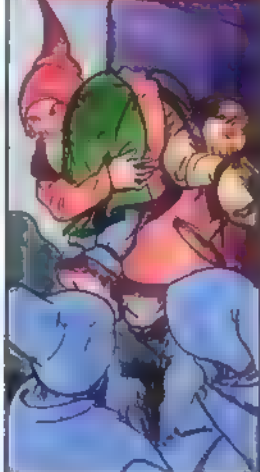


Then Bilbo fled. His heart was beating and a more fevered shaking was in his legs than when he was going down.

I'VE DONE IT! THIS WILL SHOW THEM. MORE LIKE A GROCER THAN A BURGLAR. INDEED! WELL, WE'LL HEAR NO MORE OF THAT.



Nor did he. The dwarves were overjoyed to see the hobbit again. They praised him and patted him on the back and put themselves and all their families for generations to come at his service.



The dwarves were talking delightedly of the recovery of their treasure, when suddenly a vast rumbling woke in the mountain underneath as if it was an old volcano that had made up its mind to start eruptions once again, and up the long tunnel came the dreadful echoes of a bellying and tramping that made the ground beneath them tremble.



Smaug was still to be reckoned with. It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations. And he missed his cup.

Thieves! Fire! Murder! Such a thing had not happened since first he came to the Mountain! His rage passes description—the sort of rage that is only seen when rich folk that have more than they can enjoy suddenly lose something that they have long had but have never before used or wanted.





Dragons may not have much real use for all their wealth, but they know it to an ounce as a rule especially after long possession; and Smaug was no exception.

To hunt the whole mountain till he had caught the thief and had torn and trampled him was his one thought.



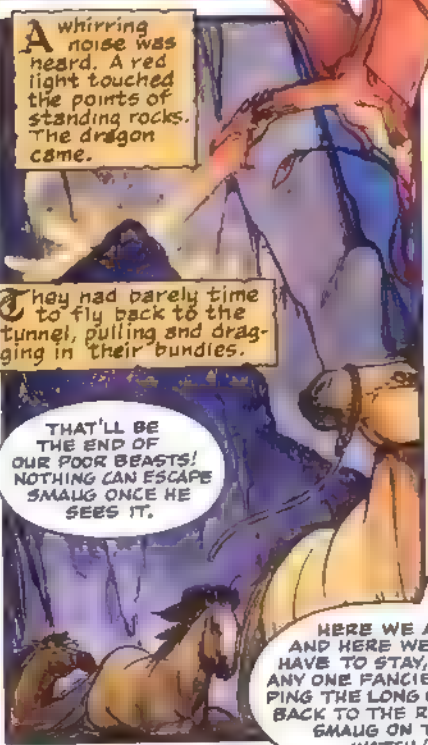
QUICK! QUICK! THE DOOR! THE TUNNEL! IT'S NO GOOD HERE.

MY COUSINS BOMBUR AND BOFUR— WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THEM, THEY ARE DOWN IN THE VALLEY! THEY WILL BE SLAIN, AND ALL OUR PONIES TOO, AND ALL OUR STORES LOST. WE CAN DO NOTHING!



NONSENSE! WE CANNOT LEAVE THEM. WHERE ARE THE ROPES? BE QUICK!

Up came Bofur, and all was safe. Up came Bombur, and still all was safe. Up came some tools and bundles of stores, and then danger was upon them.



A whirring noise was heard. A red light touched the points of standing rocks. The dragon came.

They had barely time to fly back to the tunnel, pulling and dragging in their bundles.

THAT'LL BE THE END OF OUR POOR BEASTS! NOTHING CAN ESCAPE SMAUG ONCE HE SEES IT.

His hot breath shrivelled the grass before the door and drove in through the crack they had left and scorched them as they lay hid. Through the night they could hear the roar of the flying dragon. He hunted in vain till the dawn chilled his wrath. Smaug would not forget or forgive the theft, not if a thousand years turned him to smouldering stone, but he could afford to wait. Slow and silent he crept back to his lair and half closed his eyes.



HERE WE ARE AND HERE WE SHALL HAVE TO STAY, UNLESS ANY ONE FANCIES TRAMPING THE LONG OPEN MILES BACK TO THE RIVER WITH SMAUG ON THE WATCH!

When morning came the terror of the dwarves grew less and they debated long on what was to be done.

WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE WE SHOULD DO, MISTER BAGGINS?

I HAVE NO IDEA AT THE MOMENT — IF YOU MEAN ABOUT REMOVING THE TREASURE, THAT OBVIOUSLY DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON SOME NEW TURN OF LUCK AND THE GETTING RID OF SMAUG.

GETTING RID OF DRAGONS IS NOT AT ALL IN MY LINE, BUT I WILL MAKE YOU AN OFFER. I HAVE GOT MY RING AND WILL CREEP DOWN THIS VERY NOON — THEN IF EVER SMAUG OUGHT TO BE NAPPING — AND SEE WHAT HE IS UP TO. PERHAPS SOMETHING WILL TURN UP.

'EVERY WORM HAS HIS WEAK SPOT,' AS MY FATHER USED TO SAY, THOUGH I AM SURE IT WAS NOT FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

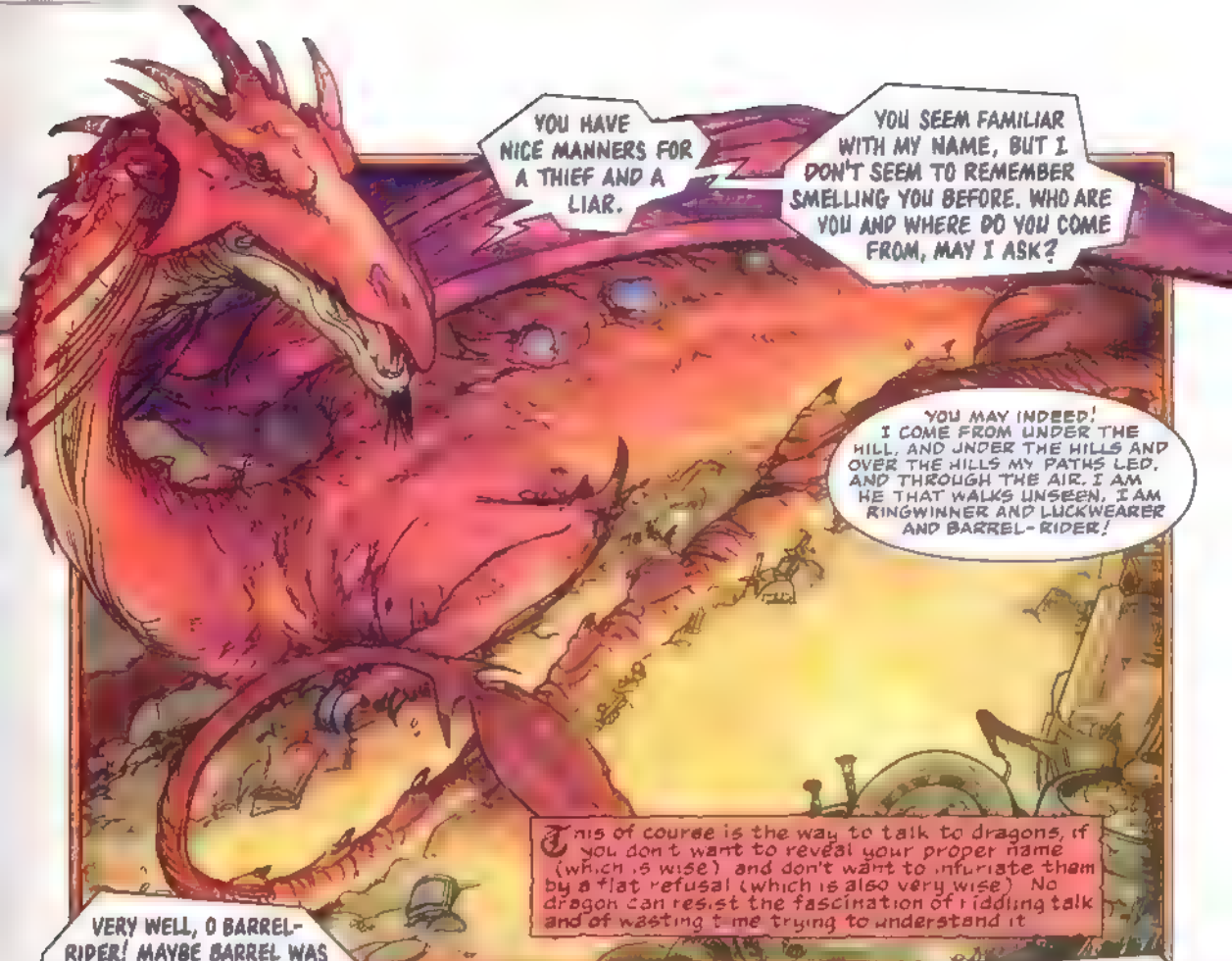
Naturally the dwarves accepted the offer eagerly. Already they had come to respect little Bilbo. Now he had become the real leader in their adventure. He had begun to have ideas and plans of his own.

OLD SMAUG IS WEARY AND ASLEEP. HE CAN'T SEE ME AND HE WON'T HEAR ME. CHEER UP, BILBO!

He had forgotten or had never heard about dragons' sense of smell. It is also an awkward fact that they keep half an eye open watching while they sleep, if they are suspicious.

WELL, THIEF! I SMELL YOU AND I FEEL YOUR AIR. I HEAR YOUR BREATH. COME ALONG! HELP YOURSELF AGAIN, THERE IS PLENTY AND TO SPARE!

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. TRULY SONGS AND TALES FALL UTTERLY SHORT OF THE REALITY.



YOU HAVE
NICE MANNERS FOR
A THIEF AND A
LIAR.

YOU SEEM FAMILIAR
WITH MY NAME, BUT I
DON'T SEEM TO REMEMBER
SMELLING YOU BEFORE. WHO ARE
YOU AND WHERE DO YOU COME
FROM, MAY I ASK?

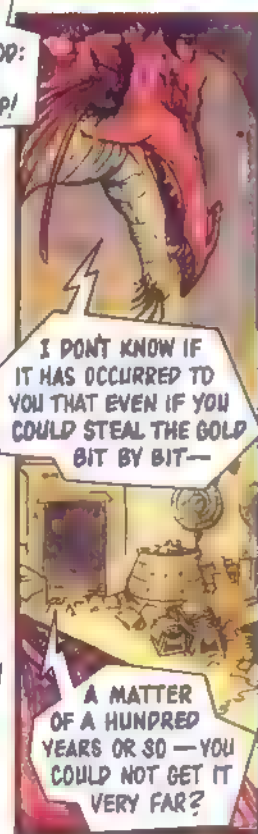
YOU MAY INDEED!
I COME FROM UNDER THE
HILL, AND UNDER THE HILLS AND
OVER THE HILLS MY PATHS LED,
AND THROUGH THE AIR, I AM
HE THAT WALKS UNSEEN, I AM
RINGWINNER AND LUCKWEAVER
AND BARREL-RIDER!

This of course is the way to talk to dragons, if
you don't want to reveal your proper name
(which is wise) and don't want to infuriate them
by a flat refusal (which is also very wise). No
dragon can resist the fascination of flattery talk
and of wasting time trying to understand it.

VERY WELL, O BARREL-
RIDER! MAYBE BARREL WAS
YOUR PONY'S NAME; AND MAYBE
NOT. I WILL GIVE YOU ONE
PIECE OF ADVICE FOR YOUR GOOD:
DON'T HAVE MORE TO DO WITH
DWARVES THAN YOU CAN HELP!

DWARVES!

I KNOW THE SMELL
(AND TASTE) OF DWARF—NO
ONE BETTER. DON'T TELL ME
THAT I CAN EAT A DWARF-
RIDDEN PONY AND NOT KNOW
IT! I SUPPOSE YOU GOT A
FAIR PRICE FOR THAT
CUP LAST NIGHT?



I DON'T KNOW IF
IT HAS OCCURRED TO
YOU THAT EVEN IF YOU
COULD STEAL THE GOLD
BIT BY BIT—

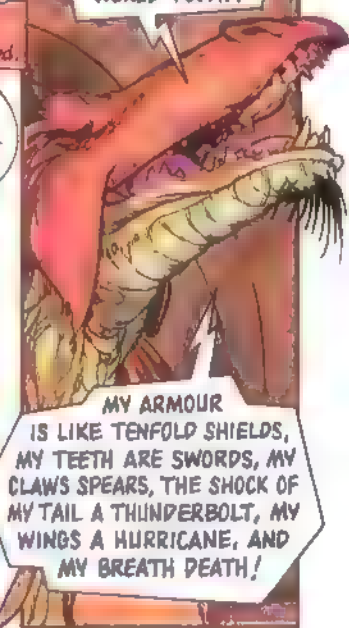
A MATTER
OF A HUNDRED
YEARS OR SO—YOU
COULD NOT GET IT
VERY FAR?

Now a nasty suspi-
cion began to grow
in Bilbo's mind—had
the dwarves forgotten
this important point
too, or were they
laughing in their sleeves
at him all the time?

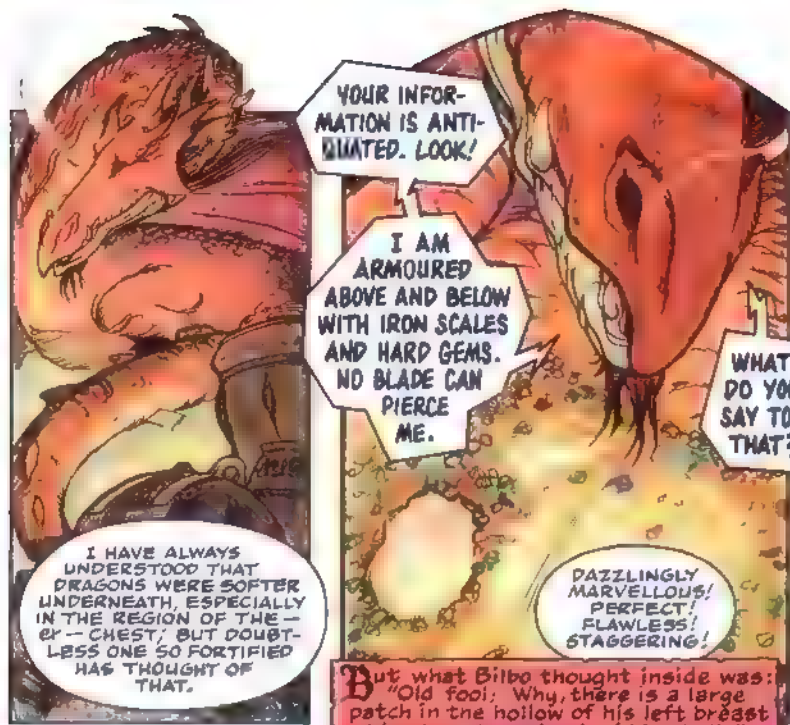
This is the effect
that dragon-talk
has on the inexperienced.

I TELL YOU THAT
GOLD WAS ONLY AN
AFTERTHOUGHT WITH
US. WE CAME OVER HILL
AND UNDER HILL, BY
WAVE AND WIN, FOR
REVENGE!

REVENGE! REVENGE!
THE KING UNDER THE MOUN-
TAIN IS DEAD AND WHERE ARE
HIS KIN THAT DARE SEEK
REVENGE? I LAID LOW THE
WARRIORS OF OLD AND THEIR
LIKE IS NOT IN THE
WORLD TODAY.



MY ARMOUR
IS LIKE TENFOLD SHIELDS,
MY TEETH ARE SWORDS,
MY CLAWS SPEARS, THE SHOCK OF
MY TAIL A THUNDERBOLT, MY
WINGS A HURRICANE, AND
MY BREATH DEATH!



YOUR INFORMATION IS ANTI-QUATED. LOOK!

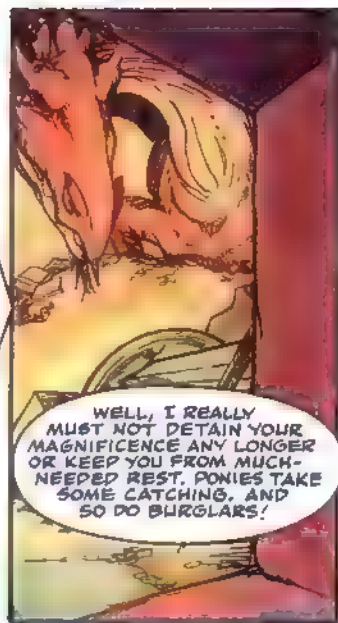
I AM ARMoured ABOVE AND BELOW WITH IRON SCALES AND HARD GEMS. NO BLADE CAN PIERCE ME.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?

