

INFORMATION:

MAY I AUDITION IF I AM IN PUFFS? Yes, the schedules do not overlap.

SOME ACTORS WILL BE CAST IN MULTIPLE ROLES.

COVID PROTOCOLS WILL BE FOLLOWED DURING REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCES.

ACTORS MUST BE AVAILABLE FOR ALL REHEARSALS FOR WHICH THEY ARE CALLED AND FOR ALL PERFORMANCES.

THORIN. Bless me. Haven't you seen the map? And haven't we been talking about all this for years?

BILBO. All the same, I'd like to know about the risks, the out-of-pocket expenses, the time required, the remuneration, and so forth.

THORIN. Oh, very well. Long ago, in my grandfather's day, we dwarves mined and tunnelled and grew rich and prosperous on the gold and jewels we discovered. That was what brought us to Smaug the dragon's attention. Dragons steal gold and jewels, you know. And then they guard their plunder as long as they live—which is practically forever, unless they're killed. Well, to make a long story short, Old Smaug flew in and settled on our mountain in a spout of flames. And before long he'd wiped out nearly all of us dwarves and stolen every last ounce of our gold and jewels. Now it's time we got it back.

BILBO. I see.

THORIN. And if you don't like being called a burglar, how about "expert treasure-hunter," though it comes to much the same thing?

BILBO. That's much better, thank you.

GANDALF. All right my fine expert treasure-hunter, we'll be setting off tomorrow morning. We'll see you then.

BILBO. But...

GANDALF. No buts about it. Tomorrow morning. At the Green Dragon Inn. 11 a.m. sharp. (GANDALF and THORIN get up and leave.)

BILBO (to their departing backs). But...(As the scene ends and BILBO is left alone onstage, he turns and talks directly to the audience.) Before I knew where I was or what was happening, it was tomorrow morning at 11 a.m. sharp and I found myself at the Green

Dragon Inn. Then it was tomorrow afternoon. And then it was tomorrow evening and I was trudging through an endless, dark forest.

A FOREST

(BILBO turns and begins trudging across the stage. As he does, THORIN re-enters wearing a backpack and carrying a walking stick. He hands another backpack and stick to BILBO who puts on the pack and begins to use the stick to help him on his trek.)

BILBO (as he does so). Bother adventures and treasure hunting and everything to do with them. I wish I was at home in my nice hole with something to eat by the fire.

THORIN. It is about time we stopped for supper. If we can find a dry patch to light a fire and sleep on.

BILBO. Splendid idea. But where's Gandalf?

THORIN. I don't know. I think he's up ahead a bit, reconnoitering. Why don't you set up camp while I go find him?

BILBO. All right. But don't be long.

(THORIN exits. As he does BILBO hears voices off-stage and hides behind a tree as BERT, TOM and WILLIAM, three trolls, enter.)

BERT (as the THREE settle down for a meal of mutton). Mutton yesterday, mutton today, and, blimey, if it don't look like mutton tomorrow.

TOM. Never a blinking bit of manflesh for ever so long. What the 'ell William was a'thinkin' of to bring us to these parts at all beats me.

Take them away to dark holes full of snakes and never let them see the light again!

(A great shaft of fire cuts through the gloom as if it's a flashing sword, toppling the GOBLINS to the ground. It's GANDALF, who, as the GOBLINS fall, urges BILBO and THORIN to flee.)

GANDALF. Quick. Follow me. Quicker. Quicker. *(BILBO and GANDALF attempt to pull themselves together and flee.)*

BILBO. Why, oh why, did I ever leave my hobbit-hole!
THORIN. Why, oh why, did we ever bring a wretched little hobbit on a treasure hunt!

