

The Lorax - By Dr. Seuss

Reader's Theater

Narrator 1 - 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.

Narrator 2 - 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.

Narrator 3 What was the Lorax? And 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.

Narrator 4 You won't see the Once-ler. Don't knock at his door. He stays in his Lerkim on top of his store. He lurks in his Lerkim, cold under the roof, where he makes his own clothes out of miff-muffled moof.

Narrator 5 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.

Narrator 6 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.

Narrator 7 Then he pulls up the pail, makes a most careful count to see if you've paid him the proper amount.

Narrator 8 Then he hides what you paid him away in his Snuvv, his secret strange hole in his gruvvulous glove. Then he grunts,

Once-ler I will call you by Whisper-ma-Phone, for the secrets I tell are for your ears alone.

Narrator 9 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.

Once-ler Now I'll tell you,

Narrator 10 he says with his teeth sounding gray,

Once-ler 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... And I first saw the Trees! The bright-colored tufts of the Truffula Trees! Mile after mile in the fresh morning breeze.

Narrator 1 And, under the trees, there were Brown Bar-ba-loots, frisking about in their Bar-ba-loot suits as they played in the shade and ate Truffula Fruits.

Narrator 2 From the rippulous pond came the comfortable sound of the Humming-Fish humming while splashing around.

Once-ler But 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.

Narrator 3 And with great skillful skill and with great speedy speed, he took the soft tuft. And he knitted a Thneed! The instant he'd finished, he heard

Lorax *ga-Zump!*

Once-ler 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.

Lorax Mister! 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 –

Once-ler He was very upset as he shouted and puffed –

Lorax *What's that THING you've made out of my Truffula tuft?*

Once-ler Look, Lorax! 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!

Lorax Sir! You are crazy with greed. There is no one on earth who would buy that fool Thneed!

Narrator 4 But the very next minute the Lorax was proved wrong. For, just at that minute, a chap came along, and he thought that the Thneed was really just great. He happily bought it for three ninety-eight.

Once-ler I laughed at the Lorax, "You poor stupid guy! You never can tell what some people will buy!"

Lorax I repeat! I speak for the trees!

Narrator 5 He rushed 'cross the room, and in no time at all, built a radio-phone and he put in a call. He called all his brothers and uncles and aunts and said,

Once-ler 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!

Narrator 6 And, in no time at all, in the factory he built, the whole Once-ler Family was working full tilt. They were all knitting Thneeds just as busy as bees, to the sound of the chopping of Truffula Trees.

Once-ler 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.

Narrator 7 They were making Thneeds four times as fast as before! And that Lorax?... *He* didn't show up any more.

Once-ler But the next week he knocked on my new office door. He snapped,

Lorax I'm the Lorax who speaks for the trees which you seem to be chopping as fast as you please. But I'm *a/so* 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 have to find food. And I hope that they may. Good luck, boys,

Once-ler 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.

Narrator 8 He meant no harm. He most truly did not. But he had to grow bigger. So bigger he got. He biggered his factory. He biggered his roads. He biggered his wagons. He biggered the loads of Thneeds he shipped out.

Narrator 9 He was shipping them forth to the South! To the East! To the West! To the North! He went right on biggering... selling more Thneeds. And he biggered his money, which everyone needs.

Once-ler Then *again* he came back! I was fixing some pipes when that old-nuisance Lorax came back with *more* gripes.

Lorax I'm the Lorax,

Narrator 10 he coughed and he whiffed. He sneezed and he snuffled. He snarggled. He sniffed.

Lorax Once-ler!

Narrator 10 He cried with a cruftulous croak.

Lorax Once-ler! You're making such smogulous smoke! My poor Swomee-Swans... why, they can't sing a note! No one can sing who has smog in his throat. And so – please pardon my cough – they cannot live here. So I'm sending them off. Where will they go?... I don't hopefully know. They may have to fly for a month... or a year... to escape from the smog you've smogged-up around here.

What's *more*, Let me say a few words about Gluppity-Glupp. Your machinery chugs on, day and night without stop making Gluppity-Glupp. Also Schloppity-Schlopp. And what do you do with this leftover goo?... I'll show you. You dirty old Once-ler man, you! You're glumping the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed!

Narrator 11 No more can they hum, for their gills are all gummed. So he sent them all off. Oh, their future is dreary. They'll walk on their fins and get woefully weary in search of some water that isn't so smeary.

Once-ler And then I got mad. I got terribly mad. I yelled at the Lorax, "Now listen here, Dad! All you do is yap-yap and say, "Bad! Bad! Bad! Bad!" Well, I have my rights, sire, and I'm telling *you* I intend to go on doing just what I do! And, for your information, you Lorax, I'm figgering on biggering and BIGGERING and BIGGERING and BIGGERING, turning MORE Truffula Trees into Thneeds which everyone, EVERYONE, *EVERYONE* needs!

Narrator 12 And at that very moment, we heard a loud whack! From outside in the fields came a sickening smack of an axe on a tree. Then we heard the tree fall. *The very last Truffula Tree of them all!*

No more trees. No more Thneeds. No more work to be done. So, in no time, the uncles and aunts, every one, all waved good-bye. They jumped into the cars and drove away under the smoke-smuggered stars.

Once-ler Now all that was left 'neath the bad-smelling sky was my big empty factory... the Lorax... and I.

Narrator 13 The Lorax said nothing. Just gave him a glance... just gave him a very sad, sad backward glance... as he lifted himself by the seat of his pants. And he'll never forget the grim look on his face when he heisted himself and took leave of this place, through a hole in the smog, without leaving a trace.

Narrator 12 And all that the Lorax left here in this mess was a small pile of rocks, with the one word... "UNLESS."

Once-ler Whatever *that* meant, well, I just couldn't guess. That was long, long ago. But each day since that day I've sat here and worried and worried away. Through the years, while my buildings have fallen apart, I've worried about it with all of my heart. But now

Narrator 13 Says the Once-ler

Once-ler Now that *you're* here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not. SO... Catch!

Narrator 12 Calls the Once-ler. He lets something fall.

Once-ler It's a Truffula Seed. It's the last one of all! You're in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds. And Truffula Trees are what everyone needs. Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care. Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air. Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack. Then the Lorax and all of his friends may come back.

All - Remember you can make a difference!