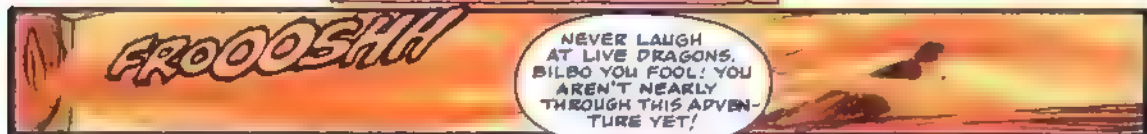
I HAVE ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THAT DRAGONS WERE SOFTER UNDERNEATH, ESPECIALLY IN THE REGION OF THE - CHEST; BUT DOUBTLESS ONE SO FORTIFIED HAS THOUGHT OF THAT.

PAZZLINGLY MARVELLOUS! PERFECT! FLAWLESS! STAGGERING!

But what Bilbo thought inside was: "Old fool: Why, there is a large patch in the hollow of his left breast as bare as a snail out of his shell!"

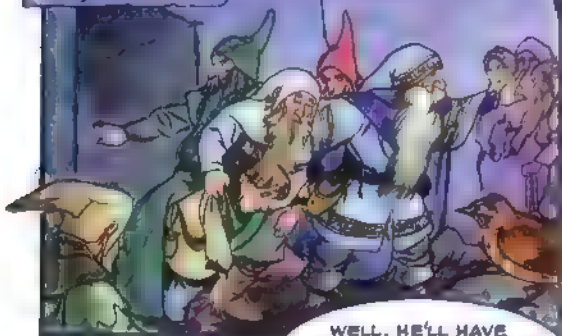


WELL, I REALLY MUST NOT DETAIN YOUR MAGNIFICENCE ANY LONGER OR KEEP YOU FROM MUCH-NEEDED REST. PONIES TAKE SOME CATCHING, AND SO DO BURGLARS!



NEVER LAUGH AT LIVE DRAGONS. BILOBO YOU FOOL! YOU AREN'T NEARLY THROUGH THIS ADVENTURE YET!

The afternoon was turning to evening when he came out again. But the hobbit was worried and uncomfortable, and they had difficulty in getting anything out of him.



WELL, HE'LL HAVE NEWS TO TAKE TO LAKE-TOWN ALL RIGHT, IF THAT IS WHAT HE IS AFTER, THOUGH I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE ARE ANY PEOPLE LEFT THERE THAT TROUBLE WITH THRUSH-LANGUAGE.

WHY, WHAT HAS HAPPENED?



So Bilbo told them all he could remember.

PRAT THE BIRD! I BELIEVE HE IS LISTENING, AND I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF HIM.



LEAVE HIM ALONE! THE THRUSHES ARE GOOD AND FRIENDLY. THE ANCIENT BREED THAT USED TO LIVE ABOUT HERE WERE A LONG-LIVED AND MAGICAL RACE. THE MEN OF DALE USED TO HAVE THE TRICK OF UNDERSTANDING THEIR LANGUAGE, AND USED THEM FOR MESSENGERS.

I AM SURE HE KNOWS WE CAME FROM LAKE-TOWN AND HAD HELP FROM THERE; AND I HAVE A HORRIBLE FEELING THAT HIS NEXT MOVE MAY BE IN THAT DIRECTION.

I THINK YOU DID VERY WELL, IF YOU ASK ME - YOU FOUND OUT ONE VERY USEFUL THING AT ANY RATE, AND GOT HOME ALIVE. IT MAY BE A MERCY AND A BLESSING YET TO KNOW OF THE BARE PATCH IN THE OLD WORM'S DIAMOND WAISTCOAT.

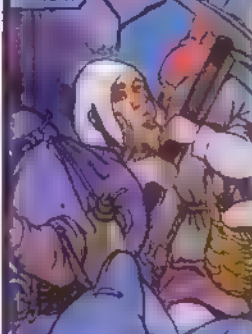
All the while they talked the thrush listened, till at last when the stars began to peep forth, it silently spread its wings and flew away. And all the while they talked Bilbo became more unhappy and his foreboding grew.

I AM SURE WE ARE VERY UNSAFE HERE. Smaug will be coming out any minute now, and our only hope is to get well in the tunnel and shut the door.



It seemed so much in earnest that the dwarves at last did as he said, though they delayed shutting the door — it seemed a desperate plan for no one knew whether or how they could get it open again from the inside.

And the thought of being shut in a place from which the only way out led through the dragon's lair was not one they liked.

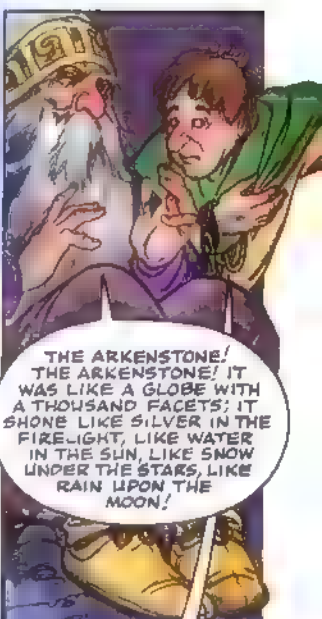


For a long while they sat inside not far down from the half-open door and went on talking.

The talk turned to the dragon's wicked words about the dwarves. But Thorin said: "As for your share, Mister Baggins, I assure you we are more than grateful, and you shall choose your own fourteenth as soon as we have anything to divide — and we will do whatever we can for you, and take our share of the cost of transport when the time comes."



From that the talk turned to the great hoard itself the great golden cup of Thrór, the necklace of Girion, Lord of Dale made of five hundred emeralds. But fairest of all was the great white gem which the dwarves had found beneath the roots of the Mountain, the heart of the Mountain, the Arkenstone of Thráin.

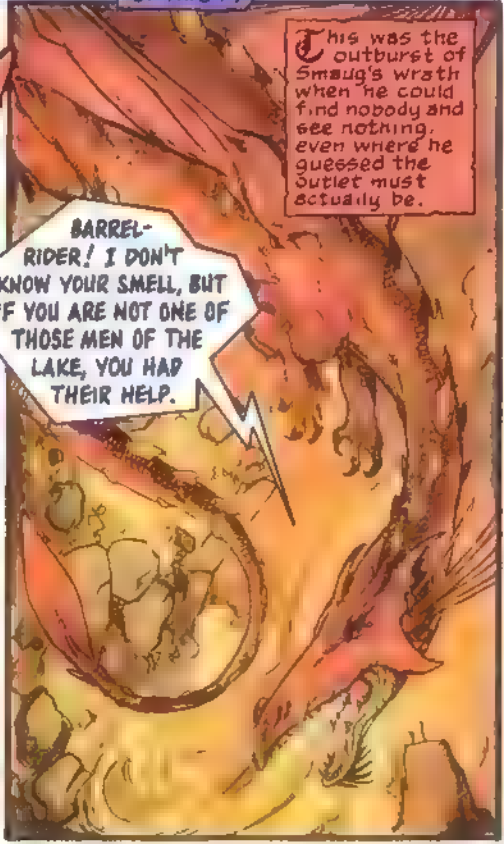
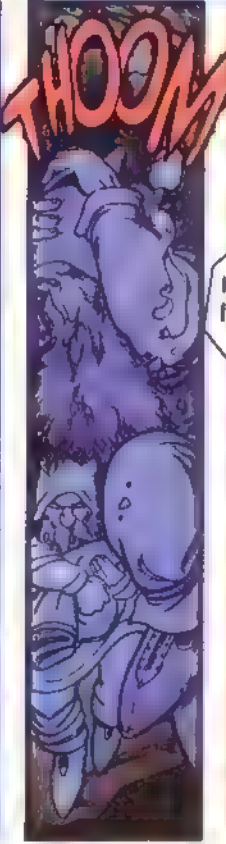
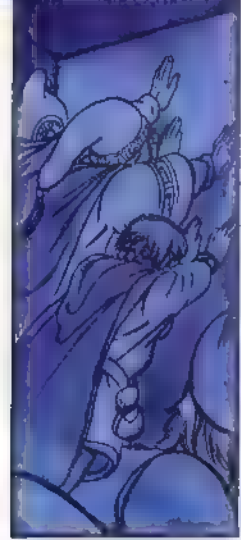


THE ARKENSTONE! THE ARKENSTONE! IT WAS LIKE A GLOBE WITH A THOUSAND FACETS; IT SHONE LIKE SILVER IN THE FIRELIGHT, LIKE WATER IN THE SUN, LIKE SNOW UNDER THE STARS, LIKE RAIN UPON THE MOON!

SHUT THE DOOR! I FEAR THAT DRAGON IN MY MARROW. SHUT THE DOOR BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

They thrust upon the door, and it closed with a snap and a clang. No trace of a keyhole was there left on the inside. They were shut in the mountain!

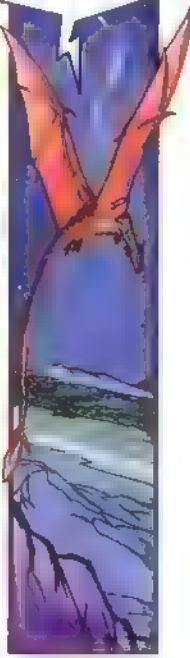
And not a moment too soon.



This was the outburst of Smaug's wrath when he could find nobody and see nothing, even where he guessed the outlet must actually be.

BARREL-RIDER! I DON'T KNOW YOUR SMELL, BUT IF YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THOSE MEN OF THE LAKE, YOU HAD THEIR HELP.

THEY SHALL SEE ME AND REMEMBER WHO IS THE REAL KING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN!



In the meanwhile the dwarves sat in darkness. They could not count the passing time, and they scarcely dared to move. At last after days and days of waiting as it seemed when they were becoming choked and dazed for want of air, they could bear it no longer.

LET US TRY THE DOOR! I MUST FEEL THE WIND ON MY FACE SOON OR DIE.

I THINK I WOULD RATHER BE SMASHED BY SMAUG IN THE OPEN THAN SUFFOCATE IN HERE!

But they found that neither key nor the magic that had once obeyed would ever open that door again.

WE ARE TRAPPED! THIS IS THE END, WE SHALL DIE HERE!

COME, COME! WHILE THERE'S LIFE THERE'S HOPE! AS MY FATHER USED TO SAY, AND THIRD TIME PAYS FOR ALL, I AM GOING DOWN THE TUNNEL ONCE AGAIN. THE ONLY WAY OUT IS DOWN. AND I THINK THIS TIME YOU HAD BETTER ALL COME WITH ME.

In desperation they agreed. Down down they went, but though every now and again Bibo in fear stopped and listened not a sound stirred below.

NOW I WONDER WHAT ON EARTH SMAUG IS PLAYING AT.

PERHAPS WE CAN MAKE A LITTLE LIGHT, AND HAVE A LOOK ROUND BEFORE THE LUCK TURNS.

But Bibo could not persuade the dwarves to do as he wished, for as Thorin carefully explained after Baggins was still obviously their expert burglar and investigator, if he liked to risk going, that was his affair. They would wait in the tunnel for his report.

So they sat near the door and watched. Every now and again while he was still near enough, they caught a glint and a tinkle as he stumbled on some golden thing.

Then they saw him halt and stoop for a moment, but they did not know the reason.

It was the Akenstone, the heart of the Mountain. So Bibo guessed from Thorin's description, but indeed there could not be two such gems even in so marvellous a hoard even in all the world.

NOW I AM A BURGLAR INDEED! BUT I SUPPOSE I MUST TELL THE DWARVES ABOUT IT — SOME TIME. THEY DID SAY I COULD PICK AND CHOOSE MY OWN SHARE; AND I THINK I WOULD CHOOSE THIS, IF THEY TOOK ALL THE REST!

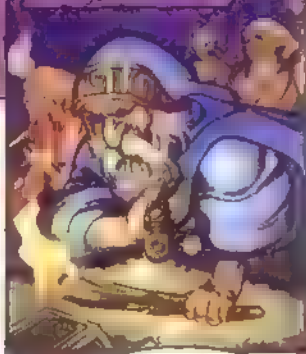
All the same he had an uncomfortable feeling that the picking and choosing had not really been meant to include this marvellous gem, and that trouble would yet come of it.

The mere fleeting glimpses of treasure which the dwarves had caught rekindled all the fire of their dwarvish hearts; and when the heart of a dwarf, even the most respectable, is awakened by gold and by jewels, he grows suddenly bold, and he may become fierce.

The dwarves indeed no longer needed any urging. All were now eager to explore the hall while they had the chance, and willing to believe that for the present, Smaug was away from home.



They gathered gems and stuffed their pockets, and let what they could not carry fall back through their fingers with a sigh. Thorin was not least among these, but a ways he searched from side to side for something which he could not find. It was the Arkenstone, but he spoke of it yet to no one.



Now the dwarves took down mail and weapons from the walls, and armed themselves.

MISTER BAGGINS! HERE IS THE FIRST PAYMENT OF YOUR REWARD! CAST OFF YOUR OLD COAT AND PUT ON THIS!

I FEEL MAGNIFICENT, BUT I EXPECT I LOOK RATHER ABSURD. HOW THEY WOULD LAUGH ON THE HILL AT HOME! STILL I WISH THERE WAS A LOOKING-GLASS HANDY!

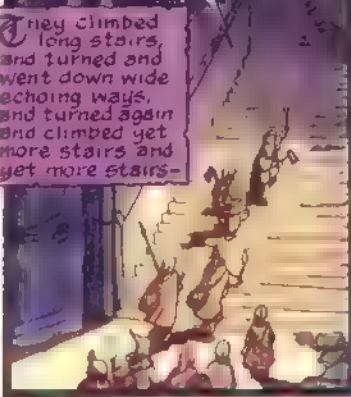


THORIN! WHAT NEXT? WE ARE ARMED, BUT WHAT GOOD HAS ANY ARMOUR EVER BEEN BEFORE AGAINST SMAUG THE DREADFUL? THIS TREASURE IS NOT YET WON BACK. WE ARE NOT LOOKING FOR GOLD YET, BUT FOR A WAY OF ESCAPE; AND WE HAVE TEMPTED LUCK TOO LONG!



YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH! LET US GO! I WILL GUIDE YOU. NOT IN A THOUSAND YEARS SHOULD I FORGET THE WAYS OF THE PALACE.

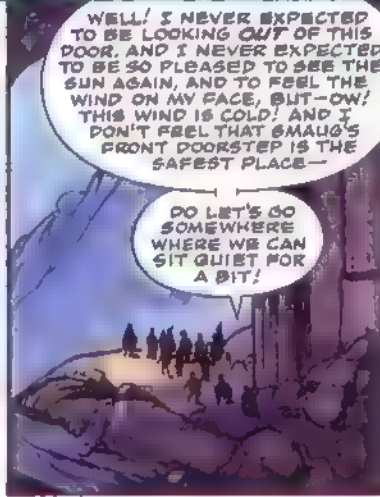
They climbed long stairs, and turned and went down wide echoing ways, and turned again and climbed yet more stairs and yet more stairs—



—and behold! Before them stood the bright light of day!

WELL! I NEVER EXPECTED TO BE LOOKING OUT OF THIS DOOR. AND I NEVER EXPECTED TO BE SO PLEASED TO SEE THE SUN AGAIN, AND TO FEEL THE WIND ON MY FACE, BUT—OW! THIS WIND IS COLD! AND I DON'T FEEL THAT SMAUG'S FRONT DOORSTEP IS THE SAFEST PLACE—

DO LET'S GO SOMEWHERE WHERE WE CAN SIT QUIET FOR A BIT!



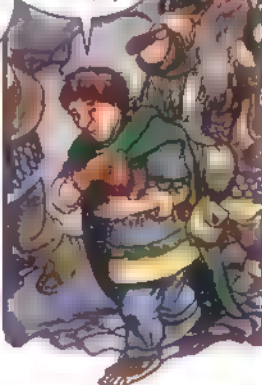
QUITE RIGHT! AND I THINK I KNOW WHICH WAY WE SHOULD GO: WE OUGHT TO MAKE FOR THE OLD LOOK-OUT POST AT THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF THE MOUNTAIN.