GANDALF. About turn. Draw your swords! *(The GOBLINS are on their feet. As BILBO and THORIN do so, they are once again grabbed by the GOBLINS. During the commotion the GOBLINS hustle themselves and THORIN off-stage, leaving BILBO collapsed on the ground, apparently unconscious. GANDALF turns to the audience.)* Because the Great Goblin and his henchman were concentrating on keeping Thorin under their control, Bilbo managed to escape from them again. He also managed to hit his head on a very hard rock when he slipped on the slimy edge of an underground lake. But not before finding something very valuable indeed—although he didn't know it at the time. Right now he's about to meet one of the strangest creatures in this whole adventure. *(GANDALF disappears again.)*

BY AN UNDERGROUND LAKE

BILBO *(waking up and feeling his head)*. Thorin? Gandalf? Where am I? *(Feeling in his pocket.)* And what's this? A ring? *(Holding the ring up.)* I found it in the dark last night. I wonder who owns it.

(BILBO puts the ring back in his pocket just before GOLLUM, all wet and fishy, suddenly appears. GOLLUM, being nearly blind, peers at BILBO intently.)

GOLLUM. Bless us and splash us, my preciousss! *(It scares BILBO half to death as it whispers and hisses to itself.)* I guess it's a choice feast. Or at least a tasty morsel for us, Gollum. *(When he says his name he makes a horrible swallowing noise in his throat, which gives him his name in the first place; he always calls himself "my precious.")*

BILBO *(shaking with fear and thrusting his dagger at GOLLUM)*. Who are you?

GOLLUM *(speaking to himself, as always)*. Who iss he, my preciousss?

BILBO *(pulling himself together)*. I'm Mr. Bilbo Baggins. I've lost Thorin the dwarf, and I've lost Gandalf the wizard, and I don't know where I am.

GOLLUM *(looking at BILBO's dagger cautiously)*. What's he got in his handses?

BILBO. A sword! A blade!

GOLLUM *(hissing and talking to himself)*. Sssss. P'rhaps we sits here and chats with it a bitsy, my preciousss. It likes riddles? Does it? Does it?

BILBO (*anxious to appear friendly*). Oh yes, I love riddles. Why don't you ask the first one?

GOLLUM. All right. What has roots as nobody sees, is taller than trees, up, up it goes, and yet never grows?

BILBO. Easy! Mountain!

GOLLUM. Does it guess easy? It must have a competition with us, my preciousss. If precious asks and it doesn't answer, we eats it, my preciousss. If it asks us, and we doesn't answer, then we does what it wants, eh? We shows it the safe way out of the Misty Mountains.

BILBO. All right! Thirty white horses on a red hill, first they champ, then they stamp, then they stand still.

GOLLUM. Chestnuts. Chestnuts. It's teeth, of course, my precious. But we has only six! Now it's my turn again. (*Through this scene GOLLUM hisses and whispers and makes slimy, watery movements.*) Voiceless it cries, wingless flutters, toothless bites, mouthless mutters.

BILBO. Half a moment. Wind, wind, of course. Now it's my turn again. 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. Ssss, ssss, my preciousss. (*Hissing as he thinks.*) Sun on the daisies it means, it does. Now: 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.

BILBO. Dark! Now try this: A box without hinges, key, or lid, yet golden treasure inside is hid.

GOLLUM (*hissing perplexedly to himself*). Sssss? Sssss?

BILBO. Well, what is it? The answer's not a kettle boiling over as you seem to think from the noises you're making.

GOLLUM. Give us a chance. Let it give us a chance, my preciousss.

BILBO (*after a short wait*). Well, what about your guess?

GOLLUM (*suddenly guessing*). Eggsses! Eggsses it is! Now try this one: 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. (*BILBO sits thinking hard.*) Is it nice, preciousss? Is it a juicy meal? Is it scrumptiously crunchable?

BILBO (*suddenly, squealing*). Time! Time! (*Which happens to be the right answer.*)

GOLLUM (*getting annoyed*). It's got to ask us another riddle, my precious. Yes it does. Just one more riddle to guess. Come on now. (*BILBO can't think of anything.*) Ask us! Ask us!

BILBO (*having put his hand in his pocket and touched the ring in it*). What have I got in my pocket?

