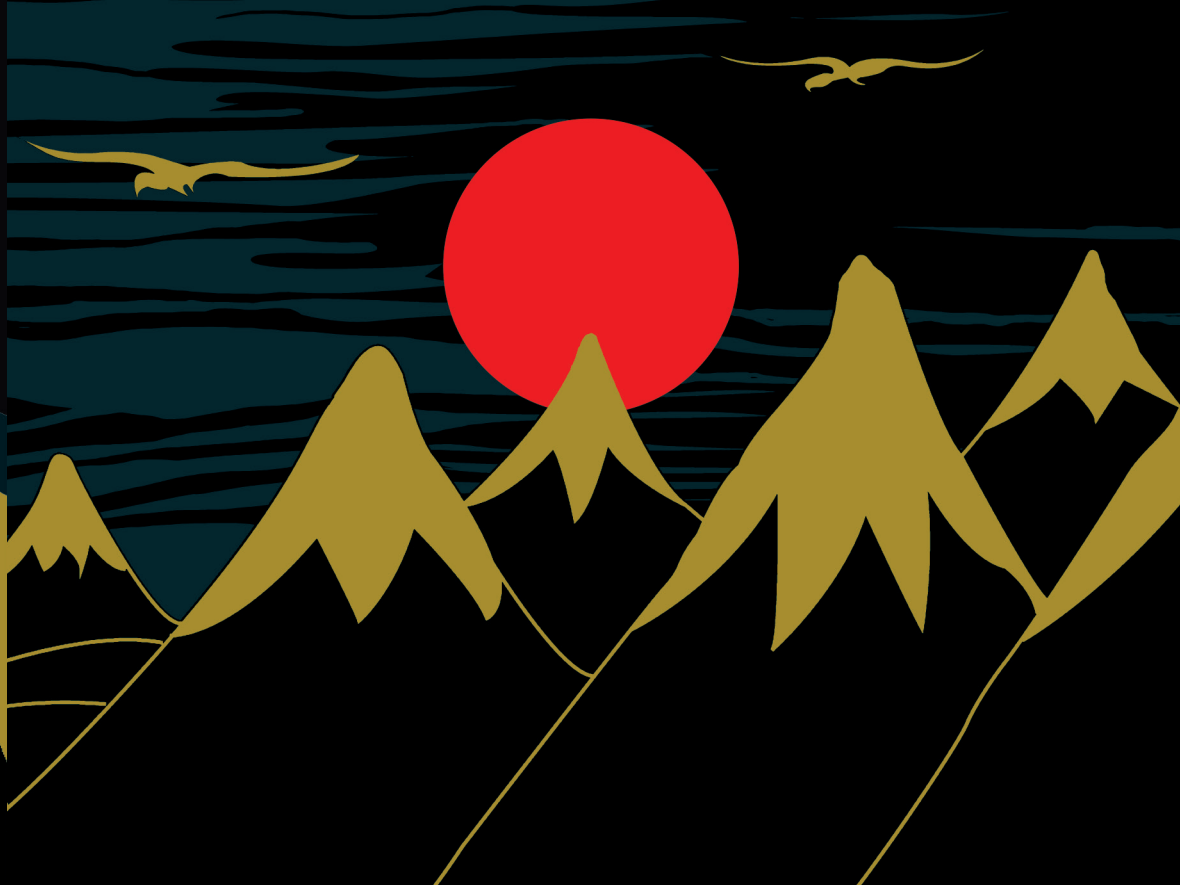
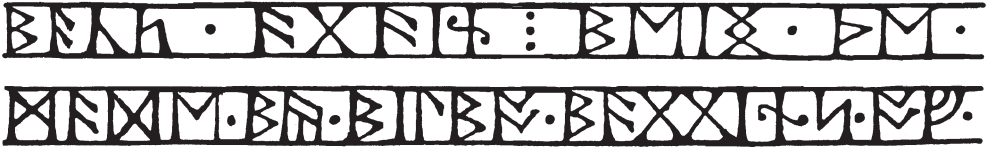


THE
HOBBIT



J.R.R. TOLKIEN

THE WORLDWIDE
BESTSELLER



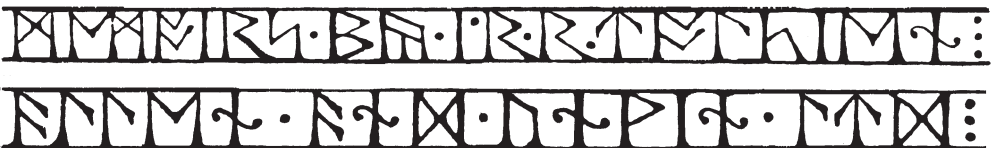
The Hobbit

or There

And Back Again

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J. R. R. Tolkien



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This is a story of long ago. At that time the languages and letters were quite different from ours of today. English is used to represent the languages. But two points may be noted. (1) In English the only correct plural of **dwarf** is **dwarfs**, and the adjective is **dwarfish**. In this story **dwarves** and **dwarvish** are used*, but only when speaking of the ancient people to whom Thorin Oakenshield and his companions belonged. (2) **Orc** is not an English word. It occurs in one or two places but is usually translated **goblin** (or **hobgoblin** for the larger kinds). **Orc** is the hobbits' form of the name given at that time to these creatures, and it is not

* The reason for this use is given in **The Lord of the Rings**, Appendix F, 1137.

Chapter I

An Unexpected Party

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.