HOW FAR IS THAT?

ABOUT FIVE HOURS MARCH, I SHOULD THINK. THERE IS (OR WAS) A PATH THAT LEFT THE ROAD AND CLIMBED UP TO THE POST ON RAVENHILL, A HARD CLIMB, TOO, EVEN IF THE OLD STEPS ARE STILL THERE.



DEAR ME! MORE WALKING AND MORE CLIMBING WITHOUT BREAKFAST! I WONDER HOW MANY BREAKFASTS AND OTHER MEALS WE HAVE MISSED INSIDE THAT NASTY CLOCKLESS, TIMELESS HOLE?



As a matter of fact two nights and the day between had gone by (and not altogether without food) since the dragon smashed the magic door, but Bilbo had quite lost count, and it might have been one night or a week of nights for all he could tell.

COME, COME! DON'T CALL MY PLACE A NASTY HOLE! YOU WAIT TILL IT HAS BEEN CLEANED AND REDECORATED!

THAT WON'T BE TILL SMAUG'S DEAD. IN THE MEANWHILE WHERE IS HE? I WOULD GIVE A GOOD BREAKFAST TO KNOW. I HOPE HE IS NOT UP ON THE MOUNTAIN LOOKING DOWN AT US!



After going a short way they rested for a while and had such a breakfast as they could, chiefly *cram* and water. (If you want to know what *cram* is, I can only say that I don't know the recipe; but it is biscuitish, keeps good indefinitely, is supposed to be sustaining, and is certainly not entertaining, being in fact very uninteresting except as a chewing exercise. It was made by the Lake-men for long journeys.)

After that they went on again till at last in the late afternoon they came to the top of the ridge and saw the wintry sun going downwards to the West.

HERE IN THE OLD DAYS WE USED ALWAYS TO KEEP WATCHMEN. THE GUARDS WERE MADE OVER COMFORTABLE PERHAPS—OTHERWISE WE MIGHT HAVE HAD LONGER WARNINGS OF THE COMING OF THE DRAGON, AND THINGS MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT. STILL, HERE WE CAN NOW LIE HID AND SHELTERED FOR A WHILE, AND CAN SEE MUCH WITHOUT BEING SEEN.

NOT MUCH USE, IF WE HAVE BEEN SEEN COMING HERE.

From the rock-chamber they looked West and there was nothing, and East there was nothing, and in the South there was no sign of the dragon, but there was a gathering of very many birds. At that they gazed and wondered; but they were no nearer understanding it, when the first cold stars came out.

Now if you wish, like the dwarves, to hear news of Smaug, you must go back again to the evening when he smashed the door and flew off in a rage, two days before.

LOOK! THE LIGHTS AGAIN! LAST NIGHT THE WATCHMEN SAW THEM START AND FADE FROM MIDNIGHT UNTIL DAWN, SOMETHING IS HAPPENING UP THERE.

PERHAPS THE KING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN IS FORGING GOLD. IT IS LONG SINCE HE WENT NORTH. IT IS TIME THE SONGS BEGAN TO PROVE THEMSELVES AGAIN.

WHICH KING? AS LIKE AS NOT IT IS THE MARAUDING FIRE OF THE DRAGON, THE ONLY KING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN WE HAVE EVER KNOWN.

THE DRAGON IS COMING OR I AM A FOOL! CUT THE BRIDGES! TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

YOU ARE ALWAYS FOREBODING GLOOMY THINGS! ANYTHING FROM FLOODS TO POISONED FISH. THINK OF SOMETHING CHEERFUL!

THE RIVER IS RUNNING GOLD FROM THE MOUNTAIN!

Then warning trumpets were suddenly sounded, and echoed along the rocky shores. Every vessel in the town was filled with water, every warrior was armed, every arrow and dart was ready, and the bridge to the land was thrown down and destroyed.

So it was that the dragon did not find them quite unprepared.

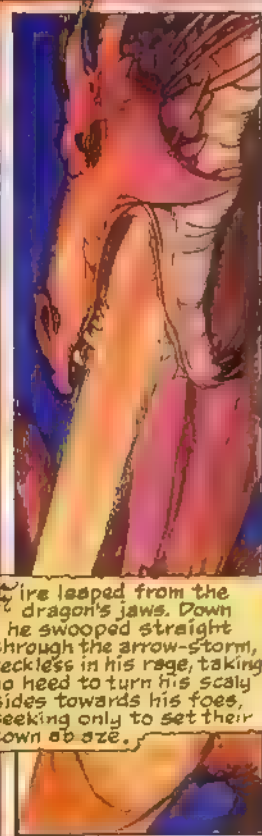
A large, detailed illustration of a dragon with orange and yellow scales breathing a massive plume of fire onto a town. The town's buildings are partially obscured by the smoke and fire. In the background, a crowd of people is visible on a hill, watching the destruction.

Roaring he swept
over the town.
A hail of dark arrows
leaped up and snapped
and rattled on his
scales and jewels and
their shafts fell back
kindled by his breath
burning and hissing
into the lake.

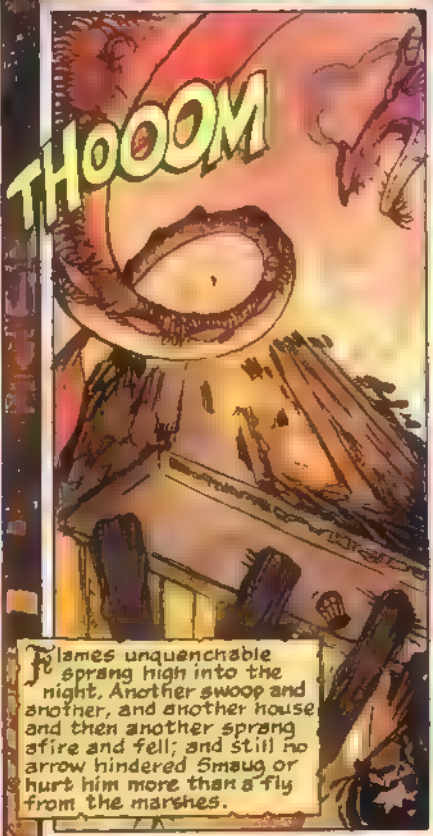
At the twanging of the
bows and the shrilling
of the trumpets the
dragon's wrath blazed
to its height, till he was
blind and mad with it.

Amid shrieks and
wailing and the
shouts of men Smaug
came over them,
swept towards the
bridge and was
foiled! The bridge
was gone, and his
enemies were on an
island in deep water—
too deep and dark
and cool for his
liking.

No one had dared to give battle to
him for many an age; nor would
they have dared now, if it had not
been for the grim-voiced man (Bard
was his name), who ran to and fro
cheering on the archers and urging
the Master to order them to fight
to the last arrow.



Fire leaped from the
dragon's jaws. Down
he swooped straight
through the arrow-storm,
reckless in his rage, taking
no heed to turn his scaly
sides towards his foes,
seeking only to set their
town ablaze.



Flames unquenchable
sprang high into the
night. Another swoop and
another, and another house
and then another sprang
afire and fell; and still no
arrow hindered Smaug or
hurt him more than a fly
from the marshes.

Already men were jumping into
the water on every side.
Women and children were being
huddled into laden boats in the
market-pool. The Master himself
was turning to his great gilded
boat, hoping to row away in the
confusion and save himself.



Soon all the
town would
be deserted and
burned down to
the surface of
the lake.

But there was still a company of archers that held their ground among the burning houses. Their captain was Bard, a descendant in long line of Girion, Lord of Dale, whose wife and child had escaped down the Running River from the ruin long ago.

Now he shot till all his arrows but one were gone.

WAIT!
WAIT!

THE MOON IS RISING. LOOK FOR THE HOLLOW OF THE LEFT BREAST AS HE FLIES AND TURNS ABOVE YOU!

It was an old thrush. Marvellous Bard found he could understand its tongue, for he was of the race of Dale.

ARROW!
BLACK ARROW!
I HAVE SAVED YOU TO THE LAST. YOU HAVE NEVER FAILED ME AND ALWAYS I HAVE RECOVERED YOU. I HAD YOU FROM MY FATHER AND HE FROM OF OLD.

IF EVER YOU CAME FROM THE FORGES OF THE TRUE KING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN, GO NOW AND SPEED WELL!

The great bow twanged.

The black arrow sped straight for the hollow by the left breast.

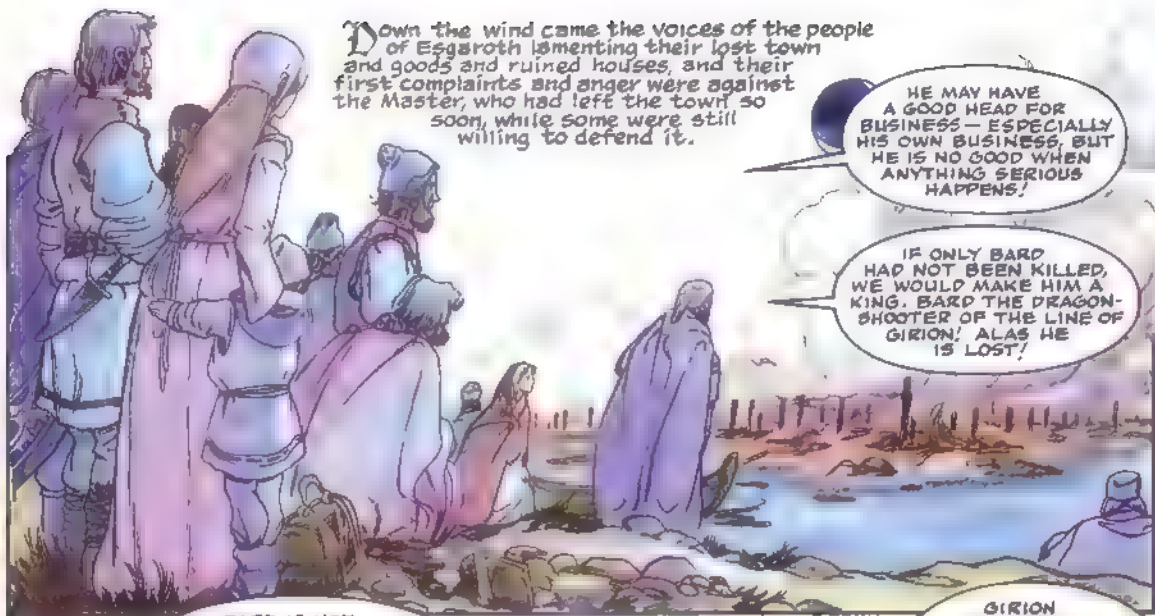
The dragon swooped once more lower than ever, and as he turned and dived down his belly glittered white with sparkling fires of gems in the moon — but not in one place.

In it smote and vanished, barb, shaft and feather, so fierce was its flight.

With a shriek that deafened men, fell trees and split stone, Smaug shot spouting into the air, turned over and crashed down from on high in ruin.

Full on the town he fell. His last throes splintered it to sparks and gledes. The lake roared in. A vast steam leaped up, white in the sudden dark under the moon.

There was a hiss, a gushing whirl, and then silence. And that was the end of Smaug and Esgaroth, but not of Bard.



Down the wind came the voices of the people of Esgaroth lamenting their lost town and goods and ruined houses, and their first complaints and anger were against the Master, who had left the town so soon, while some were still willing to defend it.

HE MAY HAVE A GOOD HEAD FOR BUSINESS — ESPECIALLY HIS OWN BUSINESS, BUT HE IS NO GOOD WHEN ANYTHING SERIOUS HAPPENS.

IF ONLY BARD HAD NOT BEEN KILLED, WE WOULD MAKE HIM A KING. BARD THE DRAGON-SHOOTER OF THE LINE OF GIRION! ALAS HE IS LOST!

BARD IS NOT LOST! HE DIVED FROM ESGAROTH, WHEN THE ENEMY WAS SLAIN. I AM BARD, OF THE LINE OF GIRION; I AM THE SLAYER OF THE DRAGON.

KING BARD!

GIRION WAS LORD OF DALE, NOT KING OF ESGAROTH. IN THE LAKE-TOWN WE HAVE ALWAYS ELECTED MASTERS FROM AMONG THE OLD AND WISE, AND HAVE NOT ENDURED THE RULE OF MERE FIGHTING MEN.

KING BARD.

LET 'KING BARD' GO BACK TO HIS OWN KINGDOM-DALE IS NOW FREED BY HIS VALOUR, AND NOTHING HINDERS HIS RETURN, AND ANY THAT WISH CAN GO WITH HIM. THE WISE WILL STAY HERE AND HOPE TO REBUILD OUR TOWN.

UP THE BOWMAN, AND DOWN WITH MONEY-BAGS!

I AM THE LAST MAN TO UNDER-VALUE BARD THE BOWMAN. BUT, WHY O PEOPLE? WHY DO I GET ALL YOUR BLAME? WHO AROUSED THE DRAGON FROM HIS SLUMBER, I MIGHT ASK? WHO OBTAINED OF US RICH GIFTS AND AMPLE HELP, AND LED US TO BELIEVE THAT OLD SONGS COULD COME TRUE? WHAT SORT OF GOLD HAVE THEY SENT DOWN THE RIVER TO REWARD US?

WHY WASTE WORDS AND WRATH ON THOSE UNHAPPY CREATURES? DOUBTLESS THEY PERISHED FIRST IN FIRE, BEFORE SMAUG CAME TO US.

FRAGON-FIRE AND RUIN! FROM WHOM SHOULD WE CLAIM THE RECOMPENSE OF OUR DAMAGE, AND AID FOR OUR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS?

Then even as he was speaking, the thought came into his heart of the fabled treasure of the Mountain lying without guard or owner. He thought of the Master's words, and of Dale rebuilt and filled with golden bells, if he could but find the men.

THIS IS NO TIME FOR ANGRY WORDS, MASTER, OR FOR CONSIDERING WEIGHTY PLANS OF CHANGE. THERE IS WORK TO DO. I SERVE YOU STILL — THOUGH AFTER A WHILE I MAY THINK AGAIN OF YOUR WORDS AND GO NORTH WITH ANY THAT WILL FOLLOW ME.



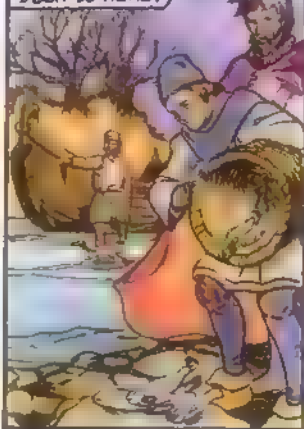
Bard strode off to help in the ordering of the camps and in the care of the sick and the wounded. And everywhere he went he found talk running like fire among the people concerning the vast treasure that was now unguarded; and it cheered them greatly in their plight.

That was well, for the night was bitter and miserable. Shelters could be contrived for few (the Master had one) and there was little food (even the Master went short). Many took ill of wet and cold and sorrow that night, and afterwards died.



In the days that followed there was much sickness and great hunger.

Meanwhile Bard took the lead, and ordered things as he wished, though always in the Master's name. Probably most of the people would have perished in the winter that now hurried after autumn, if help had not been to hand.



But help came swiftly; for Bard at once had speedy messengers sent up the river to the Forest to ask the aid of the King of the Elves of the Wood, and those messengers had found a host already on the move, although it was then only the third day after the fall of Smaug.



The Elvenking had received news from his own messengers and from the birds that loved his folk, and already knew much of what had happened. Very great indeed was the commotion among all things with wings that dwelt on the borders of the Desolation of the Dragon.



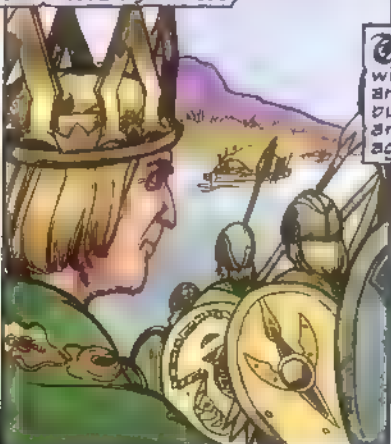
Far over Mirkwood tidings spread: "Smaug is dead!" Even before the Elvenking rode forth, the news had passed west right to the pinewoods of the Misty Mountains; Beorn had heard it in his wooden house, and the goblins were at council in their caves.

