

The Lorax

At the far end of town where the Grickle-grass grows and the wind smells slow-and-sour when it blows and no birds ever sing excepting old crows... is the Street of the Lifted Lorax.

And deep in the Grickle-grass, some people say, if you look deep enough you can still see, today, where the Lorax once stood just as long as it could before somebody lifted the Lorax away.

What was the Lorax? Any why was it there? And why was it lifted and taken somewhere from the far end of town where the Grickle-grass grows? The old Once-ler still lives here.

Ask him, he knows.

You won't see the Once-ler. Don't knock at his door. He stays in his Lerkim on top of his store. He stays in his Lerkim, cold under the floor, where he makes his own clothes out of miff-muffered moof. And on special dank midnights in August, he peeks out of the shutters and sometimes he speaks and tells how the Lorax was lifted away. He'll tell you, perhaps... if you're willing to pay.

On the end of a rope he lets down a tin pail and you have to toss in fifteen cents and a nail and the shell of a great-great-great- grandfather snail.

Then he pulls up the pail, makes a most careful count to see if you've paid him the proper amount. Then he hides what you paid him away in his Snuvv, his secret strange hole in his gruvvulous glove. Then he grunts. I will call you by Whisper-ma-Phone, for the secrets I tell you are for your ears alone.

SLUPP Down slupps the Whisper-ma-Phone to your ear and the old Once-ler's whispers are not very clear, since they have to come down through a snergelly hose, and he sounds as if he had smallish bees up his nose. Now I'll tell you, he says, with his teeth sounding gray, how the Lorax got lifted and taken away... It all started way back... such a long, long time back...

Way back in the days when the grass was still green and the pond was still wet and the clouds were still clean, and the song of the Swomee-Swans rang out in space... one morning, I came to this glorious place. And I first saw the trees! The Truffula Trees! The bright-colored tufts of the Truffula Trees! Mile after mile in the fresh morning breeze.

And under the trees, I saw Brown Bar-ba-loots frisking about in their Bar-ba-loot suits as they played in the shade and ate Truffula Fruits. From the rippulous pond came the comfortable sound of the Humming-Fish humming while splashing around.

But those trees! Those trees! Those Truffula Trees! All my life I'd been searching for trees such as these. The touch of their tufts was much softer than silk. And they had the sweet smell of fresh butterfly milk.

I felt a great leaping of joy in my heart. I knew just what I'd do! I unloaded my cart. In no time at all, I had built a small shop. Then I chopped down a Truffula Tree with one chop. And with great skillful skill and with great speedy speed, I took the soft tuft. And I knitted a Thneed!

The instant I'd finished I heard a ga-Zump! I looked. I saw something pop out of the stump of the tree I'd chopped down. It was sort of a man. Describe him... That's hard. I don't know if I can. He was shortish, and oldish, and brownish and mossy. And he spoke with a voice that was sharpish and bossy.

Mister! He said with a sawdusty sneeze, I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. And I'm asking you, sir, at the top of my lungs-- he was very upset as he shouted and puffed-- What's that THING you've made out of my Truffula tuft?

Look, Lorax, I said. There's no cause for alarm. I chopped just one tree. I am doing no harm. I'm being quite useful. This thing is a Thneed. A Thneed's a Fine-Something-That-All-People-Need! It's a shirt. It's a sock. It's a glove. It's a hat. But it has other uses. Yes, far beyond that. You can use it for carpets. For pillows! For sheets! Or curtains! Or covers for bicycle seats! The Lorax said, Sir! You are crazy with greed. There is no one on earth who would buy that fool Thneed!

But the very next minute I proved he was wrong. For, just at that minute, a chap came along, and he thought that the Thneed I had knitted was great. He happily bought it for three ninety-eight. I laughed at the Lorax, You poor stupid guy! You never can tell what some people will buy.

I repeat, cried the Lorax, I speak for the trees!

I'm busy, I told him. Shut up, if you please. I rushed 'cross the room, and in no time at all, built a radiophone. I put in a quick call. I called all my brothers and uncles and aunts and I said, listen here! Here's a wonderful chance for the whole Once-ler Family to get mighty rich! Get over here fast! Take the road to North Nitch. Turn left at Weehawken. Sharp right at South Stitch.

And, in no time at all, in the factory I built, the whole Once-ler Family was working full tilt. We were all knitting Thneed's just as busy as bees, to the sound of the chopping of Truffula Trees.

Then... Oh! Baby! Oh! How my business did grow! Now, chopping one tree at a time was too slow. So I quickly invented my Super-Axe-Hacker, which whacked off four Truffula Trees at one smacker. We were making Thneed's four times as fast as before! And that Lorax?... He didn't show up any more.

But the next week he knocked on my new office door. He snapped! I'm the Lorax who speaks for the trees, which you seem to be chopping as fast as you please. But I'm also in charge of the Brown Bar-ba-loots, who played in the shade in their Bar-ba-loot suits and happily lived, eating Truffula Fruits. NOW...thanks to your hacking my trees to the ground, there's not enough Truffula Fruit to go 'round.

And my poor Bar-ba-loots are all getting the crummies because they have gas, and no food, in their tummies! They loved living here. But I can't let them stay. They'll have to find food. And I hope that they may. Good luck, boys, he cried. And he sent them away.

I, the Once-ler, felt sad as I watched them all go. BUT... business is business! And business must grow regardless of crummies in tummies, you know.

I meant no harm. I most truly did not. But I had to grow bigger. So bigger I got. I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads. I biggered my wagons. I biggered the loads of the Thneed's I shipped out. I was shipping them forth to the South! To the East! To the West! To the North! I went right on biggering...selling more Thneed's. And I biggered my money, which everyone needs.