Gandalf

BILBO (bowing). Your servant, Baggins.
DWARVES (ad lib). How'd you escape? What happened? Tell us!
GANDALF. He can tell us on the way. We must leave at once. (DWARVES groan.)
BILBO. But I'm so dreadfully hungry----
FILI. Me, too----
KILI. And me----
BOMBUR. Me most of all!
GANDALF. Forget it. Hundreds of goblins will be out after us as soon as it gets dark. So tighten your belts and let's go. Better no supper than be supper.
DWARVES. Hear, hear!
THORIN. But where are we going? (Takes out his map.)
GANDALF. Through Mirkwood Forest. (Groans from the dwarves.) It is dark and dangerous but it won't be too bad if you can only remember one thing: the path is clearly marked and you must stay on it. Don't let anything tempt you to leave it even for a moment.
THORIN. But aren't you coming with us?
GANDALF. Impossible. I have pressing business in the South.
THORIN. But you can't desert us now!
GANDALF. We may meet again before all is over and then again we may not. That depends on your luck and courage and good sense. But I am sending Mr. Baggins with you, and there's more to him than meets the eye. (BILBO groans.) Cheer up, Bilbo, don't look so glum. Cheer up, Thorin and Company. Think of the treasure at the end!
BILBO. Do we really have to go through Mirkwood! Isn't there some safer way 'round it?
GANDALF. There are no safe ways in this part of the world. You are over the Edge of the Wild

now and there's danger everywhere.
THORIN (studying map, irritably). You said some- about a forest path----
GANDALF. Yes. Straight through the forest is your way now. Don't stray off the path. If you do, it's a thousand to one you'll never find it again and never get out of Mirkwood. And then, I suppose, you'll all be eaten by goblins and I shall never see you again!
THORIN (sourly). Very consoling you are, to be sure.
GANDALF. Come now, enough delay. These woods will soon be thick with goblins! (GANDALF exits R. His voice is heard faintly in the distance.) Don't leave the path! (The DWARVES and BILBO trudge glumly off L.)

CURTAIN