But the king, when he received the prayers of Bard, had pity; so turning his march, which had at first been direct towards the Mountain—for he too had not forgotten the legend of the wealth of Thrór—he hasted now down the river to the Long Lake. He had not boats or rafts enough for his host, but great store of goods he sent ahead by water.

Only five days after the death of the dragon they came upon the shores and looked on the ruins of the town. The Master was ready to make any bargain for the future in return for the Elvenking's aid.

But all the men of arms who were still able, and the most of the Elvenking's array, got ready to march north to the Mountain. It was thus that in eleven days from the ruin of the town the head of their host passed the rock-gates at the end of the lake and came into the desolate lands.

Their plans were soon made. The Master remained behind, and with him were some men of crafts and many skilled elves; and they busied themselves felling trees, and raising huts by the shore against the oncoming winter.





SOMETHING STRANGE IS HAPPENING. THE TIME HAS GONE FOR THE AUTUMN WANDERINGS! AND THESE ARE BIRDS THAT DWELL ALWAYS IN THE LAND! THERE ARE STARLING AND FLOCKS OF FINCHES; AND FAR OFF THERE ARE MANY CARRION BIRDS AS IF A BATTLE WERE AFOOT!

THERE IS THAT OLD THRUSH AGAIN! HE SEEMS TO HAVE ESCAPED, WHEN SMAUG SMASHED THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE!

I BELIEVE HE IS TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING. I ONLY WISH HE WAS A RAVEN!

PIP PIP
PIP PIP PIP



I THOUGHT YOU DID NOT LIKE THEM! YOU SEEMED VERY SHY OF THEM WHEN WE CAME THIS WAY BEFORE!

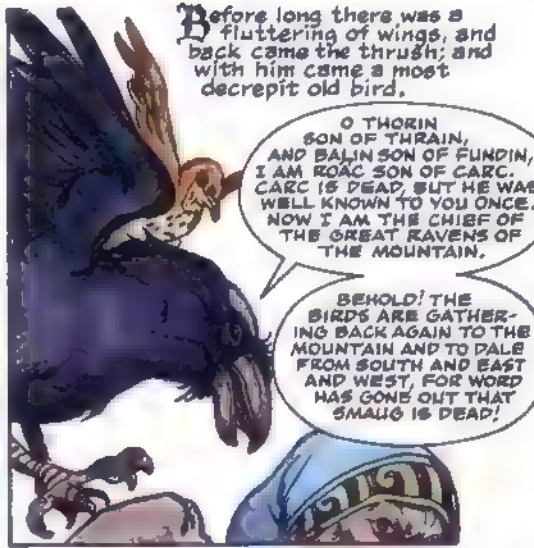
THOSE WERE CROWS! AND NASTY SUSPICIOUS-LOOKING CREATURES AT THAT, AND RUDE AS WELL. BUT THE RAVENS ARE DIFFERENT. THERE USED TO BE GREAT FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THEM AND THE PEOPLE OF THOR, AND THEY OFTEN BROUGHT US SECRET NEWS.

THIS VERY HEIGHT WAS ONCE NAMED RAVENHILL, BECAUSE THERE WAS A WISE AND FAMOUS PAIR, OLD CARC AND HIS WIFE, BUT I DON'T SUPPOSE THAT ANY OF THAT ANCIENT BREED LINGER HERE NOW.



WE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND HIM, BUT THAT OLD BIRD UNDERSTANDS US, I AM SURE. KEEP WATCH NOW, AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

PIP PIP
PIP PIP PIP



Before long there was a fluttering of wings, and back came the thrush; and with him came a most decrepit old bird.

O THORIN SON OF THRAIN, AND BALIN SON OF FUNDIN, I AM ROAC SON OF CARC. CARC IS DEAD, BUT HE WAS WELL KNOWN TO YOU ONCE. NOW I AM THE CHIEF OF THE GREAT RAVENS OF THE MOUNTAIN.

BEHOLD! THE BIRDS ARE GATHERING BACK AGAIN TO THE MOUNTAIN AND TO DALE FROM SOUTH AND EAST AND WEST, FOR WORD HAS GONE OUT THAT SMAUG IS DEAD!



DEAD? DEAD?

YES, DEAD. THE THRUSH, MAY HIS FEATHERS NEVER FALL, SAW HIM DIE, AND WE MAY TRUST HIS WORDS. YOU MAY GO BACK TO YOUR HALLS IN SAFETY; ALL THE TREASURE IS YOURS—FOR THE MOMENT.

BUT MANY ARE GATHERING HERE BESIDE THE BIRDS, ALREADY A HOST OF THE ELVES IS ON THE WAY, AND CARRION BIRDS ARE WITH THEM HOPING FOR BATTLE AND SLAUGHTER.

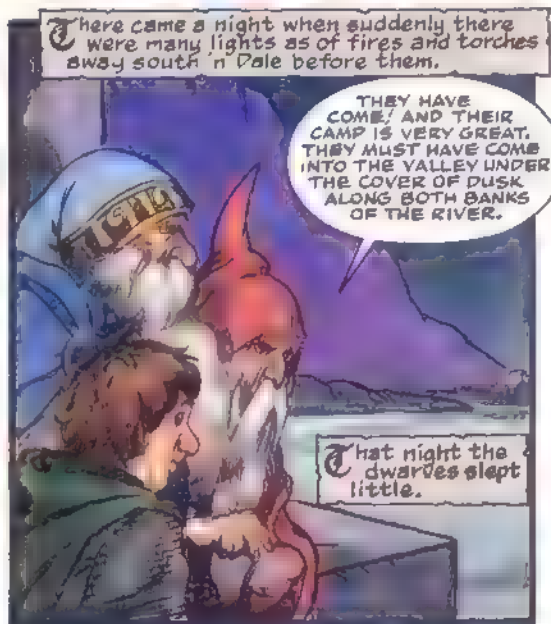
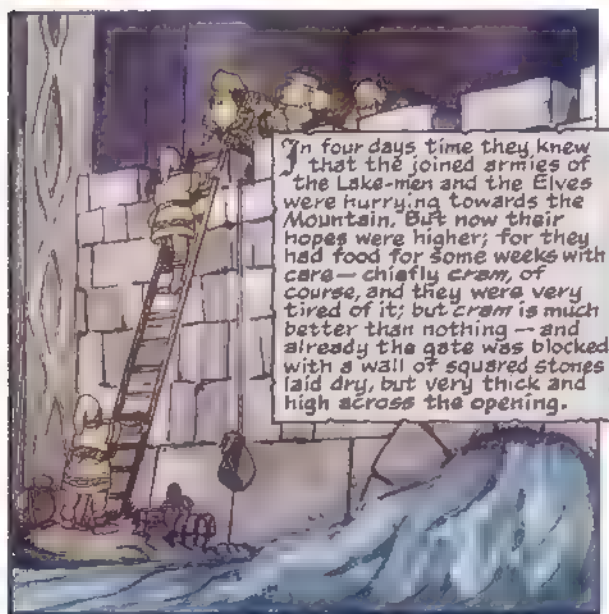
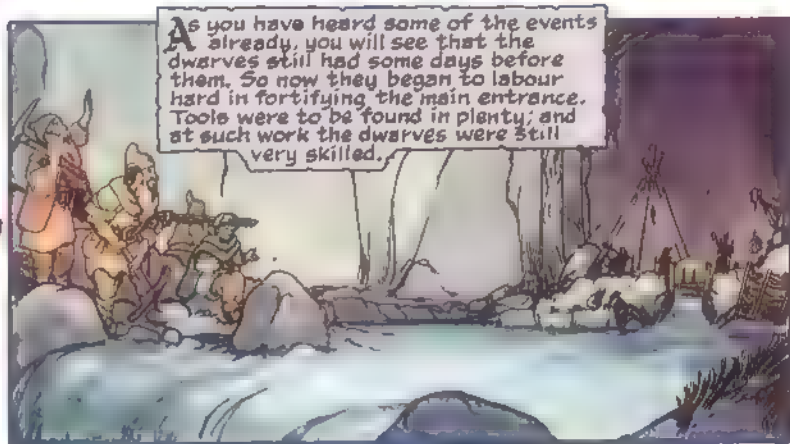
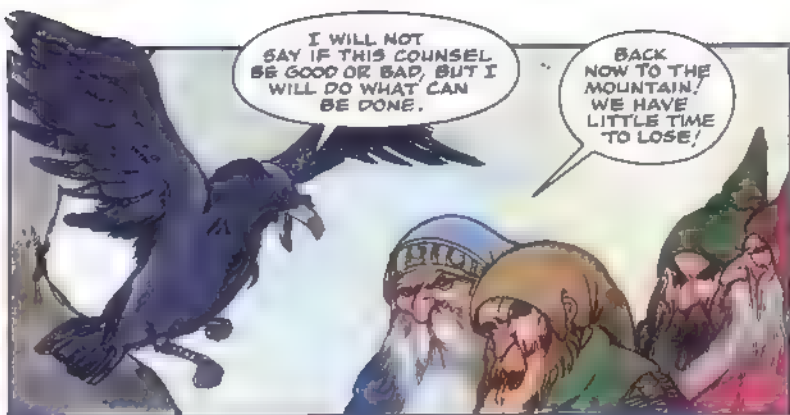
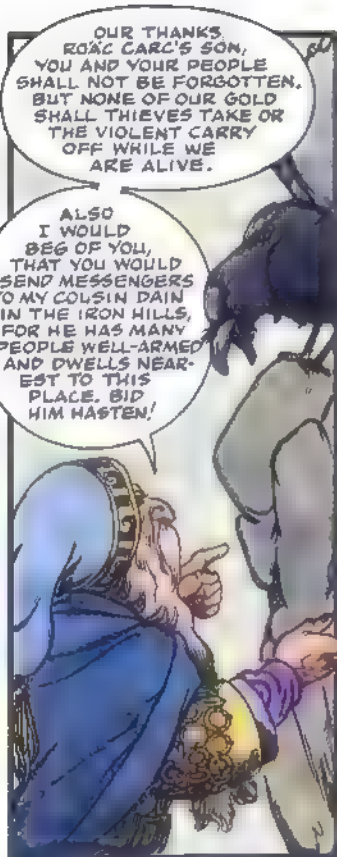
BY THE LAKE MEN MURMUR THAT THEIR SORROWS ARE DUE TO THE DWARVES; FOR THEY ARE HOMELESS AND MANY HAVE DIED, AND SMAUG HAS DESTROYED THEIR TOWN. THEY TOO THINK TO FIND AMENDS FROM YOUR TREASURE, WHETHER YOU ARE ALIVE OR DEAD.

THEN WE HAVE BEEN IN NEED—LESS FEAR—AND THE TREASURE IS OURS!



THIRTEEN IS A SMALL REMNANT OF THE GREAT FOLK OF DURIN THAT ONCE DWELL HERE. IF YOU WILL LISTEN TO MY COUNSEL, YOU WILL NOT TRUST THE MASTER OF THE LAKE-MEN, BUT RATHER HIM THAT SHOT THE DRAGON WITH HIS BOW.

WE WOULD SEE PEACE ONCE MORE AMONG DWARVES AND MEN AND ELVES AFTER THE LONG DESOLATION; BUT IT MAY COST YOU DEAR IN GOLD, I HAVE SPOKEN.



The morning was still pale when they saw a company approaching. Before long they could see that both men of the lake armed as if for war and elvish bowmen were among them.

WHO ARE YOU THAT COME ARMED AS IF IN WAR TO THE GATES OF THORIN, KING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN, AND WHAT DO YOU DESIRE?

HAIL, THORIN! WE REJOICE THAT YOU ARE ALIVE BEYOND OUR HOPE. I AM BARD, AND BY MY HAND WAS THE DRAGON SLAIN AND YOUR TREASURE DELIVERED.

MOREOVER I AM BY RIGHT DESCENT THE HEIR OF GIRON OF PALE, AND IN YOUR HOARD IS MINGLED MUCH OF THE WEALTH OF HIS HALLS AND TOWN, WHICH OF OLD SMAUG STOLE. IS NOT THAT A MATTER OF WHICH WE MAY SPEAK?

FURTHER, IN HIS LAST BATTLE SMAUG DESTROYED THE DWELLINGS OF THE MEN OF ESGAROTH, AND I AM YET THE SERVANT OF THEIR MASTER. I WOULD SPEAK FOR HIM AND ASK WHETHER YOU HAVE NO THOUGHT FOR THE SORROW AND MISERY OF HIS PEOPLE. THEY AIDED YOU IN YOUR DISTRESS, AND IN RECOMPENSE YOU HAVE THUS FAR BROUGHT RUIN ONLY, THOUGH DOUBTLESS UNDESIGNED.

Now these were fair words and true, if proudly and grimly spoken; and Bilbo thought that Thorin would at once admit what justice was in them. But he did not reckon with the power that gold has upon which a dragon has long brooded, nor with dwarvish hearts.

TO THE TREASURE OF MY PEOPLE NO MAN HAS A CLAIM, BECAUSE SMAUG WHO STOLE IT FROM US ALSO ROBBED HIM OF LIFE OR HOME. THE GOLD WAS NOT HIS THAT HIS EVIL DEEDS SHOULD BE AMENDED WITH A SHARE OF IT. THE PRICE OF THE GOODS AND THE ASSISTANCE THAT WE RECEIVED OF THE LAKE-MEN WE WILL FAIRLY PAY— IN DUE TIME.

BUT NOTHING WILL WE GIVE, NOT EVEN A LOAF'S WORTH, UNDER THREAT OF FORCE. NOR WILL I PARLEY WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE ELVENKING, WHOM I REMEMBER WITH SMALL KINDNESS. IN THIS DEBATE THEY HAVE NO PLACE. BE GONE NOW ERE OUR ARROWS FLY!

THE ELVENKING IS MY FRIEND, AND HE HAS SUCCURED THE PEOPLE OF THE LAKE IN THEIR NEED, THOUGH THEY HAD NO CLAIM BUT FRIENDSHIP ON HIM.

WE WILL GIVE YOU TIME TO REPENT YOUR WORDS. GATHER YOUR WISDOM ERE WE RETURN.

For many hours
they were past, the
banner-bearers
returned, and
trumpeters stood
forth and blew
a blast!



IN THE NAME
OF ESGAROTH AND
THE FOREST WE SPEAK
UNTO THORIN THRAIN'S
SON OAKENSHIELD, AND WE
BID HIM CONSIDER WELL THE
CLAIMS THAT HAVE BEEN
URGED, OR BE DECLARED
OUR FOE.

AT THE
LEAST HE SHALL
DELIVER ONE TWELFTH
PORTION OF THE TREASURE
UNTO BARD, AS THE DRAGON-
SLAYER, AND AS THE HEIR OF
GIRION. FROM THAT PORTION
BARD WILL HIMSELF
CONTRIBUTE TO THE
AID OF ESGAROTH.

BUT IF THORIN
WOULD HAVE THE FRIEND-
SHIP AND HONOUR OF THE LANDS
ABOUT, AS HIS SIRS HAD OF
OLD, THEN HE WILL GIVE ALSO
SOMEWHAT OF HIS OWN FOR
THE COMFORT OF THE MEN
OF THE LAKE.

SINCE SUCH IS
YOUR ANSWER, I
DECLARE THE MOUNTAIN
BESIEGED. YOU SHALL NOT
DEPART FROM IT, UNTIL YOU
CALL ON YOUR SIDE FOR A
TRUCE AND A PARLEY. WE
WILL BEAR NO WEAPONS
AGAINST YOU, BUT WE
LEAVE YOU TO YOUR
GOLD. YOU MAY EAT
THAT, IF YOU WILL!

The days passed slowly
and wearily. So grim
had Thorin become, that
even if they had wished,
the others would not
have dared to find fault
with him, but indeed
most of them seemed
to share his mind —
except perhaps old fat
Bombur and Fili and
Kili. Bilbo of course
disapproved of the
whole turn of affairs.

THE WHOLE
PLACE STILL STINKS
OF DRAGON AND
IT MAKES ME SICK.
AND GRAM IS BEGIN-
NING SIMPLY TO
STICK IN MY
THROAT.