GOLLUM. Not fair! Not fair, my precious, to ask what it's got in its nassty little pocketsses!

BILBO (*louder*). What have I got in my pocket?

GOLLUM. Sssss. It must give us three guesses, my precious, three guesses.

BILBO. Very well. Guess away!

GOLLUM. Handses?

BILBO (*who has just taken his hand out of his pocket in time*). Wrong. Guess again.

GOLLUM. Sssss. Knife?

BILBO. Wrong. Last guess. (*GOLLUM is hissing, sputtering and rocking himself backwards and forwards, all the while slapping his damp, webbed feet on the ground.*)

GOLLUM. Ssssss. Ssssss.

BILBO. Come on! I'm waiting. Time's up!

GOLLUM (*shrieking*). String! Or nothing!

BILBO. That's two last guesses, not one. But they're both wrong. (*Jumping up with his dagger in his hand.*)

Well? What about your promise? I want to go. You must show me the way.

GOLLUM. Did we say so, precious? Show the nasty little Baggins the way out? But what has it got in its pocket? Not string. Not nothing. Oh no, Gollum!

BILBO. Never you mind. A promise is a promise.

GOLLUM. Cross, is it. Impatient, precious? But it must wait, yes it must wait. We must go and get some things first. Things to help us.

BILBO. Well, hurry up!

GOLLUM. Oh, I will, my precious, won't I? It's my birthday present I want, my precious, isn't it? (*GOLLUM wanders, squelching, off-stage. As he does, BILBO pulls himself together, brushes himself off, and readies himself for the next leg of his adventure. Suddenly there's a terrible screech from GOLLUM off-stage.*)

GOLLUM (*from offstage*). Where is it? Where is it? Losst it is, my precious. Lost, lost! Curse us and crush us, my precious is lost!

(*GOLLUM re-appears terrible agitated.*)

BILBO. What's the matter? What have you lost?

GOLLUM (*shrieking*). It mustn't ask us. Not its business, no, Gollum! It's losst, Gollum, Gollum, Gollum.

BILBO. Well, so am I. And I want to get unlost. And I won the game, and you promised. So come along, come along, show me the way out.

GOLLUM. No, not yet, precious! We must search for it; it's lost, Gollum. (*GOLLUM scrabbles around on the ground, blindly looking for his lost ring.*)

BILBO. But you never guessed my last question; and you promised.

GOLLUM. Never guessed! (*A sharp hiss.*) What has it got in its pocket? Tell us that. It must tell us that first.

BILBO (*not knowing the importance of the ring, but annoyed with GOLLUM*). Answers were to be guessed, not given.

GOLLUM. But it wasn't a fair question. Not a riddle, precious, no.

BILBO. Oh well, if it's a matter of ordinary questions, then I asked one first. What have you lost? Tell me that!

GOLLUM (*growing suspicious of what BILBO is concealing*). What has it got in its pocket?

BILBO (*persisting*). What have you lost?

GOLLUM (*hissing louder and louder*). What has it got in its pocket? (*GOLLUM comes closer and closer to BILBO, more and more menacing.*)

BILBO (*asking himself the question*). What have I got in my pocket, I wonder? (*As he ponders the question he puts his hand into his pocket and slips the ring onto his finger, suddenly becoming invisible—the best way to indicate this is for BILBO to have a sign saying "Invisible" around his neck or on his costume somewhere that he can suddenly flip over for the audience to see whenever he's "invisible."*)

GOLLUM (*rushing past BILBO as if he isn't there, because he can no longer see him*). Curse it! Curse it! Curse it! Curse the Baggins! It's gone! It must have had my birthday present in its pocket. My birthday

present! Curse it! How did we lose it, my preciousss? It must have slipped from us after all these ages and ages. And the Baggins must have found it. Curse it. ...But maybe it doesn't know what our birthday present can do. That if it puts it on its finger no one will be able to see it. It'll be completely invisible. We must catch up with the Baggins before it puts it on and becomes invisible and gets away. Hurry. Hurry. (*GOLLUM rushes off.*)

BILBO. So that's it. That's why Gollum was so upset. The ring I found was his. And it has the power to make its wearer invisible. How very, very useful. But I'd better hurry after Gollum and follow him to the way out of this slippery, slimy place. (*BILBO runs off after GOLLUM.*)

GOLLUM (*from off-stage, shrieking*). Thief, thief, thief! Baggins! We hates it! We hates it! We hates it forever!

