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J.R.R. Tolkien's

THE HOBBIT

An Adventure Play

Adapted

by

EDWARD MAST



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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EDWARD MAST

Based upon the work, “THE HOBBIT” by
J.R.R. TOLKIEN

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(THE HOBBIT)

Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-589-X

THE HOBBIT

A Play in One Act
For 29 actors (all male)*

CHARACTERS

BILBO BAGGINS, a hobbit

GANDALF, a wizard

13 Dwarves

BALIN

BOFUR

FILI

DWALIN

BOMBUR

KILI

OIN

DORI

THORIN OAKENSHIELD

GLOIN

ORI

BIFUR

NORI

GOBLIN KING

DORK, a goblin

DOOF, a goblin

GOLLUM, a nocturnal creature

MAXWELL, a human

BARD, a human

SMAUG, a dragon

SEVERAL GOBLINS, SEVERAL MEN

*The script is meant for heavy doubling—all 13 dwarves, for example, are never seen onstage together—and was originally performed with a cast of 10.

TIME: The Third Age.

PLACE: Middle Earth.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET/COSTUMES

With many scenes progressing in rapid sequence, a flexible unit set will be best. The difference in size between Hobbits and Humans is important; thus Humans (and Gandalf) are played by actors on painter's stilts. Costumes and scenic design need not be faux-medieval: instead, the script suggests superhero trappings, mainly to stimulate designers to explore new possibilities.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about *The Hobbit*.

“Our children and youth audiences and actors adored the play. Mast adapts the story into a marvelous adventure, filled with the spirit of Tolkien’s work and with strong themes about pride and forgiveness.”

*Katie Simons,
Corinth Theatre Arts,
Corinth, Miss.*

“It was a visceral and wonderful experience!” *Matt Thompson,
Theatre School at North Coast Repertory Theatre,
Solana Vista, Calif.*

“Strong example of a positive way to condense an epic novel to a one-act play for children.”

*Tyler Stillwill,
Black Hawk Children’s Theatre,
Waterloo, Iowa*

“It was a fun play to direct. All of the cast enjoyed the battle scenes!”

*Lisa Masson,
TEACH Drama Group,
Baldwin, Kan.*

THE HOBBIT

AT RISE: *In shadow and silhouette: A huge armored WARRIOR walks out, clanking ominously. The warrior narrates the following with gestures, as a rich deep voice speaks the words over the loudspeakers:*

VOICE. And those few brave Elves who survived the fall of the great city of Gondolin made their perilous way across high mountaintops and the falls of Thain Sear. But lo, suddenly before them leaped a Balrog, blocking their way with its whip of flame. But Glorfindel leaped forward and his golden armor gleamed in the moonlight, and he hewed so fierce at the demon that it leaped on a great boulder and Glorfindel after.

(A screen has come up with shadow puppet figures making their way across mountains in silhouette. Suddenly—as in narration—a MONSTER appears, wielding whip and claw; a WARRIOR, half its height, fights with sword and shield. The figures have the enlarged shoulders and many-bladed weapons of comic book superheroes.)

VOICE. And the women and children of the Elves watched in terror, for the battle of Glorfindel and the Balrog was like thunder and fire and the cracking of stone. They grappled in fury atop the mountain peak, till the Balrog shrieked with the pain of Glorfindel's sword, and staggered, losing

its footing; but the monster clutched at Glorfindel as he fell, and the two swayed and toppled, and over the edge, into the abyss...

(The screen fades out. Lights come up slowly on the WAR-RIOR, who turns out to be no armored warrior at all. Instead, he is a little man with a large pot on his head for a helmet, several pans on his body as breastplates, standing on metal pots, and wielding kitchen utensils as weapons. He looks at us, pauses a moment: laughs. He is a hobbit.)

