

The Hunting of the Snark

By

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Lewis Carroll

An Agony In Eight Fits

(An Easter Greeting to Every Child who loves Alice)

Inscribed to a dear Child: in memory of golden summer hours and
whispers of a summer sea.

Girt with a boyish garb for boyish task, Eager she wields her spade: yet
loves as well Rest on a friendly knee, intent to ask The tale he loves to
tell.

Rude spirits of the seething outer strife, Unmeet to read her pure and
simple spright, Deem, if you list, such hours a waste of life, Empty of
all delight!

Chat on, sweet Maid, and rescue from annoy Hearts that by wiser talk
are unbeguiled. Ah, happy he who owns that tenderest joy, The heart-
love of a child!

Away, fond thoughts, and vex my soul no more! Work claims my wakeful
nights, my busy days-- Albeit bright memories of that sunlit shore Yet
haunt my dreaming gaze!

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FIT THE FIRST- THE LANDING.

“Just the place for a Snark!” the Bellman cried, As he landed his crew
with care; Supporting each man on the top of the tide By a finger
entwined in his hair.

“Just the place for a Snark! I have said it twice: That alone should
encourage the crew. Just the place for a Snark! I have said it thrice:
What I tell you three times is true.”

The crew was complete: it included a Boots-- A maker of Bonnets and
Hoods-- A Barrister, brought to arrange their disputes-- And a Broker,
to value their goods.

A Billiard-marker, whose skill was immense, Might perhaps have won
more than his share-- But a Banker, engaged at enormous expense, Had
the whole of their cash in his care.

There was also a Beaver, that paced on the deck, Or would sit making
lace in the bow: And had often (the Bellman said) saved them from wreck,
Though none of the sailors knew how.

There was one who was famed for the number of things He forgot when
he entered the ship: His umbrella, his watch, all his jewels and rings,
And the clothes he had bought for the trip.

He had forty-two boxes, all carefully packed, With his name painted
clearly on each: But, since he omitted to mention the fact, They were all
left behind on the beach.

The loss of his clothes hardly mattered, because He had seven coats on
when he came, With three pair of boots--but the worst of it was, He had
wholly forgotten his name.

He would answer to “Hi!” or to any loud cry, Such as “Fryme!” or
“Fritter my wig!” To “What-you-may-call-um!” or “What-was-his-name!”
But especially “Thing-um-a-jig!”

While, for those who preferred a more forcible word, He had different

names from these: His intimate friends called him "Candle-ends," And his enemies "Toasted-cheese."

"His form is ungainly--his intellect small--" (So the Bellman would often remark) "But his courage is perfect! And that, after all, Is the thing that one needs with a Snark."

He would joke with hyænas, returning their stare With an impudent wag of the head: And he once went a walk, paw-in-paw, with a bear, "Just to keep up its spirits," he said.

He came as a Baker: but owned, when too late-- And it drove the poor Bellman half-mad-- He could only bake Bridecake--for which, I may state, No materials were to be had.

The last of the crew needs especial remark, Though he looked an incredible dunce: He had just one idea--but, that one being "Snark," The good Bellman engaged him at once.

He came as a Butcher: but gravely declared, When the ship had been sailing a week, He could only kill Beavers. The Bellman looked scared, And was almost too frightened to speak:

But at length he explained, in a tremulous tone, There was only one Beaver on board; And that was a tame one he had of his own, Whose death would be deeply deplored.

The Beaver, who happened to hear the remark, Protested, with tears in its eyes, That not even the rapture of hunting the Snark Could atone for that dismal surprise!

It strongly advised that the Butcher should be Conveyed in a separate ship: But the Bellman declared that would never agree With the plans he had made for the trip:

Navigation was always a difficult art, Though with only one ship and one bell: And he feared he must really decline, for his part, Undertaking another as well.

The Beaver's best course was, no doubt, to procure A second-hand dagger-proof coat-- So the Baker advised it--and next, to insure Its life in some Office of note:

This the Banker suggested, and offered for hire (On moderate terms), or for sale, Two excellent Policies, one Against Fire, And one Against Damage From Hail.

Yet still, ever after that sorrowful day, Whenever the Butcher was by, The Beaver kept looking the opposite way, And appeared unaccountably shy.