(*GOLLUM's shrieking fades into the distance and stops as BILBO re-appears on another part of the acting area.*)

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MISTY MOUNTAINS

BILBO (*still invisible*). Good heavens! I seem to have got right to the other side of the Misty Mountains, right to the edge of the Land Beyond! But where oh where are the others? I hate being alone. What's that? (*He hears someone coming.*) It's Gandalf! And Thorin! Thank goodness. I think I'll give them a surprise. (*BILBO fondles the ring on his finger, indicating to the audience that he'll remain invisible for the time being.*)

(*GANDALF enters with THORIN.*)

GANDALF. After all, Bilbo is my friend. And not a bad little chap. I feel responsible for him. I wish to goodness you hadn't lost him.

THORIN. Why did you bring him along with us at all? He's been more trouble than use so far. If we have to go back into the Misty Mountains to find him, drat him, I say.

GANDALF (*angrily*). I brought him, and I don't bring things that are of no use. Either you help me to look for him or I leave you here to get out of this mess as best you can. Why did you lose him in the first place?

THORIN. Because there were goblins everywhere, fighting and biting in the dark. Why didn't you keep track of Baggins the burglar? He's your hobbit, not mine. And you are a wizard, after all! (*BILBO steps out before GANDALF can answer while removing his ring and flipping his "Invisible" sign out of sight.*)

BILBO. Here's your burglar! (*GANDALF and THORIN jump, startled, then pleased.*)

GANDALF and THORIN (*together*). Where did you come from?

BILBO. Oh I just crept along, you know—very carefully and quietly.

THORIN. Well, it's the first time that even a mouse has crept along carefully and quietly under my nose and not been spotted. I take off my hood to you. (*Which he does.*)

BILBO. I'll take that as a compliment—though I must say I still don't like being called a burglar. I think of myself as an honorable righter of wrongs.

And what about the rest of the treasure? (*The roars continue.*) For heaven's sake do something quick!

BILBO. What else am I supposed to do? I wasn't engaged to kill dragons, only to steal back stolen treasure. I've made the best beginning I could.

THORIN. I beg your pardon, Mr. Baggins. But what do we do now?

BILBO. I've no idea at the moment—if you mean about removing the rest of the treasure. That obviously depends entirely on getting rid of Smaug. But I'm doing my best to think of something.

THORIN. But what are we to do today? Right now?

BILBO. Well, I've still got my magic ring, so I'm going to put it on to become invisible again. I rather think that Smaug will come out of his main entrance looking for me. You go back to your hiding place. (*There's a huge roar from much nearer.*) Quick! (*THORIN scuttles off.*) Wish me luck! (*BILBO puts on his ring and flips over his "Invisible" sign again.*)

(*SMAUG appears in all his smoky, fiery, noisy, huge glory.*)

SMAUG. Well, thief! I smell you and I feel your air. I hear your breath. But I can't see you. Do help yourself to my treasure again (*Sarcastically.*); there's plenty to spare!

BILBO. No thank you, O Smaug, the Tremendous! I did not come for presents. I only wish to have a look at you and see if you are truly as great as the tales say. I did not believe them.

SMAUG (*somewhat flattered*). Do you believe them now?

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

SMAUG. You have nice manners for a thief and a liar. But I don't remember smelling you before. Who are you and where do you come from?

BILBO. 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.

SMAUG. So I can well believe. But that is hardly your usual name.