SEARCH EVERY
CORNER, FOR THE ARKEN-
STONE OF MY FATHER IS WORTH
MORE THAN A RIVER OF GOLD IN ITSELF,
AND TO ME IT IS BEYOND PRICE. THAT
STONE OF ALL THE TREASURE I NAME
UNTO MYSELF, AND I WILL BE AVENGED
ON ANYONE WHO FINDS IT
AND WITHHOLDS IT.

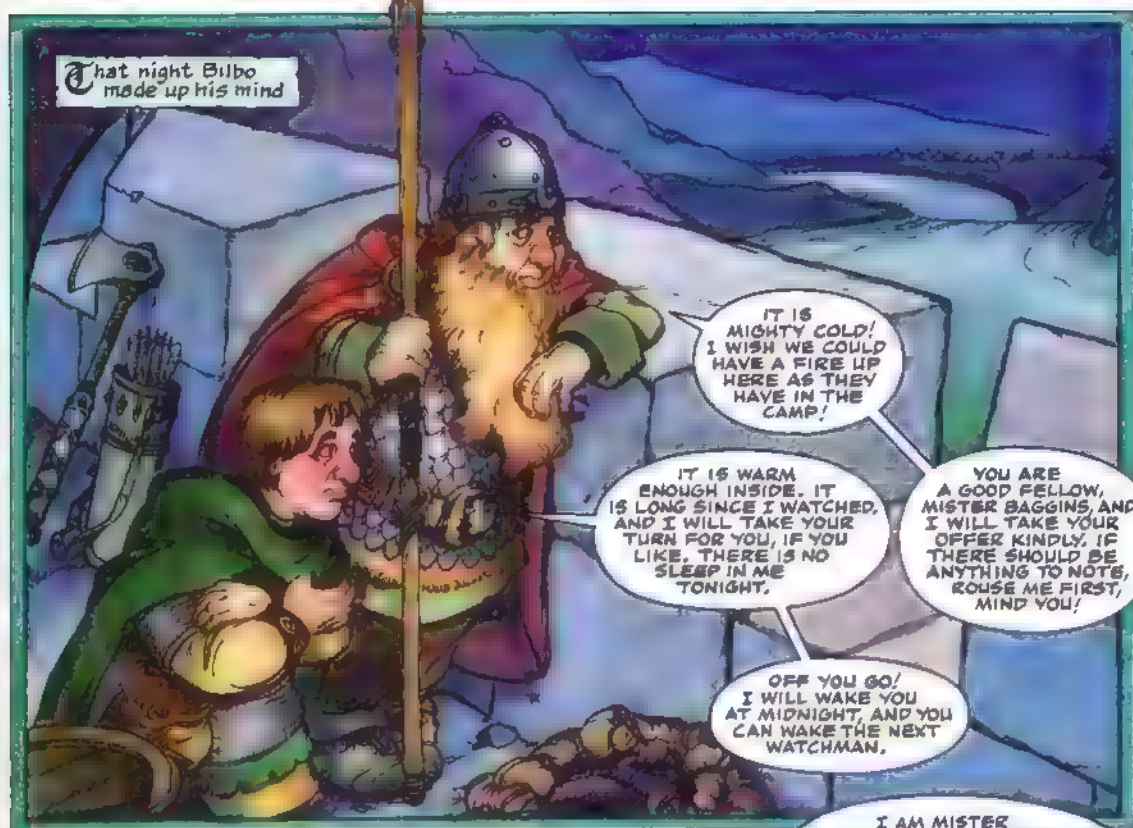
All the same Bilbo
did not speak of
it, for as the wear-
iness of the days grew
heavier, the beginnings
of a plan had come
into his little head.

Then the ravens brought news that Dain and
more than five hundred dwarves were now
within about two days' march of Dale.

THOUGH THEY ARE A GRIM FOLK, THEY
ARE NOT LIKELY TO OVERCOME THE
HOST THAT BESIEGES YOU; AND EVEN IF THEY
DID SO, WHAT WILL YOU GAIN? WINTER
AND SNOW IS HASTENING BEHIND THEM.
HOW SHALL YOU BE FED WITHOUT
THE FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD-
WILL OF THE LANDS
ABOUT YOU? THE TREAS-
URE IS LIKELY TO BE
YOUR DEATH, THOUGH
THE DRAGON IS
NO MORE!

WINTER AND
SNOW WILL BITE
BOTH MEN AND ELVES.
WITH MY FRIENDS BEHIND
THEM AND WINTER UPON
THEM, THEY WILL PERHAPS
BE IN SOFTER
MOOD TO PARLEY
WITH.

That night Bilbo made up his mind



IT IS MIGHTY COLD! I WISH WE COULD HAVE A FIRE UP HERE AS THEY HAVE IN THE CAMP!

IT IS WARM ENOUGH INSIDE. IT IS LONG SINCE I WATCHED, AND I WILL TAKE YOUR TURN FOR YOU, IF YOU LIKE. THERE IS NO SLEEP IN ME TONIGHT.

YOU ARE A GOOD FELLOW, MISTER BAGGINS, AND I WILL TAKE YOUR OFFER KINDLY, IF THERE SHOULD BE ANYTHING TO NOTE, ROUSE ME FIRST, MIND YOU!

OFF YOU GO! I WILL WAKE YOU AT MIDNIGHT, AND YOU CAN WAKE THE NEXT WATCHMAN.

As soon as Bombur had gone, Bilbo put on his ring, slipped down over the wall, and was gone. He had about five hours before him. Bombur would sleep and all the others were busy with Thorin.

It was very dark. At last Bilbo came to the bend where he had to cross the water, if he was to make for the camp, as he wished. He was nearly across when he missed his footing on a round stone and fell into the cold water.

THAT WAS NO FISH! THERE IS A SPY ABOUT. HIDE YOUR LIGHTS!



THEY WILL HELP HIM MORE THAN US, IF IT IS THAT QUEER LITTLE CREATURE THAT IS SAID TO BE THEIR SERVANT.

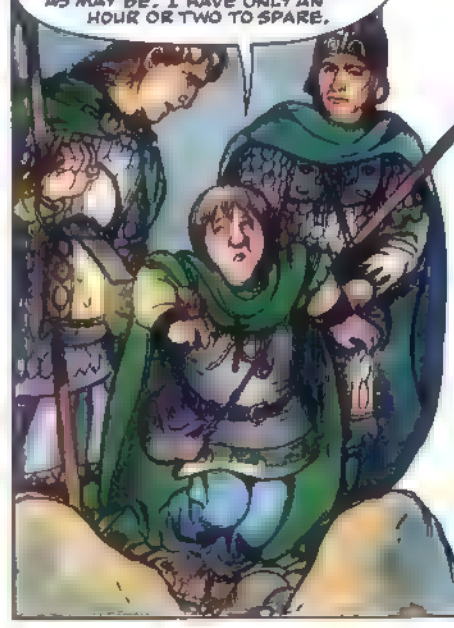
SERVANT INDEED! LET'S HAVE A LIGHT! I AM HERE, IF YOU WANT ME!



WHO ARE YOU? ARE YOU THE DWARVES' HOBBIT? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I AM MISTER BILBO BAGGINS, COMPANION OF THORIN IF YOU WANT TO KNOW. I KNOW YOUR KING WELL BY SIGHT, THOUGH PERHAPS HE DOESN'T KNOW ME TO LOOK AT ME. BUT BARD WILL REMEMBER ME. AND IT IS BARD I PARTICULARLY WANT TO SEE.

IF YOU WISH EVER TO GET BACK TO YOUR OWN WOODS FROM THIS COLD CHEERLESS PLACE YOU WILL LET ME SPEAK TO YOUR CHIEFS AS QUICK AS MAY BE. I HAVE ONLY AN HOUR OR TWO TO SPARE.



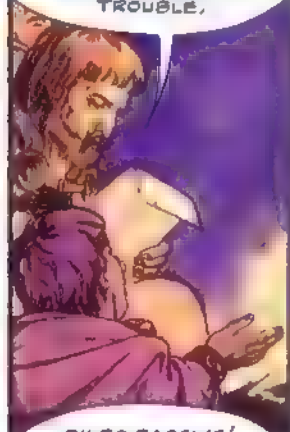


REALLY
YOU KNOW THINGS
ARE IMPOSSIBLE.
PERSONALLY I AM
TIRED OF THE
WHOLE AFFAIR.

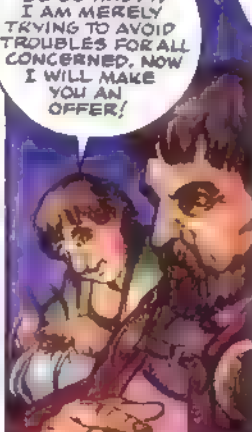
BUT I
HAVE AN INTEREST
IN THIS MATTER — ONE
FOURTEENTH SHARE TO
BE PRECISE, ACCORDING
TO A LETTER, WHICH
FORTUNATELY I
HAVE KEPT.

A SHARE
OF THE PROFITS,
MIND YOU, PERSONALLY
I AM ONLY TOO READY TO
CONSIDER ALL YOUR CLAIMS
CAREFULLY, AND DEDUCT WHAT
IS RIGHT FROM THE TOTAL
BEFORE PUTTING IN MY
OWN CLAIM.

HOWEVER
YOU DON'T KNOW
THORIN OAKENSHIELD AS
WELL AS I DO NOW. I ASSURE
YOU, HE IS QUITE READY TO
SIT ON A HEAP OF GOLD
AND STARVE, AS LONG
AS YOU SIT HERE.



AT THE SAME
TIME WINTER IS COMING
ON FAST. ALSO THERE WILL
BE OTHER DIFFICULTIES, DAIN
OF THE IRON HILLS, I MAY
TELL YOU, IS NOW LESS THAN
TWO DAYS' MARCH OFF, AND
HAS AT LEAST FIVE HUNDRED
GRIM DWARVES WITH HIM.
WHEN THEY ARRIVE THERE
MAY BE SERIOUS
TROUBLE.



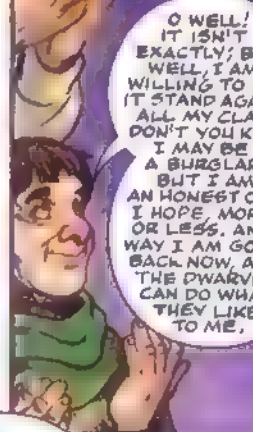
WHY
DO YOU TELL
US THIS? ARE YOU
BETRAYING YOUR
FRIENDS, OR ARE
YOU THREATENING
US?

MY DEAR
BARD! DON'T
BE SO HASTY.
I AM MERELY
TRYING TO AVOID
TROUBLES FOR ALL
CONCERNED. NOW
I WILL MAKE
YOU AN
OFFER!

IT IS
THIS!



THIS IS THE
ARKENSTONE OF
THRAIN, THE HEART
OF THE MOUNTAIN,
AND IT IS ALSO THE
HEART OF THORIN.
HE VALUES IT ABOVE
A RIVER OF GOLD.
I GIVE IT TO YOU.
IT WILL AID YOU
IN YOUR BAR-
GAINING.



BUT
HOW IS
IT YOURS
TO
GIVE?

O WELL!
IT ISN'T
EXACTLY; BUT,
WELL, I AM
WILLING TO LET
IT STAND AGAINST
ALL MY CLAIM,
DON'T YOU KNOW.
I MAY BE
A BURGLAR—
BUT I AM
AN HONEST ONE,
I HOPE, MORE
OR LESS. ANY-
WAY I AM GOING
BACK NOW, AND
THE DWARVES
CAN DO WHAT
THEY LIKE
TO ME.



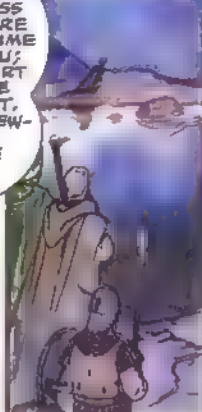
BILBO BAGGINS!
YOU ARE MORE WORTHY
TO WEAR THE ARMOUR OF
ELF-PRINCES THAN MANY
THAT HAVE LOOKED MORE
COMELY IN IT. BUT I
WONDER IF THORIN
OAKENSHIELD
WILL SEE IT SO. I
ADVISE YOU TO REMAIN
WITH US, AND HERE YOU
SHALL BE HONOURED
AND THRICE
WELCOME.

THANK YOU
VERY MUCH I AM
SURE, BUT I DON'T
THINK I OUGHT TO LEAVE
MY FRIENDS LIKE THIS,
AFTER ALL WE HAVE GONE
THROUGH TOGETHER, AND
I PROMISED TO WAKE OLD
BOMBUR AT MIDNIGHT,
TOO! REALLY I MUST
BE GOING, AND
QUICKLY.

WELL
DONE! MISTER
BAGGINS; THERE IS
ALWAYS MORE
ABOUT YOU THAN
ANYONE
EXPECTS!

GANDALF!
I AM SO
GLAD TO SEE
YOU! WHERE
HAVE
YOU—

ALL IN GOOD
TIME! THINGS ARE
DRAWING TOWARDS
THE END NOW, UNLESS
I AM MISTAKEN, THERE
IS AN UNPLEASANT TIME
JUST IN FRONT OF YOU;
BUT KEEP YOUR HEART
UP! YOU MAY COME
THROUGH ALL RIGHT,
THERE IS NEWS BREW-
ING THAT EVEN
THE RAVENS HAVE
NOT HEARD.
GOOD NIGHT!



Puzzled but
cheered, Bilbo
hurried on. At
midnight he woke
up Bombur.



About midday the banners of the Forest and the Lake were seen to be borne forth again.

HAIL THORIN! ARE YOU STILL OF THE SAME MIND?

MY MIND DOES NOT CHANGE WITH THE RISING AND SETTING OF A FEW SUNS. DID YOU COME TO ASK ME IDLE QUESTIONS? STILL THE ELF-HOST HAS NOT DEPARTED AS I BADE! TILL THEN YOU COME IN VAIN TO BARGAIN WITH ME.



IS THERE THEN NOTHING FOR WHICH YOU WOULD YIELD ANY OF YOUR GOLD?

WHAT OF THE ARKENSTONE OF THRAIN?



THAT STONE WAS MY FATHER'S, AND IS MINE. WHY SHOULD I PURCHASE MY OWN?

BUT HOW CAME YOU BY THE HEIRLOOM OF MY HOUSE— IF THERE IS NEED TO ASK SUCH A QUESTION OF THIEVES?

I GAVE IT TO THEM!



YOU! YOU! MISERABLE HOBBIT! YOU UNDERSIZED—BURGLAR!

BY THE BEARD OF DURIN! I WISH I HAD GANDALF HERE! CURSE HIM FOR HIS CHOICE OF YOU! MAY HIS BEARD WITHER! AS FOR YOU I WILL THROW YOU TO THE ROCKS!



STAY! YOUR WISH IS GRANTED!

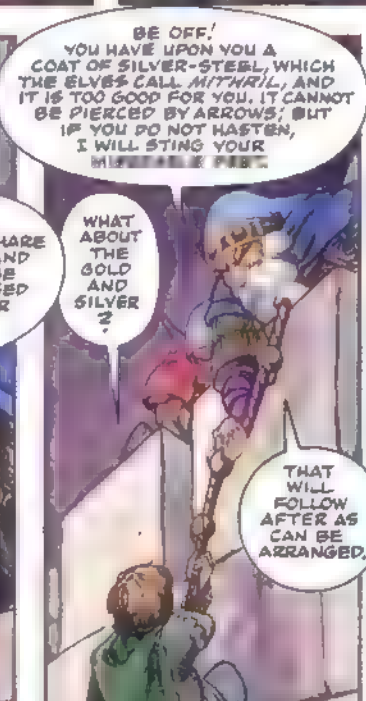
HERE IS GANDALF! AND NONE TOO SOON IT SEEMS, IF YOU DON'T LIKE MY BURGLAR, PLEASE DON'T DAMAGE HIM, PUT HIM DOWN, AND LISTEN FIRST TO WHAT HE HAS TO SAY!



DEAR ME! DEAR ME! YOU MAY REMEMBER SAYING THAT I MIGHT CHOOSE MY OWN FOURTEENTH SHARE? PERHAPS I TOOK IT TOO LITERALLY. THE TIME WAS, ALL THE SAME, WHEN YOU SEEMED TO THINK THAT I HAD BEEN OF SOME SERVICE. TAKE IT THAT I HAVE DISPOSED OF MY SHARE AS I WISHED, AND LET IT GO AT THAT?

