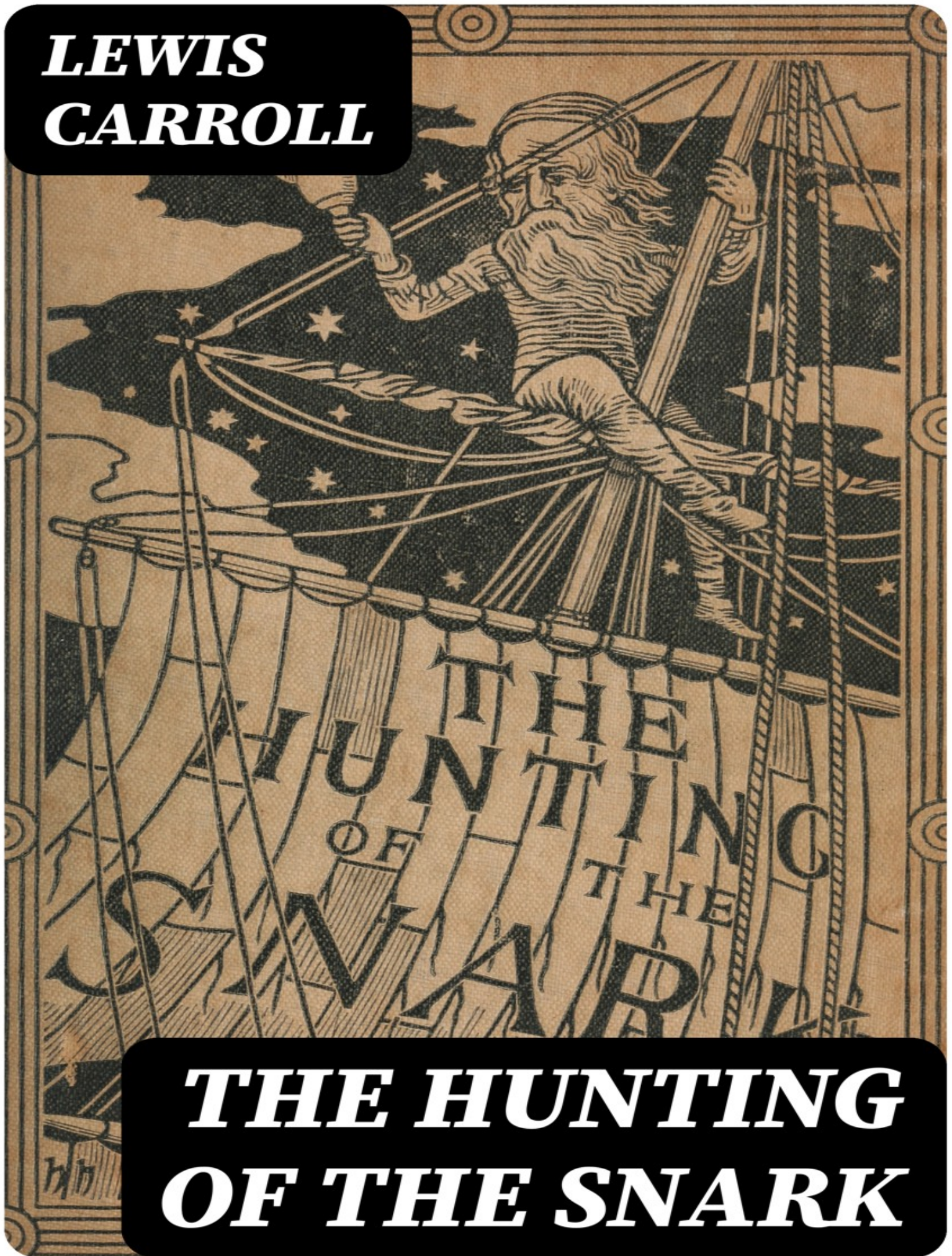


**LEWIS
CARROLL**



**THE HUNTING
OF THE SNARK**

Lewis Carroll

The Hunting of the Snark

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Table of Contents

[Preface](#)

[Fit the First: The Landing](#)

[Fit the Second: The Bellman's Speech](#)

[Fit the Third: The Baker's Tale](#)

[Fit the fourth: The Hunting](#)

[Fit the Fifth: The Beaver's Lesson](#)

[Fit the Sixth: The Barrister's Dream](#)

[Fit the Seventh: The Banker's Fate](#)

[Fit the Eighth: The Vanishing](#)

Preface

[Table of Contents](#)

If — and the thing is wildly possible — the charge of writing nonsense were ever brought against the author of this brief but instructive poem, it would be based, I feel convinced, on the line (in p.4)

“Then the bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometimes.”

In view of this painful possibility, I will not (as I might) appeal indignantly to my other writings as a proof that I am incapable of such a deed: I will not (as I might) point to the strong moral purpose of this poem itself, to the arithmetical principles so cautiously inculcated in it, or to its noble teachings in Natural History — I will take the more prosaic course of simply explaining how it happened.

The Bellman, who was almost morbidly sensitive about appearances, used to have the bowsprit unshipped once or twice a week to be revarnished, and it more than once happened, when the time came for replacing it, that no one on board could remember which end of the ship it belonged to. They knew it was not of the slightest use to appeal to the Bellman about it — he would only refer to his Naval Code, and read out in pathetic tones Admiralty Instructions which none of them had ever been able to understand — so it generally ended in its being fastened on, anyhow, across the rudder. The helmsman¹ used to stand by with tears in his eyes; he knew it was all wrong, but alas! Rule 42 of the Code, “*No one shall speak to the Man at the Helm,*” had been completed by the Bellman himself with the words “*and the Man at the Helm shall speak to no one.*” So remonstrance was impossible, and no steering could be