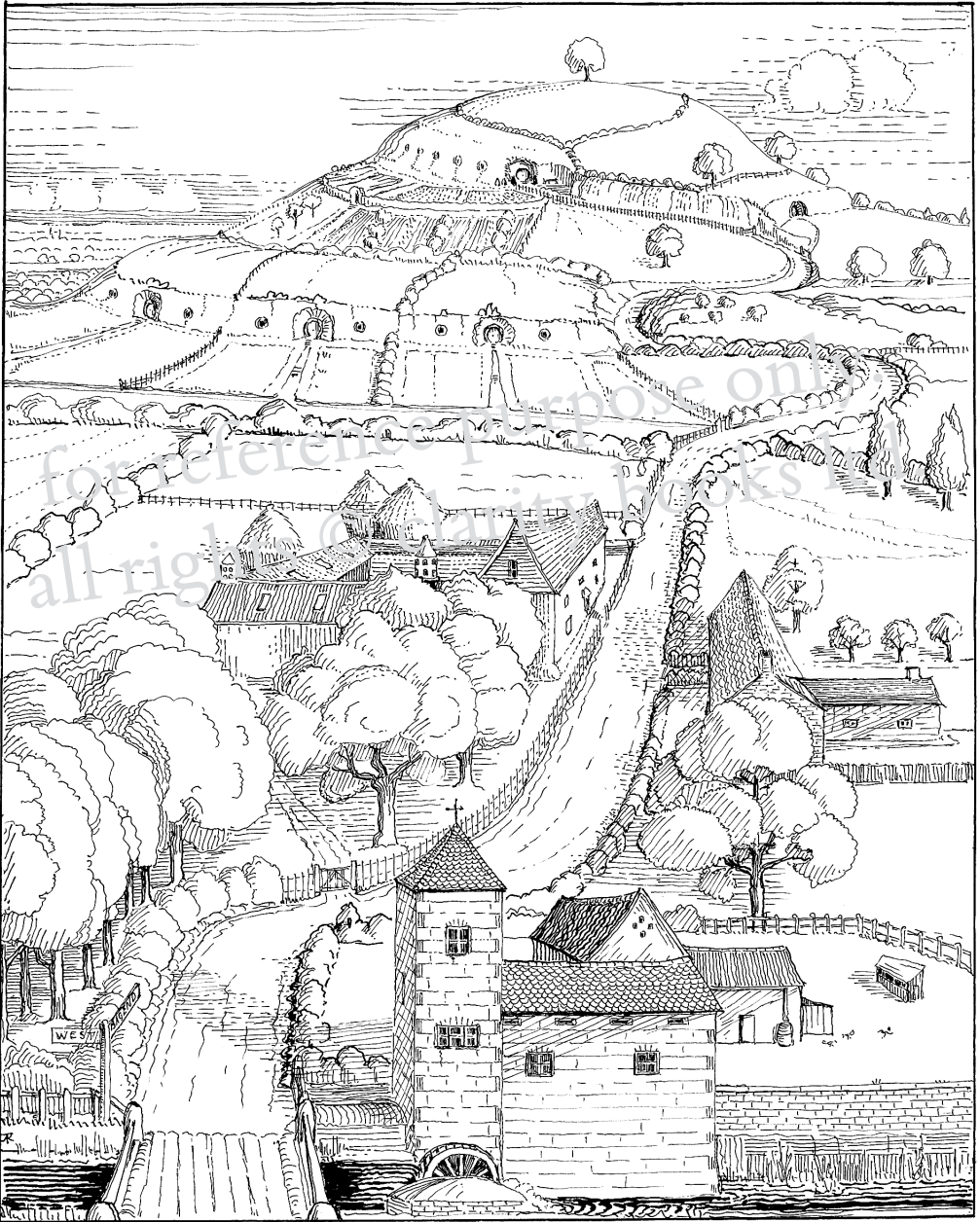
It had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle. The door opened on to a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats—the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill—The Hill, as all the people

for many miles round called it—and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side and then on another. No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining-rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage. The best rooms were all on the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river.

This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, and his name was Baggins. The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him. This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected. He may have lost the neighbours' respect, but he gained—well, you

will see whether he gained anything in the end.

The mother of our particular hobbit—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 (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded Dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants which they can hear a mile off. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it). Now you know enough to go on with. As I was saying, the mother of this hobbit—of Bilbo Baggins, that is—was the famous Belladonna Took, one of the three remarkable daughters of the Old Took,



The Hill: Hobbiton across the Water.

Thereupon the twelve dwarves—not Thorin, he was too important, and stayed talking to Gandalf—jumped to their feet, and made tall piles of all the things. Off they went, not waiting for trays, balancing columns of plates, each with a bottle on the top, with one hand, while the hobbit ran after them almost squeaking with fright: “please be careful!” and “please, don’t trouble! I can manage.” But the dwarves only started to sing:

Chip the glasses and crack the plates!

Blunt the knives and bend the forks!

That’s what Bilbo Baggins hates—

Smash the bottles and burn the corks!

*

Cut the cloth and tread on the fat!

Pour the milk on the pantry floor!

Leave the bones on the bedroom mat!

Splash the wine on every door!

*

Dump the crocks in a boiling bowl;

Pound them up with a thumping pole;

Goblins are upon you! Bolg* of the North is coming, O Dain! whose father you slew in Moria. Behold! the bats are above his army like a sea of locusts. They ride upon wolves and Wargs are in their train!”

Amazement and confusion fell upon them all. Even as Gandalf had been speaking the darkness grew. The dwarves halted and gazed at the sky. The elves cried out with many voices.

“Come!” called Gandalf. “There is yet time for council. Let Dain son of Nain come swiftly to us!”

* * *

So began a battle that none had expected; and it was called the Battle of Five Armies, and it was very terrible. Upon one side were the Goblins and the Wild Wolves, and upon the other were Elves and Men and Dwarves. This is how it fell out. 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

* Son of Azog. See p.47