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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Hunting of the Snark: The Baker's Tale (3/8)

They roused him with muffins—they roused him with ice

—

They roused him with mustard and cress—

They roused him with jam and judicious advice—

They set him conundrums to guess.

When at length he sat up and was able to speak,

His sad story he offered to tell;

And the Bellman cried "Silence! Not even a shriek!"

And excitedly tingled his bell.

There was silence supreme! Not a shriek, not a scream,

Scarcely even a howl or a groan,

As the man they called "Ho!" told his story of woe

In an antediluvian tone.

"My father and mother were honest, though poor—"

"Skip all that!" cried the Bellman in haste.

"If it once becomes dark, there's no chance of a Snark—

We have hardly a minute to waste!"

"I skip forty years," said the Baker, in tears,

"And proceed without further remark

To the day when you took me aboard of your ship

To help you in hunting the Snark.

"A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was named)

Remarked, when I bade him farewell—"

“Oh, skip your dear uncle!” the Bellman exclaimed,
As he angrily tingled his bell.

“He remarked to me then,” said that mildest of men,
“If your Snark be a Snark, that is right:
Fetch it home by all means—you may serve it with
greens,

And it’s handy for striking a light.

“You may seek it with thimbles—and seek it with care;
You may hunt it with forks and hope;
You may threaten its life with a railway-share;
You may charm it with smiles and soap—”

(“That’s exactly the method,” the Bellman bold
In a hasty parenthesis cried,

“That’s exactly the way I have always been told
That the capture of Snarks should be tried!”)

“But oh, beamish nephew, beware
of the day,

If your Snark be a Boojum! For
then

You will softly and suddenly vanish
away,

And never be met with again!’

“It is this, it is this that oppresses
my soul,

When I think of my uncle’s last
words:

And my heart is like nothing so much as a bowl
Brimming over with quivering curds!

“It is this, it is this—” “We have had that before!”
The Bellman indignantly said.



And the Baker replied "Let me say it once more.
It is this, it is this that I dread!
"I engage with the Snark—every night after dark—
In a dreamy delirious fight:
I serve it with greens in those shadowy scenes,
And I use it for striking a light:
"But if ever I meet with a Boojum, that day,
In a moment (of this I am sure),
I shall softly and suddenly vanish away—
And the notion I cannot endure!"