I WILL.

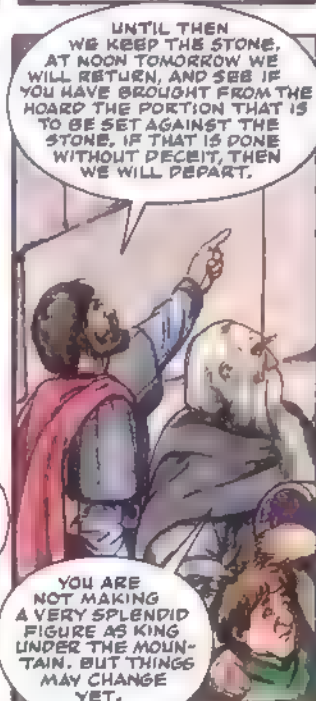
AND FOR THE ARKENSTONE I WILL GIVE ONE FOURTEENTH SHARE OF THE HOARD IN SILVER AND GOLD; BUT THAT SHALL BE ACCOUNTED THE PROMISED SHARE OF THIS TRAITOR AND YOU CAN DIVIDE IT AS YOU WILL.



BE OFF! YOU HAVE UPON YOU A COAT OF SILVER-STEEL, WHICH THE ELVES CALL MITHRIL, AND IT IS TOO GOOD FOR YOU. IT CANNOT BE PIERCED BY ARROWS; BUT IF YOU DO NOT HASTEN, I WILL STING YOUR MISERABLE FLESH.

WHAT ABOUT THE GOLD AND SILVER?

THAT WILL FOLLOW AFTER AS CAN BE ARRANGED.



UNTIL THEN WE KEEP THE STONE. AT NOON TOMORROW WE WILL RETURN, AND SEE IF YOU HAVE BROUGHT FROM THE HOARD THE PORTION THAT IS TO BE SET AGAINST THE STONE. IF THAT IS DONE WITHOUT DECEIT, THEN WE WILL DEPART.

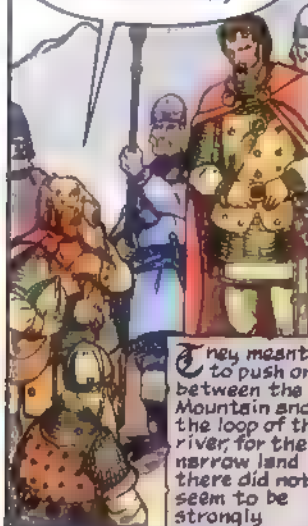
YOU ARE NOT MAKING A VERY SPLENDID FIGURE AS KING UNDER THE MOUNTAIN. BUT THINGS MAY CHANGE YET.

That day passed and the night.
The next morning was still
early when a cry was heard
in the camp.

Dain had
come.

Thorin had sent messengers by Road
telling Dain of what had passed
the day before. And Dain had hurried
on through the night, and so had come
upon them sooner than expected.

WE ARE SENT
FROM DAIN SON OF
NAIN. WE ARE HASTENING
TO OUR KINSMEN IN THE
MOUNTAIN, SINCE WE LEARN
THAT THE KINGDOM OF OLD
IS RENEWED. BUT WHO ARE
YOU THAT SIT IN THE PLAIN
AS FOES BEFORE DEFEN-
DED WALLS?



They meant
to push on
between the
Mountain and
the loop of the
river, for the
narrow land
there did not
seem to be
strongly
guarded.

Bard, of course, refused
to allow the dwarves
to go straight on to the
Mountain. He was deter-
mined to wait until the
gold and silver had been
brought out in exchange
for the Arkenstone. The
dwarves had brought with
them a great store of sup-
plies. They would stand a
siege for weeks, and by
that time yet more dwarves
might come.

So after
angry
words, the
dwarf-mes-
sengers re-
tired, mut-
tering in
their beards

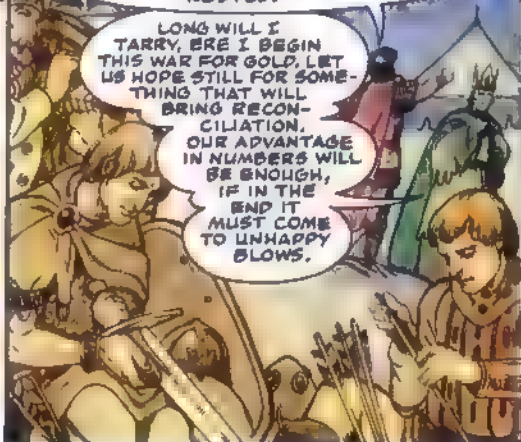


Bard then sent messengers at once to the Gate;
but they found no gold or payment. Arrows
came forth as soon as they were within shot.

In the camp all was now astir, as if for battle;
for the dwarves of Dain were advancing along
the eastern bank.

POOLS! THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND
WAR ABOVE GROUND. WHATEVER THEY
MAY KNOW OF BATTLE IN THE MINES.
LET US SET ON THEM NOW FROM BOTH
SIDES, BEFORE THEY ARE FULLY
RESTED.

LONG WILL I
TARRY, Ere I begin
this war for gold. Let
us hope still for some-
thing that will
bring recon-
ciliation.
Our advantage
in numbers will
be enough,
if in the
end it
must come
to unhappy
blows.

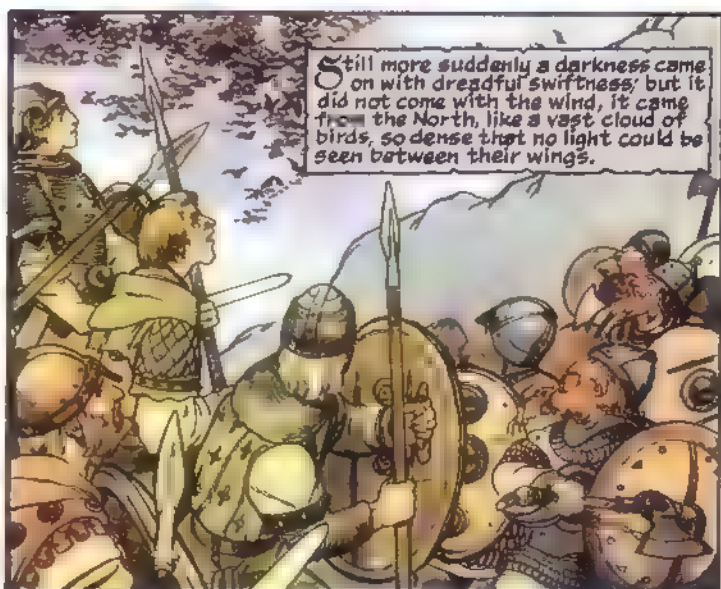


But the Elvenking reckoned
without the dwarves. The
knowledge that the Arkenstone
was in the hands of the
besiegers burned in their
thought.



Suddenly
without
a signal they
sprang silently
forward to
attack.

Still more suddenly a darkness came
on with dreadful swiftness; but it
did not come with the wind, it came
from the North, like a vast cloud of
birds, so dense that no light could be
seen between their wings.





Ever since the fall of the Great Goblin of the Misty Mountains the hatred of their race for the dwarves had been rekindled to fury. Messengers had passed to and fro between all their cities, colonies and strongholds; for they resolved now to win the dominion of the North.

Then they learned of the death of Smaug, and joy was in their hearts; and they hastened night after night through the mountains, and came thus at last on a sudden from the North hard on the heels of Dain.

The council's only hope was to lure the goblins into the valley between the arms of the mountain; and themselves to man the great spurs that struck south and east.

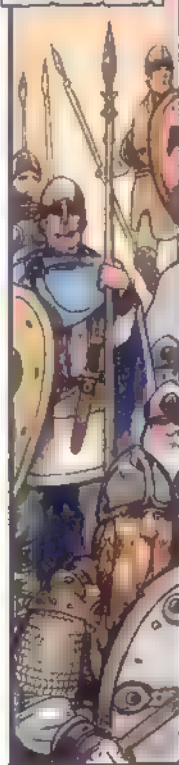


Yet this would be perilous, if the goblins were in sufficient numbers to overrun the Mountain itself and so attack them also from behind and above.

On the Southern spur the Elves were set.



On the Eastern spur were men and dwarves.



For long the vanguard, swirling round the spur's end and came rushing into Dale. Many brave men fell before the rest drew back and fled to either side.

The goblin banners were countless, black and red, and they came on like a tide in fury and disorder.





It was a terrible battle.

Bilbo put on his ring early in the business, and vanished from sight, if not from all danger. A magic ring of that sort does not stop flying arrows and wild spears; but it prevents your head from being specially chosen for a sweeping stroke by a goblin swordsman.

The elves were the first to charge. Their hatred for the goblins is cold and bitter. They sent against their enemies a shower of arrows, and each flickered as it flew as if with stinging fire. Behind the arrows a thousand of their spearmen leapt down and charged. The rocks were stained black with goblin blood.

Just as the goblins were recovering from the onslaught and the elf-charge was halted, there rose from across the valley a deep-throated roar. With cries of "Morio!" and "Dain, Dain!" the dwarves of the Iron Hills plunged in, wielding their mattocks, upon the other side; and beside them came the men of the Lake with long swords.

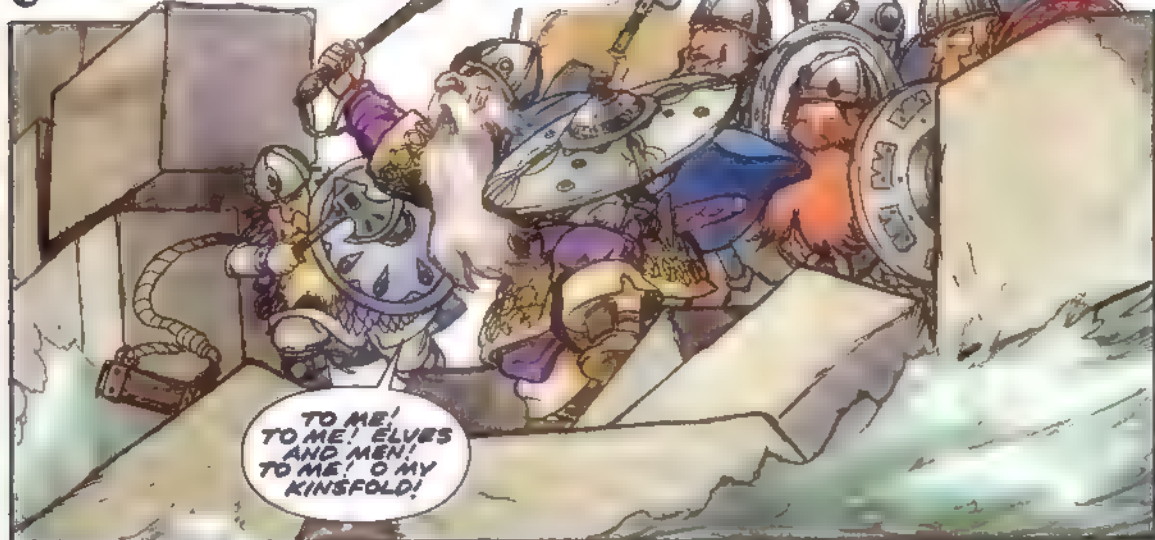
Panic came upon the goblins, and even as they turned to meet this new attack, the elves charged again with renewed numbers. Victory seemed at hand, when a cry rang out on the heights above.

Goblins had scaled the Mountain from the other side and already many were on the slopes above the Gate, and others were streaming down recklessly to attack the spurs from above. Victory now vanished from hope. They had only stemmed the first onslaught of the black tide.

Day drew on. The goblins gathered again in the valley. There a host of Wargs came ravelling and with them came the bodyguard of Bolg. Now Bard was fighting to defend the Eastern spur, and yet giving slowly back; and the elf-lords were at bay about their king upon the southern arm, near to the watch-post on Ravenhill.

Suddenly there was a great shout, and from the Gate came a trumpet call.

They had forgotten Thorin!



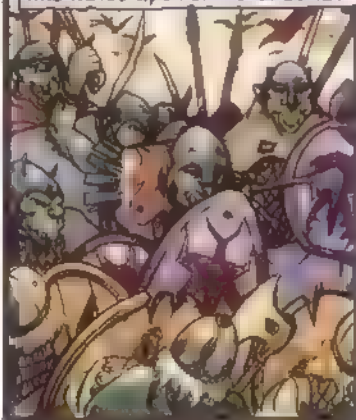
TO ME!
TO ME! ELVES
AND MEN!
TO ME! O MY
KINSFOLD!

Once again the goblins were stricken in the valley; and they were piled in heaps till Dale was dark and hideous with their corpses. The Wargs were scattered and Thorin drove right against the bodyguards of Bolg.

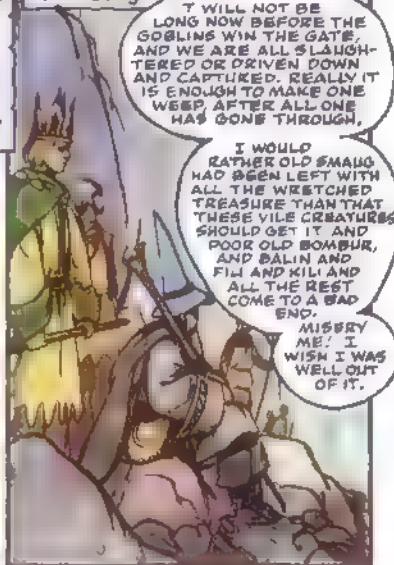


But he could not pierce their ranks.

As the valley widened his onset grew ever slower. His numbers were too few. His flanks were unguarded. Soon the attackers were attacked, hemmed all about with goblins and wolves returning to the assault. The bodyguard of Bolg came howling against them and drove in upon their ranks like waves upon cliffs of sand.



On all this Bilbo looked with misery.

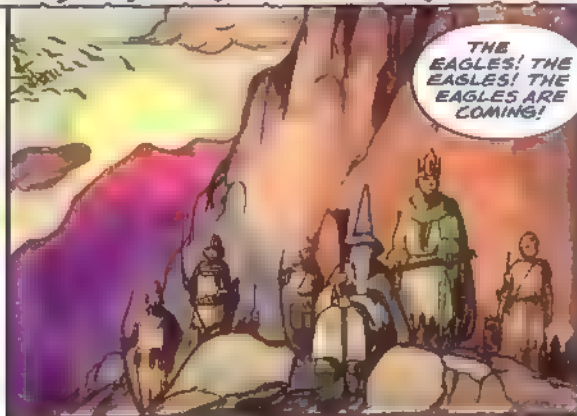


IT WILL NOT BE LONG NOW BEFORE THE GOBLINS WIN THE GATE, AND WE ARE ALL SLAUGHTERED OR DRIVEN DOWN AND CAPTURED. REALLY IT IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ONE WEEP, AFTER ALL ONE HAS GONE THROUGH.

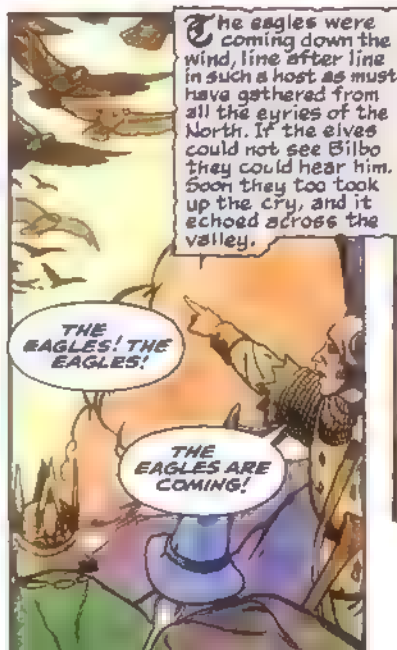
I WOULD RATHER OLD SMAUG HAD BEEN LEFT WITH ALL THE WRETCHED TREASURE THAN THAT THESE VILE CREATURES SHOULD GET IT AND POOR OLD BOMBUR, AND BALIN AND FILI AND KILI AND ALL THE REST COME TO A BAD END.

MISERY ME! I WISH I WAS WELL OUT OF IT.