BILBO. I am the clue-finder. The web-cutter. The stinging fly. (*Brandishing his dagger.*) I was chosen by the great wizard.

SMAUG (*sneering*). Lovely titles! But do they mean anything?

BILBO. I am he that buries his friends alive and drowns them and draws them alive again from the water.

SMAUG. These don't sound so creditable.

BILBO. I am the friend of bears and the guest of eagles. I am Ringwinner and Luckwearer. And I am Barrel-rider.

SMAUG. That's better. But don't let your imagination run away with you! Now, O Barrel-rider, I'll give you one piece of advice: don't have more to do with dwarves than you can help!

BILBO (*in pretend surprise*). Dwarves?

SMAUG. Don't try to fool me. I know the smell—and taste—of dwarves. And I don't mind if you tell that dwarf you're with exactly what I've just said. In the meantime, I suppose the two of you are after my treasure, whatever you say to the contrary.

BILBO. You don't know everything, O Smaug, the Mighty. Not gold alone brought us hither.

SMAUG. Ha, ha! You admit the "us." But I'm pleased to hear that you have other business in these parts besides my gold, because there's an awful lot of it and it'd be a very heavy load for one small dwarf and whoever and whatever you are.

BILBO. I tell you the gold was only an afterthought with us. We came over hill and under hill, by wave and wind, for Revenge. Surely, O Smaug, the unassessably wealthy, you realize that your success has made you some bitter enemies. *(SMAUG snorts so loudly he knocks BILBO to the ground.)*

SMAUG. Revenge! Revenge! The King under the Mountain is dead and where are his kin that dare seek Revenge! Girion, Lord of Dale, is dead, and I have eaten his people like a wolf among sheep. And where are his sons' sons that dare approach me? I kill where I wish and none dare resist. My armor is like tenfold shields, my teeth are swords, my claws spears, the shock of my tail a thunderbolt, my wings a hurricane, my breath death!

BILBO. I've always understood that dragons were softer underneath, especially in the region of the—er—chest. But doubtless one so fortified has thought of that.

SMAUG. Your information is antiquated. I'm armored above and below with iron scales and hard gems. No blade can pierce me.

BILBO. I might have guessed. Truly there can nowhere be found the equal of Lord Smaug the Impenetrable. What magnificence to possess a waistcoat of fine diamonds!

SMAUG *(absurdly flattered)*. Yes, it is rare and wonderful indeed. *(He rises up and displays his waistcoat.)* Look! What do you say to that?

BILBO. Dazzling! Perfect! Flawless! Staggering! *(Then, to himself.)* The old fool. Why there's a large patch in the hollow of his left chest as bare as a snail out of its shell! *(Aloud again.)* Well, I really must not detain Your Magnificence any longer, or keep you from your much needed rest. Maidens take some catching, I believe. *(Teasingly, laughing.)* And so do burglars! *(SMAUG roars and spouts flames in BILBO's direction, almost hitting him.)*

SMAUG. I'll be back, O Barrel-rider. And next time I'll catch you and eat you! *(SMAUG exits as BILBO, scared by the nearness of the flames, pulls himself together.)*

BILBO. Never laugh at live dragons, Bilbo. Never laugh at live dragons, even when you're invisible. You aren't nearly through this adventure yet.

END

(BILBO takes off his ring and flips his "Invisible" sign out of sight as THORIN comes rushing back in.)

THORIN. Are you all right, Bilbo? I heard and saw everything—and you were magnificent. Just as well I had such a good hiding place.

BILBO. I'm fine, thank you. But now you know just exactly what we're up against.

THORIN. Yes, I do. And it may be a great mercy and blessing to know of that bare patch in the old worm's diamond waistcoat.

BILBO. Very true. But this isn't a safe place. Smaug's very likely to reappear if we stay here. Let's get well away before he does.

OUTSIDE BILBO'S HOME

(The scene is as it was at the beginning of the play, except for a sign reading "Auction Today of the Estate of the Late Bilbo Baggins Esq.")

