

Richard Armitage

“I naturally became braver.”

Q: I would never have thought the actor who plays the dwarf Thorin would be this tall. Where did you get the idea to play a dwarf?

A: I could never have imagined that I would play a character who is only 160 cm. Even after shooting started, I didn't unpack my luggage for 3 weeks. I didn't know when I might have to go home. (laughs) Fortunately that didn't happen.

Q: How did you feel on the first day of shooting? Did you feel yourself being immersed in the world of *The Lord of the Rings*?

A: The moment I looked into Gandalf's eyes, I felt a chill run down my spine. I never would have dreamed of meeting Ian McKellen, and yet there I was shooting a film with him!

Q: I heard that the dwarf costume was very heavy. It must have been very difficult to perform action scenes in that heavy costume.

A: When I wore the padding, which made me look short and chunky, and the armor on top of that, it was nearly 30 kilos. It was very difficult when the weather was hot and I was tired. Because I wore an extra 30 kilos my movements looked sluggish, so I had to make my movements even bigger and stronger than usual so they would be visible on screen.

Q: What is most memorable of Thorin's action scenes for you?

A: When we were shooting the scene where Thorin ran into the burning forest in the confrontation with Azog, the Orc chieftain, (played by Manu Bennet), they actually built a fire in the studio. The crew who built the fire were right next to me, waiting for me to finish the scene. When it came time to leap into the fire and shoot the scene, I started worrying about whether they would put the fire out as soon as I was finished. (laughs) But I soon put aside my doubts and bravely leaped into the fire. I will never forget that moment.

Q: Wow, it sounds frightening.

A: Ha ha. When we shot dangerous scenes, the stunt guys would do a practice run first. The fear didn't go away, though, but when I saw how great the scene turned out, I later suggested that we get even bolder. (laughs)

Q: Among the dwarves, Thorin is of a royal lineage in the bloodline of Thrór, the king of Erebor (played by Jeffrey Thomas). How did you want to portray him?

A: I imagined a hero who has the potential to regain the glory of the lost kingdom. I thought he had a fiery character, and he was someone who could overcome everything and grasp victory even though reality looked bleak. Someone who can bring life back to a dying flame.

Q: Indeed. Realistically speaking, it seems unlikely that Thorin and the twelve dwarves would be able to defeat in battle the dragon Smaug, who overthrew the kingdom of Erebor. So where does Thorin find the courage?

A: He feels that he must return to his home of Erebor, but he is also burdened by the fact that this is something he must do at all costs. He would have been lonely as a leader as well. But neither his

grandfather King Thror nor his father Thrain (played by Michael Mizrahi) were able to reclaim the kingdom of Erebor, so Thorin believes that if he fails in this task, then no one will be able to succeed. So I think he uses this burden as fuel, and he pushes himself like one addicted to responsibility.

<right-hand box> Do you know this actor?

Thorin, a handsome figure with good looks that rival even those of Legolas (Orlando Bloom) of *The Lord of the Rings*. Richard Armitage, who plays a dwarf in the film, is actually 188 cm tall. Add to this his baritone voice and sapphire-blue eyes. He is best known for his role in the BBC television series *North & South*. Set in England in the 1850s, it depicts the love of Margaret (Daniela Denby-Ashe), who was born into a well-to-do family, and John (Armitage), a man deeply scarred by poverty. The intensity in Richard's eyes is a highlight of the series.

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Why director Peter Jackson says he cast Richard Armitage

If Bilbo is the film's heart, Thorin is the film's soul. We auditioned a lot of actors to find someone to play the role of Thorin, but Richard Armitage captured an important element of Thorin's character. As a character who leads a group of dwarves on a perilous journey to engage the dragon Smaug in a decisive battle, Thorin needs to possess both courage and dignity. Richard Armitage knows how to express these characteristics through stillness and silence. Even when he is on screen with other characters, that stillness captures the audience's attention.