HOBBIT. The story gets kind of sad after that part. Tsk. Wonderful old story, though. The Fall of Gondolin. Mm! *(Cheerfully removes his helmet and armor as he chats with us.)* When I was just a little hobbit, oh, I used to picture myself with spear and sword, slashing my way through armies of orcs and Morgoth's servants, questing for the right; you know how it goes. But, of course, wars and suchlike don't much happen here in the Shire. And just as well, thank you. *(Has finished removing kitchenware. He is a little fellow, with something of a stomach, dressed comfortably in trousers and gaudy waistcoat. His feet are bare and covered with fur; otherwise he is quite ordinary and human-like. He picks up a pipe to smoke.)* Name's Bag-gins; you can call me Bilbo. Welcome to Bag End. You're just in time for tea, and maybe you'll stay for my late second supper. One of my favorite meals: the last one before dinnertime. Stories and adventures are fun for young ones, I suppose. But I'm getting on; don't get much chance for it anymore. And I certainly don't go hunting it out. I'll just look in the pantry...*(Starts to leave; stops, turns to us:)* Still and all, it would be something to be part of a real adventure, wouldn't it? *(KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK on the*

door.) Excellent! Don't have the faintest idea who it might be, but whoever, it's more company!

(Eagerly answers the door. Enter GANDALF, a wizard, who is human-size—that is, wears elevated shoes and is above-normal height.)

BILBO. Good afternoon to you.

GANDALF *(stands looking sternly down at BILBO)*. You have grown fatter since I saw you last.

BILBO. I should hope so: I'm no pauper, after all. But you have the advantage on me: when was it you saw me last?

GANDALF. Some thirty years ago, I'd hazard a guess. I'll hazard as well you've forgotten who I am.

BILBO. You have me there. But once I know your name, I'll apologize grandly. You are...

GANDALF. Gandalf.

BILBO. Gandalf the wizard! Really! Well I *am* mortified and I *do* apologize. How could I have failed to recognize Gandalf? Where have you been these last thirty years?

GANDALF. Wandering Middle Earth, Mister Baggins, on roads and not on roads, as is my profession.

BILBO. Oooh, I'll bet you've seen some things!

GANDALF. I have indeed. I seem to remember, when you were a young hobbit some thirty years ago, you had a taste for adventure.

BILBO. For hearing about them, at least, though I'm more inclined to listen over bread and tea these days. I hope you'll stay for late second supper?

GANDALF *(blandly)*. Delighted to. Though I'm with a friend.

BILBO. Invite him in!

GANDALF. You're very gracious. But, in fact, it's not just one friend...

BILBO. They're both welcome.

GANDALF. Nor just two...

BILBO. Room for all! Never let it be said that Bilbo Baggins turned away company!

GANDALF. Excellent! I knew I could count on your hospitality. Allow me to introduce Balin and Dwalin.

(Enter BALIN and DWALIN. They are dwarves—though we won't much refer to them by that word. They are about BILBO's height—i.e., normal actor height—but stocky, sturdy, swaggering, with vast broad shoulders. They wear half-masks with bulbous noses and huge bushy eyebrows. They wear thick boots, colorful vests and matching caps. Each dwarf wears a different matching cap and vest, and a different mask; their vests are labeled with their names. They also carry armor and weaponry, all of the exaggerated superhero-type. As GANDALF introduces them, BALIN and DWALIN bow low.)

BALIN & DWALIN. At your service.

BILBO. At yours, gentlemen. *(Gesturing them to enter.)*
Won't you please—

BALIN *(as they walk past BILBO)*. We will, thanks very much.

DWALIN. Dining room must be...?

BILBO. Yes, that way.

BALIN. Thanks very much. *(BALIN and DWALIN exeunt toward dining room, leaving their weapons leaning carefully in the hallway.)*

BILBO. Friends of yours, you say?

GANDALF. And fine friends they are, too. Let me further introduce: O-in and Glo-in.

(OIN and GLOIN enter. They are also dwarves.)

OIN & GLOIN *(bowing)*. Very much your servants.

BILBO. And yours. Won't you please—

GLOIN. We will.

OIN. Dining room is...

BILBO. That way.

GLOIN. Of course.