The clouds were torn by the wind, and a red sunset slashed the West. Seeing the sudden gleam in the gloom Bilbo looked round. He gave a great cry: he had seen a sight that made his heart leap, dark shapes small yet majestic against the distant glow.



THE EAGLES! THE EAGLES! THE EAGLES ARE COMING!



The eagles were coming down the wind, line after line in such a host as must have gathered from all the eyries of the North. If the elves could not see Bilbo they could hear him. Soon they too took up the cry, and it echoed across the valley.

THE EAGLES! THE EAGLES!

THE EAGLES ARE COMING!

At that moment a stone hurtling from above smote heavily on Bilbo's helm...

...and he fell with a crash and knew no more.



When Bilbo came to himself, he was literally by himself. He was shivering and as chilled as stone, but his head burned with fire.

NOW I WONDER WHAT HAS HAPPENED?



VICTORY AFTER ALL, I SUPPOSE!

HELLO THERE! HULLO THERE! WHAT NEWS?

WHAT VOICE IS IT THAT SPEAKS AMONG THE STONES?



WELL, I'M BLESSED! THIS INVISIBILITY HAS ITS DRAWBACKS AFTER ALL. OTHERWISE I SUPPOSE I MIGHT HAVE SPENT A WARM AND COMFORTABLE NIGHT IN BED!

IT'S ME, BILBO BAGGINS, COMPANION OF THORIN!



IT IS WELL THAT I HAVE FOUND YOU! YOU ARE NEEDED AND WE HAVE LOOKED FOR YOU LONG. I HAVE BEEN SENT TO LOOK HERE FOR THE LAST TIME.

ARE YOU HURT?

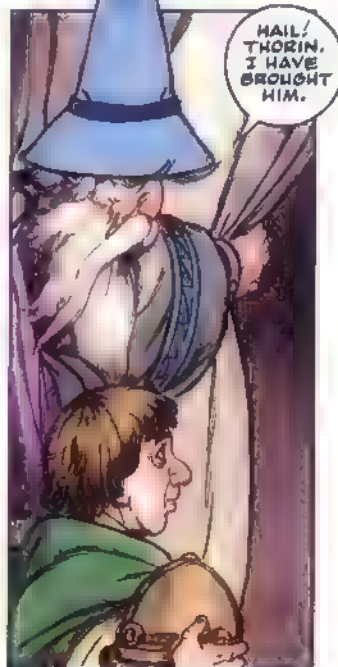
A NASTY KNOCK ON THE HEAD, I THINK, BUT I HAVE A HELM AND A HARD SKULL. ALL THE SAME I FEEL SICK AND MY LEGS ARE LIKE STRAWS.

I WILL CARRY YOU DOWN TO THE CAMP IN THE VALLEY.



BAGGINS! WELL I NEVER! ALIVE AFTER ALL—I AM GLAD! I BEGAN TO WONDER IF EVEN YOUR LUCK WOULD SEE YOU THROUGH! A TERRIBLE BUSINESS, AND IT NEARLY WAS DISASTROUS.

BUT OTHER NEWS CAN WAIT. COME! YOU ARE CALLED FOR.



HAIL! THORIN. I HAVE BROUGHT HIM.

FAREWELL,
GOOD THIEF. I GO
NOW TO THE HALLS OF
WAITING TO SIT BESIDE
MY FATHERS, UNTIL
THE WORLD IS
RENEWED.

SINCE I LEAVE
NOW ALL GOLD AND
SILVER, AND GO WHERE
IT IS OF LITTLE WORTH, I
WISH TO PART IN FRIENDSHIP
FROM YOU, AND I WOULD
TAKE BACK MY WORDS
AND DEEDS AT
THE GATE.

FAREWELL, KING
UNDER THE MOUNTAIN!
THIS IS A BITTER ADVENTURE
IF IT MUST END SO; AND NOT A
MOUNTAIN OF GOLD CAN AMEND
IT. YET I AM GLAD THAT I HAVE
SHARED IN YOUR PERILS—THAT
HAS BEEN MORE THAN ANY
BAGGINS DESERVES.

NO! THERE
IS MORE IN YOU OF
GOOD THAN YOU KNOW, CHILD
OF THE KINDLY WEST. SOME
COURAGE AND SOME WISDOM,
BLENDED IN MEASURE. IF MORE
OF US VALUED FOOD AND CHEER
AND SONG ABOVE HOARDED
GOLD, IT WOULD BE A
MERRIER WORLD.

BUT
SAD OR
MERRY, I MUST
LEAVE IT NOW.
FAREWELL!

Then Bilbo turned away and he went by himself, and sat alone, and, whether you believe it or not, he wept until his eyes were red and his voice was hoarse. He was a kindly little soul. Indeed it was long before he had the heart to make a joke again.

A MERCY IT IS THAT
I WOKE UP WHEN I DID.
I WISH THORIN WERE
LIVING, BUT I AM
GLAD THAT WE
PARTED IN
KINDNESS.

YOU ARE A
FOOL, BILBO BAGGINS,
AND YOU MADE A GREAT
MESS OF THAT BUSINESS
WITH THE STONE AND
THERE WAS A BATTLE, IN
SPITE OF ALL YOUR EFFORTS
TO BUY PEACE AND QUIET,
BUT I SUPPOSE YOU
CAN HARDLY BE
BLAMED FOR
THAT.

All that had happened after he was stunned Bilbo learned later.

The Eagles had long had suspicion of the goblins' mustering. So they too had gathered in great numbers; and at length smelling battle from afar they had come speeding down the gale in the nick of time. They it was who dislodged the goblins from the mountain slopes.

But even with the Eagles they were still outnumbered. In that last hour Beorn himself had appeared—no one knew how or from where. He came alone, and in bear's shape; and he seemed to have grown almost to giant-size in his wrath.

He fell upon their rear, and broke like a clap of thunder through the ring. Then Beorn stooped and lifted Thorin, who had fallen pierced with spears, and bore him out of the fray.

Swiftly he returned and his wrath was redoubled, so that nothing could withstand him and no weapon seemed to bite him. He scattered the bodyguard, and pulled down Bolg himself and crushed him.

Then dismay fell on the Goblins and they fled in all directions. But weariness left their enemies with the coming of new hope, and they pursued them closely, and prevented most of them from escaping where they could.

Songs have said that three parts of the goblin warriors of the North perished on that day, and the mountains had peace for many a year.

WHERE ARE THE EAGLES?

SOME ARE IN THE HUNT BUT MOST HAVE GONE BACK TO THEIR BYRIES.

THEY WOULD NOT STAY HERE, AND DEPARTED WITH THE FIRST LIGHT OF MORNING. DAIN HAS CROWNED THEIR CHIEF WITH GOLD AND SWORN FRIENDSHIP WITH THEM FOR-EVER.

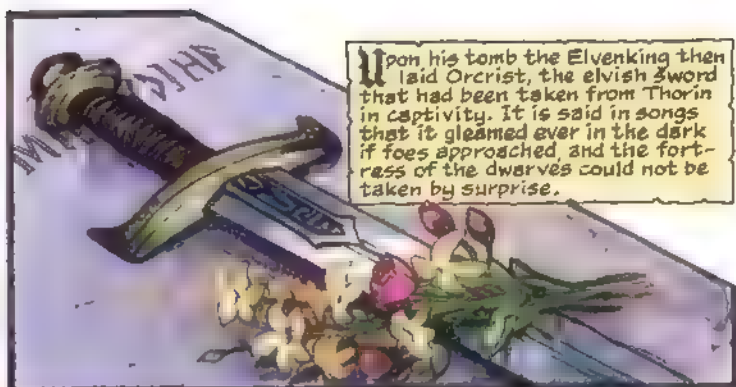
I SUPPOSE I SHALL BE GOING HOME SOON?

AS SOON AS YOU LIKE.

I AM SORRY, I MEAN, I SHOULD HAVE LIKED TO SEE THEM AGAIN. PERHAPS I SHALL SEE THEM ON THE WAY HOME.

Actually it was some days before Bilbo really set out. They buried Thorin deep beneath the Mountain, and Bard laid the Arkenstone upon his breast.

THERE LET IT LIE
TILL THE MOUNTAIN
FALLS; MAY IT BRING
GOOD FORTUNE TO ALL
HIS FOLD THAT DWELL
HERE AFTER!



Upon his tomb the Elvenking then laid Orcrist, the elvish sword that had been taken from Thorin in captivity. It is said in songs that it gleamed ever in the dark if foes approached, and the fortress of the dwarves could not be taken by surprise.

There now Dain son of Nain took up his abode, and he became King under the Mountain.



Of the twelve companions of Thorin, ten remained. Fili and Kili had fallen defending him with shield and body, for he was their mother's elder brother.

WE WILL
HONOUR THE
AGREEMENT OF
THE DEAD AND HE
HAS NOW THE
ARKENSTONE IN
HIS KEEPING.

THIS TREASURE IS AS
MUCH YOURS AS IT IS MINE, YET
EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE WILLING
TO LAY ASIDE ALL YOUR CLAIM, I
SHOULD WISH THAT THE WORDS OF
THORIN, OF WHICH HE REPENTED,
SHOULD NOT PROVE TRUE: THAT
WE SHOULD GIVE YOU LITTLE,
I WOULD REWARD YOU MOST
RICHLY OF ALL.

In the end he would only take two small chests, one filled with silver, and the other with gold. "That will be quite as much as I can manage," said he.

FAREWELL, BALIN! AND FAREWELL, DWALIN! AND FAREWELL DORI, NORI, ORI, OIN, GLOIN, BIFUR, BOFUR, AND BOMBUR! MAY YOUR BEARDS NEVER GROW THIN!

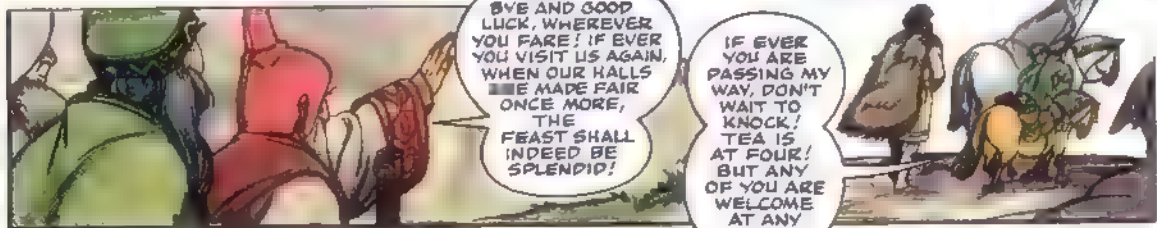
VERY KIND
OF YOU. BUT REALLY IT
IS A RELIEF TO ME. HOW
ON EARTH SHOULD I HAVE
GOT ALL THAT TREASURE
HOME WITHOUT WAR AND
MURDER ALL ALONG THE
WAY, I DON'T KNOW.
I AM SURE IT IS
BETTER IN YOUR
HANDS.

There was of course, no longer any question of dividing the hoard in such shares as had been planned. Yet a fourteenth share of all the silver and gold, wrought and unwrought, was given up to Bard. From that treasure Bard sent much gold to the Master of Laketown. To the Elvenking he gave the emeralds of Girion which Dain had restored to him.

FAREWELL,
THORIN OAKEN-
SHIELD! AND FILI
AND KILI! MAY
YOUR MEMORY
NEVER FADE!

GOOD-
BYE AND GOOD
LUCK, WHEREVER
YOU FARE! IF EVER
YOU VISIT US AGAIN,
WHEN OUR HALLS
ARE MADE FAIR
ONCE MORE,
THE
FEAST SHALL
INDEED BE
SPLENDID!

IF EVER
YOU ARE
PASSING MY
WAY, DON'T
WAIT TO
KNOCK!
TEA IS
AT FOUR!
BUT ANY
OF YOU ARE
WELCOME
AT ANY
TIME!





The elf-host was on the march; and if it was sadly lessened, yet many were glad, for the dragon was dead, and the goblins overthrown, and their hearts looked forward after winter to a spring of joy.

So they went on until they drew near to the borders of Mirkwood. Then they halted, for the wizard and Bilbo intended to go along the edge of the forest, and round its northern end. It was a long and cheerless road, but now that the goblins were crushed, it seemed safer to them than the dreadful pathways under the trees. Moreover Beorn was going that way too.

FAREWELL! O ELVENKING!
MERRY BE THE GREENWOOD,
WHILE THE WORLD IS
YET YOUNG.

AND
MERRY BE
YOUR
FOLK!

FAREWELL!
O GANDALF! MAY YOU
EVER APPEAR WHERE YOU
ARE MOST NEEDED AND
LEAST EXPECTED! THE
OFTENER YOU APPEAR
IN MY HALLS THE
BETTER SHALL I
BE PLEASED!



I BEG OF
YOU TO ACCEPT
THIS GIFT!

IN WHAT
WAY HAVE I
EARNED SUCH
A GIFT,
O HOBBIT?

WELL, ER,
I THOUGHT,
DON'T YOU KNOW
THAT ER, SOME
LITTLE RETURN
SHOULD BE
MADE FOR YOUR,
ER, HOSPITALITY.
I HAVE DRUNK
MUCH OF YOUR
WINE AND EATEN
MUCH OF YOUR
BREAD.

I WILL
TAKE YOUR GIFT,
O BILBO THE MAGNI-
FICENT! AND I NAME
YOU ELF-FRIEND AND
BLESSED, MAY YOUR
SHADOW NEVER GROW
LESS (OR STEALING
WOULD BE TOO EASY).
FAREWELL!



Bilbo had many hardships and adventures before he got back. The Wild was still the Wild, and there were many other things in it in those days—besides goblins.

Anyway by mid-winter Gandalf and Bilbo had come all the way back to the doors of Beorn's house, and there for a while they both stayed.

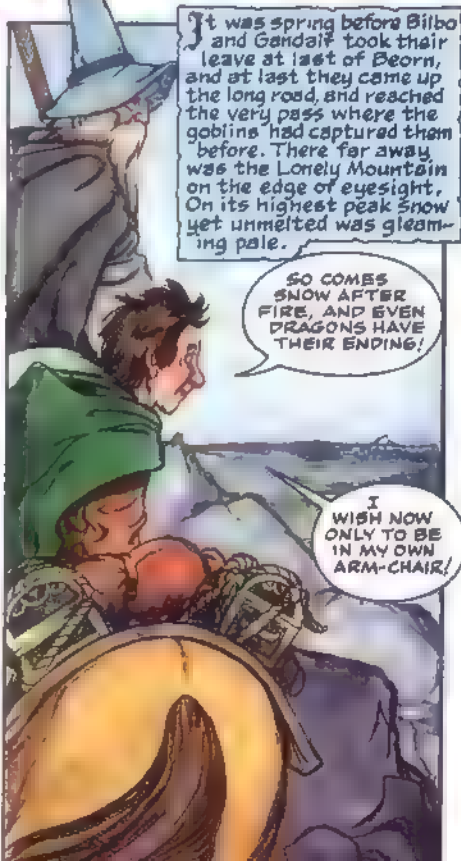


Beorn became a great chief afterwards in those regions; and it is said that for many generations the men of his line had the power of taking bear's shape.

It was spring before Bilbo and Gandalf took their leave at last of Beorn, and at last they came up the long road, and reached the very pass where the goblins had captured them before. There far away was the Lonely Mountain on the edge of eyesight. On its highest peak snow yet unmelted was gleaming pale.

SO COMES
SNOW AFTER
FIRE, AND EVEN
DRAGONS HAVE
THEIR ENDING!

I
WISH NOW
ONLY TO BE
IN MY OWN
ARM-CHAIR!

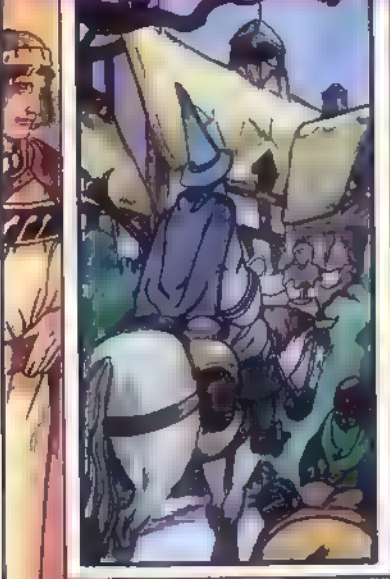


It was on May the First that the two came back at last to the brink of the valley of Rivendell, where stood the Last (or the First) Homely House.