GANDALF. Cheer up, Bilbo; here we are, home at last.

BILBO. Bless me! *(Seeing the sign.)* What's going on? Who says I'm late?

GANDALF. You've been gone longer than you think. You've been assumed dead and your estate is about to be sold off. Just as well we arrived when we did.

BILBO. I'll soon put a stop to that nonsense. One good thing. I'm rich enough now to buy myself a whole new estate, whatever happens.

GANDALF. Several dozen new estates, I'd say. And don't forget your magic ring. You'll find that very useful on your next adventure.

BILBO. Oh no, Gandalf. No more adventures for me. The only thing I'll use my magic ring for now is when unpleasant callers come knocking at my door.

GANDALF. Don't you believe it, Mr. Baggins. You're not the stay-at-home hobbit you were when we first met. And that ring is even more magic, more important than you think. After the great adventure you've just had you'll soon find yourself yearning for another. And the ring might just lead you on it.

BILBO. No, Gandalf, I've had quite enough adventure for one small hobbit. *(Sadly.)* If only I hadn't given the Arkenstone to Bard. Thorin might still be alive today.

GANDALF. That's not so, Bilbo. Thorin alone was responsible for his life and his death.

BILBO. Still, I'll always regret that Thorin and I couldn't have remained friends.

GANDALF. What you should know is that before he died Thorin asked for your forgiveness. What's more, King Bard laid the Arkenstone on his breast when he was buried beneath the Mountain. So Thorin and the Arkenstone are now together forever.

BILBO. Thank goodness for that, Gandalf. And how noble and thoughtful of King Bard.

GANDALF. Yes, indeed.

BILBO. Any news of Lake-town? Since you always seem to know everything.

GANDALF. It's been lavishly rebuilt since Smaug damaged it. And it has a new Master of a wiser kind. Very popular too, I hear, since he's reaping the benefit of Smaug's death and the general prosperity ever since. They're making songs which say that in his day the rivers run with gold.

BILBO. Then the prophecies of the old songs and tales have turned out to be true, after a fashion.

GANDALF. Of course! And why shouldn't they prove true? Surely you don't disbelieve the prophecies because you had a hand in bringing them about? You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for *your* sole benefit?

BILBO. Of course I don't.

GANDALF. You're a very fine hobbit, Mr. Baggins, and I'm very fond of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all.

BILBO. Thank goodness! *(Laughing, he sits down on his front-door bench and pats the place beside him for GANDALF to join him.)* And remember, Gandalf,

whenever you are passing my way, don't wait to knock! Tea is at four, but you are welcome at any time! *(By this time, GANDALF has joined BILBO on the bench and they beam happily at one another as the play ends.)*

THE END

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

BILBO BAGGINS: He is a well-to-do, well-fed hobbit, hobbits being smaller than dwarves but very much larger than Lilliputians. He's fat in the stomach, dresses in bright colors (particularly green and yellow), and wears no shoes because his feet have naturally leathery soles and lots of warm, curly hair—like his head. He has long clever brown fingers, a good-natured face, and a deep fruity laugh.

GANDALF: A wizard, Gandalf appears as a little old man wearing a tall pointed blue hat, a long grey cloak, a silver scarf over which his long white beard hangs down below his waist, and immense black boots. His long bushy eyebrows stick out even further than the brim of his shady hat. He carries a magic staff out of which blue light flashes when he uses it for serious business such as casting spells.

THORIN: A haughty, self-important dwarf, Thorin wears a sky-blue cape with a hood with a long silver tassel. He has a yellow beard that he tucks into his silver belt.

THREE TROLLS: Bert, Tom and William are big, dirty and uncouth. You wouldn't want to have anything to do with them and they should look that way.

TWO ELVES: Elves are quite the opposite of trolls and the distinction between them and the preceding trolls should be very clear. They should be elegant and mercurial.

ELROND: The master of a great house, this elf-friend has a natural nobility, is handsome, and exudes strength and wisdom.