

THE HOBBIT

CHAPTER ABSTRACTS – CHAPTER 9

- The Wood Elves take the rest of the dwarves prisoner. Bilbo escapes with the help of his ring but follows them into the underground palace of the Elvenking.
- Balin also refuses to tell the Elvenking why they are traveling through Mirkwood; the dwarves are put in prison separately, not knowing that Thorin is also held prisoner there.
- Bilbo remains invisible within the palace, stealing food where he can. However, he finds Thorin and passes news from one prisoner to another, keeping their morale (and resolve to remain silent about their quest) intact.
- Bilbo discovers that the Wood Elves trade with the men of Laketown, transporting goods in barrels along the river, then returning the empty barrels via the same route. He makes a plan of escape.
- When the chief guard and the butler "sample" a new batch of wine that has just arrived and fall into a drunken sleep, Bilbo steals the guard's keys and frees his friends. He explains his plans and packs them into empty barrels ready to be floated back to Laketown.
- Bilbo suddenly realizes the weak point in his plan: he is not inside a barrel. Hastily, he catches hold of a barrel and rides it.
- The barrels float downstream to Laketown. Bilbo, still invisible, rides the barrels with the convoy, dodging the elves and men steering the barrels. He catches a bad cold.
- Here, Thorin and the other dwarves acknowledge that they are dependent on Bilbo for the success of their quest. They have complete confidence that he will be able to get them out of prison.
- Bilbo is not completely happy about being a hero upon whom everyone depends. He still longs to return home.
- The song of the Wood Elves as they send the barrels downstream is significant - the barrels are returning "back to lands you once did know" and carrying dwarves to their long-lost home.