Gandalf it was who spoke, for Bilbo was fallen quite drowsy. It was in this way that Bilbo learned where Gandalf had been to.

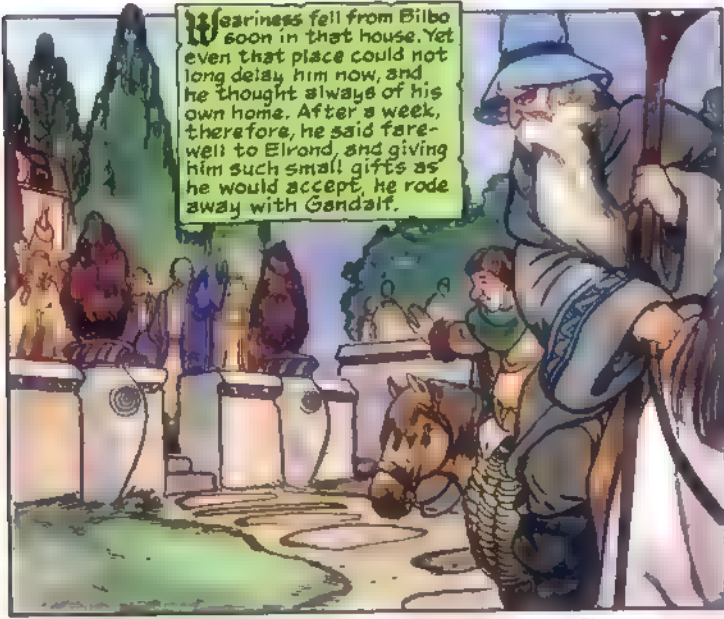
Here a warm welcome was made them, and there were many eager ears that evening to hear the tale of their adventures.

It appeared that Gandalf had been to a great council of the white wizards, masters of lore and good magic; and that they had at last driven the Necromancer from his dark hold in the south of Mirkwood.

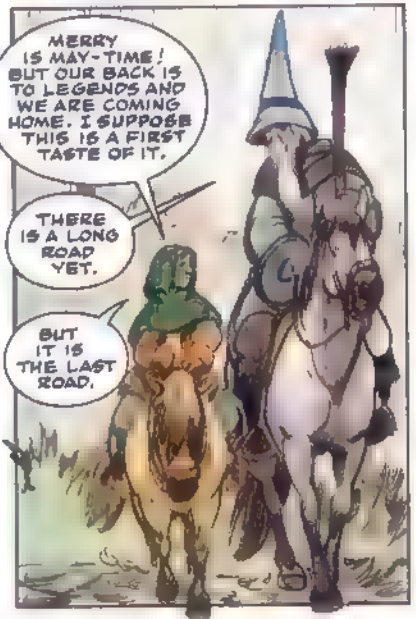


ERE LONG NOW THE FOREST WILL GROW SOMEWHAT MORE WHOLESOME. THE NORTH WILL BE FREED FROM THAT HORROR FOR MANY LONG YEARS, I HOPE. YET I WISH WE WERE BANISHED FROM THE WORLD!

IT WOULD BE WELL INDEED, BUT I FEAR THAT WILL NOT COME ABOUT IN THIS AGE OF THE WORLD, OR FOR MANY AFTER.



Weariness fell from Bilbo soon in that house. Yet even that place could not long delay him now, and he thought always of his own home. After a week, therefore, he said farewell to Elrond, and giving him such small gifts as he would accept, he rode away with Gandalf.



MERRY IS MAY-TIME! BUT OUR BACK IS TO LEGENDS AND WE ARE COMING HOME. I SUPPOSE THIS IS A FIRST TASTE OF IT.

THERE IS A LONG ROAD YET.

BUT IT IS THE LAST ROAD.

At each point on the road Bilbo recalled the happenings and the words of a year ago—it seemed to him more like ten—so that, of course, he quickly noted the place where they had turned aside for their nasty adventure with Tom and Bert and Bill.

Not far from the road they found the gold of the trolls, which they had buried, still hidden and untouched.

I HAVE ENOUGH TO LAST ME MY TIME. YOU HAD BETTER TAKE THIS, GANDALF. I DARE SAY YOU CAN FIND A USE FOR IT.

INDEED I CAN! BUT SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE! YOU MAY FIND YOU HAVE MORE NEEDS THAN YOU EXPECT.

After that their going was slower, for most of the time they walked. But the land was green and there was much grass through which the hobbit strolled along contentedly—for now June had brought summer, and the weather was bright and hot again.

As all things come to an end, even this story, a day came at last when Bilbo could see his own Hill in the distance.

ROADS GO EVER EVER ON
UNDER CLOUD AND
UNDER STAR,
YET FEET THAT WANDERING
HAVE GONE
TURN AT LAST TO
HOME AFAR.

EYES THAT FOREST AND FIRE
HAVE SEEN
AND HORROR IN THE HALLS
OF STONE
LOOK AT LAST ON MEADOWS GREEN
AND TREES AND HILLS
THEY LONG HAVE KNOWN!

MY DEAR BILBO! SOMETHING IS THE MATTER WITH YOU! YOU ARE NOT THE HOBBIT THAT YOU WERE.

BLESS ME! WHAT'S GOING ON?

Bilbo had arrived back in the middle of an auction! There was a large notice in black and red hung on the gate, stating that on June the Twenty-second Messrs. Grubb, Grubb, and Burrows would sell by auction the effects of the late Bilbo Baggins Esquire, of Bag-End, Underhill, Hobbiton. Sale to commence at ten o'clock sharp.

It was now nearly lunchtime, and most of the things had already been sold, for various prices from next to nothing to old songs (as is not unusual at auction).

Bilbo's cousins the Sackville-Bagginses were, in fact, busy measuring his rooms to see if their own furniture would fit. In short Bilbo was "Presumed Dead" and not everybody that said so was sorry to find the presumption wrong.



The return of Mr. Bilbo Baggins created quite a disturbance, both under the Hill and over the Hill, and across the Water; it was a great deal more than a nine days' wonder. The legal bother, indeed, lasted for years.

In the end to save time Bilbo had to buy back quite a lot of his own furniture. Many of his silver spoons mysteriously disappeared and were never accounted for.

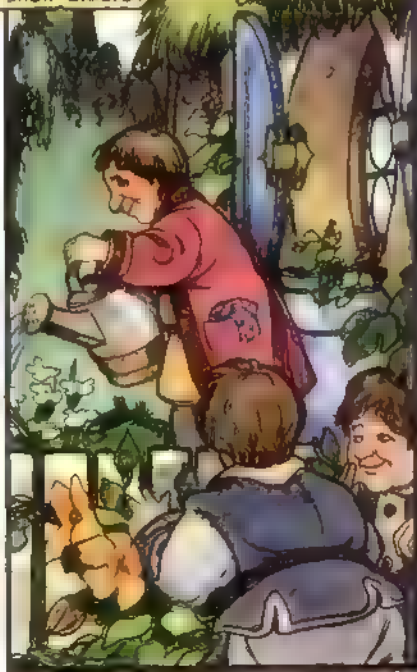
Indeed Bilbo found he had lost more than spoons—he had lost his reputation. It is true that for ever after he remained an elf-friend, and had the honour of dwarves, wizards, and all such folk as ever passed that way; but he was no longer quite respectable.

He was in fact held by all the hobbits of the neighbourhood to be queer—except by his nephews and nieces on the Took side, but even they were not encouraged in their friendship by their elders.

I am sorry to say he did not mind. He was quite content. His sword he hung over the mantelpiece. His coat of mail was arranged on a stand in the hall (until he lent it to a Museum). His gold and silver was largely spent in presents. His magic ring he kept a great secret, for he chiefly used it when unpleasant callers came.



He took to writing poetry and visiting the elves; and though few believed any of his tales, he remained very happy to the end of his days, and those were extraordinarily long.



One autumn evening some years afterwards Bilbo was sitting in his study writing his memoirs—he thought of calling them "There and Back Again, a Hobbit's Holiday"—when there was a ring at the door.

It was Gandalf and a dwarf; and the dwarf was actually Balin.

Soon they fell to talking of their times together, of course, and Bilbo asked how things were going in the lands of the Mountain. It seemed they were going well.

Bard had rebuilt the town in Dale and all the valley had become tilled again and rich, and the desolation was now filled with birds and blossoms in spring and fruit and feasting in autumn.

And Lake-town was refounded and was more prosperous than ever, and much wealth went up and down the Running River; and there was friendship in those parts between elves and dwarves and men.

The old Master had come to a bad end. Bard had given him much gold for the help of the Lake-people, but being of the kind that easily catches such disease he fell under the dragon-sickness, and took most of the gold and fled with it, and died of starvation in the Waste, deserted by his companions.

COME IN! COME IN!

THE NEW MASTER IS OF WISER KIND AND VERY POPULAR, FOR, OF COURSE, HE GETS MOST OF THE CREDIT FOR THE PRESENT PROSPERITY. THEY ARE MAKING SONGS WHICH SAY THAT IN HIS DAY THE RIVERS RUN WITH GOLD.

THEN THE PROPHECIES OF THE OLD SONGS HAVE TURNED OUT TO BE TRUE, AFTER A FASHION!

OF COURSE! AND WHY SHOULD NOT THEY PROVE TRUE?

SURELY YOU DON'T DISBELIEVE THE PROPHECIES, BECAUSE YOU HAD A HAND IN BRINGING THEM ABOUT YOURSELF? YOU DON'T REALLY SUPPOSE, DO YOU, THAT ALL YOUR ADVENTURES AND ESCAPES WERE MANAGED BY MERE LUCK, JUST FOR YOUR SOLE BENEFIT?

YOU ARE A VERY FINE PERSON, MISTER BAGGINS, AND I AM FOND OF YOU; BUT YOU ARE ONLY QUITE A LITTLE FELLOW IN A WIDE WORLD AFTER ALL!

THANK GOODNESS!

The End

T. WILKINSON



J. R. R. Tolkien

J. R. R. Tolkien (1892—1973) was Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Pembroke College, Oxford, from 1925 to 1945 and then, until his retirement in 1959, Merton Professor of English Language and Literature. His chief interest was in the literary and linguistic tradition of the English West Midlands, especially in *Beowulf*, the *Ancrene Wisse*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; but he is better known to the reading public as the author of *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, and the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*.



David Wenzel

David Wenzel began his career in 1975 by illustrating *Middle Earth, The World of Tolkien Illustrated* by Lin Carter, and has now come full circle with the completion of *The Hobbit*. His style combines classic pen and watercolor techniques and graphic storytelling. Artistic inspiration came from Arthur Rackham, Howard Pyle and Hal Foster, plus a large medieval reference library. Other illustrated works by Wenzel include Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Robert E. Howard's *Solomon Kane*, H. B. Pieper's *The Adventures of Little Fuzzy*, and *Kingdom of the Dwarfs* by Rob Walsh.

Charles Dixon

Charles Dixon has written various children's books for Golden Books and Walt Disney, including new adventures of *Winnie the Pooh*. He has worked prolifically in comics since 1984, producing original stories and series continuity for every major comics company. His works include: *Airboy*, *Evangaline*, *Strike*, *Radio Boy*, *Valkyrie!*, *Black Terror*, *Alien Legion*, *Moon Knight*, *Super Cops*, *Alias*, and many others.



Sean Deming

Sean Deming came to Eclipse Books as an assistant editor in 1985 . He went on to edit many titles and also held the position of Distribution Manager from 1988 to 1990. It was during this time that he began working on *The Hobbit*. He co-created and edited the *New Wave* series during the late '80s, and created the *Naive Inter-dimensional Commando Koalas*.



Bill Pearson

Bill Pearson has written, edited, colored, and illustrated comics over the last thirty years for almost every publisher in the field, but is most often employed as a letterer. His skillful use of letter forms enhances the overall sense of design of *The Hobbit*. Other recent lettering works include Clive Barker's *Tapping the Vein*, and P. Craig Russell's adaptation of *The Magic Flute*.

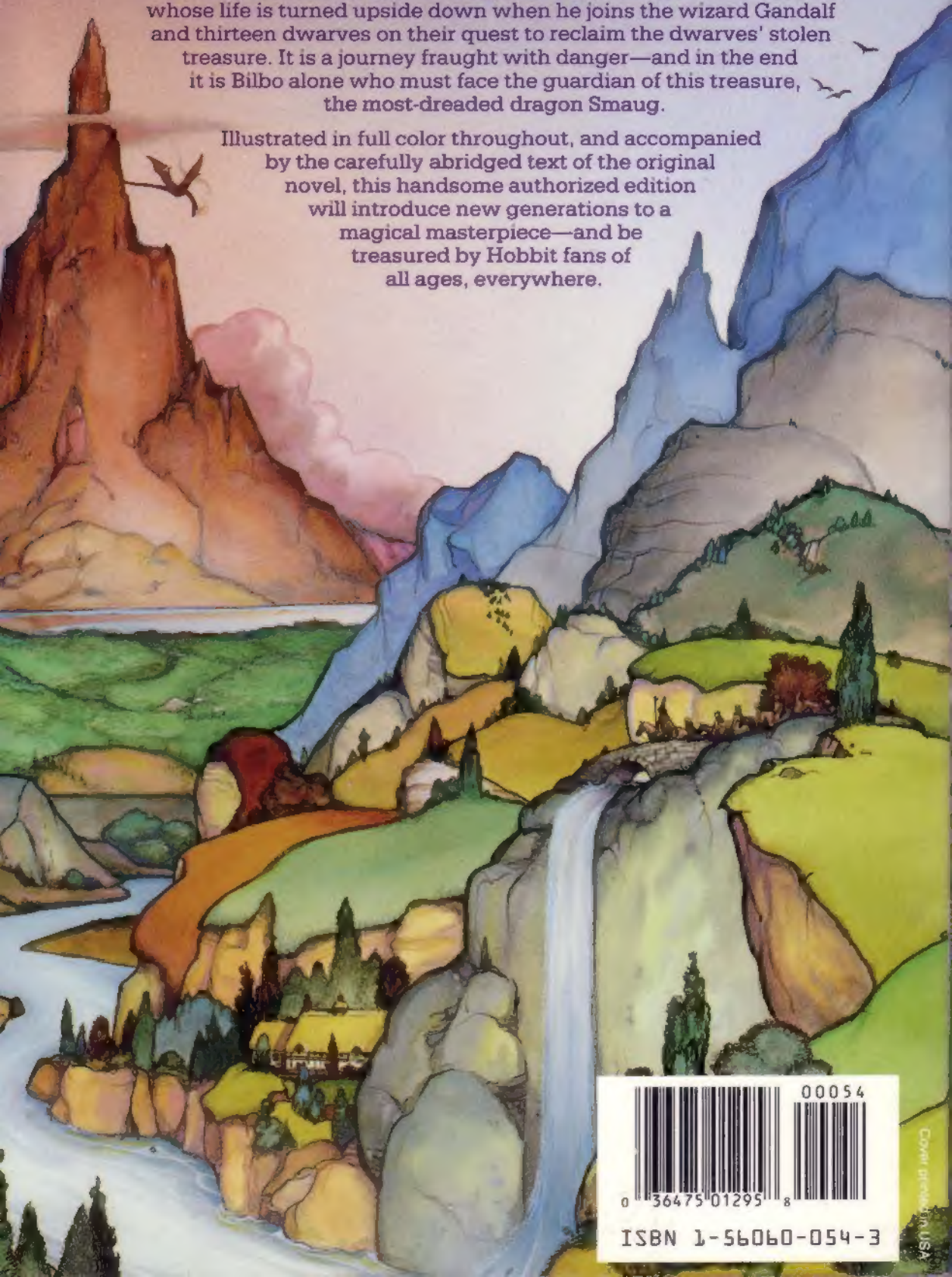


Wentzel

First published in the United States over 50 years ago, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* has become one of the best-loved books of all time. Now Tolkien's fantasy classic has been adapted into a fully painted graphic novel.

The Hobbit is the story of Bilbo Baggins...a quiet and contented hobbit whose life is turned upside down when he joins the wizard Gandalf and thirteen dwarves on their quest to reclaim the dwarves' stolen treasure. It is a journey fraught with danger—and in the end it is Bilbo alone who must face the guardian of this treasure, the most-dreaded dragon Smaug.

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