OIN. Thanks. *(They exeunt to dining room, leaving weapons.)*

BILBO. Well, er, I'm sure they're very...

GANDALF. They are. May I present: Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur.

(Three DWARVES enter. BOMBUR is rather stouter of stomach than the others.)

BIFUR, BOFUR & BOMBUR *(bowing briefly as they walk past BILBO)*. Entirely at your service.

BILBO. And at yours. If you'll—

BOMBUR. Dining room?

BILBO. That way.

BOMBUR. Mmmmmm, excellent. *(They exeunt.)*

BILBO. More than one friend indeed. Are all your friends so—

GANDALF. Some. Let me introduce Dori.

(DWARF enters, bows.)

DORI. At your service. Dining room?

BILBO *(bowing)*. That way.

GANDALF (*as DORI leaves*). And Ori.

(DWARF enters, bowing as he walks past.)

ORI. At your service. Dining room?

BILBO (*bowing*). That way.

GANDALF (*as ORI leaves*). And Nori.

(DWARF enters, bowing as he walks past.)

NORI. At your—

BILBO (*bowing*). That way.

GANDALF. And Fili. And Kili.

(Each DWARF enters, bowing as he says "At your—" and BILBO bows saying "That way" as GANDALF continues.)

GANDALF. And most specially let me introduce Master Thorin Oakenshield.

(THORIN is dressed in a more military manner than the rest, with some regalia of rank. He bows slightly.)

THORIN. At your service, Mister Baggins.

BILBO. Yes yes, that way.

THORIN. What is that way?

BILBO. The dining room.

THORIN. In good time, Mister Baggins. Gandalf and I have much to discuss first. May we sit here while you prepare the necessaries for the rest?

GANDALF. That will be fine.

BILBO. Well, uh, I imagine that will be...what do you mean by necessaries?

(Reenter BOMBUR from dining room.)

BOMBUR. Pardon me, Mister Baggins, but we have come a long way and are rather famished, if you don't mind.

BILBO. Yes, of course; ummm...what would you like?

BOMBUR. Oh, nothing special, whatever you have on hand. Just some pork pie, perhaps, and salad.

BIFUR *(poking his head in)*. Raspberry jam and apple tarts for me.

GLOIN *(poking his head in)*. Mince pie and cheese, if y' got 'em.

BALIN *(poking his head in)*. Cold chicken and pickles, some tea, and ale, of course. That should do it.

THORIN. Perhaps you could throw on a few eggs, if you please.

BILBO. Yes, well, certainly, of course, um. This may take a little bit of a while, seeing as there are...er...several of you...

BALIN. Well, of course, but we'll lend a hand, won't we?

GLOIN. Of course!

BOFUR. Of course!

BOMBUR. I suppose.

BALIN. Onward, gentlemen! Into the kitchen and out with the finest china! *(DWARVES exeunt; BILBO follows quickly.)*

BILBO. Just a moment! You don't need to—CAREFULLY!! *(He's gone. Noise of clattering dishes offstage. THORIN looks after BILBO skeptically.)*

THORIN. And this is your Mister Baggins?

GANDALF. It is.

THORIN. Looks more like a grocer than a burglar to me. Soft as the mud of this Shire he lives in.

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

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

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

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

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

BILBO *(taken aback)*. Sorry.

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

BILBO. My profession?

(Enter GLOIN.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THORIN. There are worse things than death.

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

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

BILBO. What's all this?

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

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

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

BILBO. Fine with me.

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

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

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

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

BILBO. Really? How nice for you.

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

BILBO. We? Who is we?

THORIN. My army and myself.

BILBO. You have an army?

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

BILBO. Those? You have an army of thirteen?

THORIN. DON'T SPEAK THAT NUMBER!

BILBO. Sorry.

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

BILBO. Fight with a dragon?

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

BILBO. Me?

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

BILBO. But you said you wanted a trained burglar.

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

BILBO. But—

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

BILBO. But just a minute. I'm not—

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

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

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

THORIN. I will not sneak.

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