

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

All the King's horses and all the King's men

Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty in his place again.

'That last line is much too long for the poetry,' she added, almost out loud, forgetting that Humpty Dumpty would hear her.

'Don't stand there chattering to yourself like that,' Humpty Dumpty said, looking at her for the first time, 'but tell me your name and your business.'

'My *name* is Alice, but—'

'It's a stupid enough name!' Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently.

'What does it mean?'

'*Must* a name mean something?' Alice asked doubtfully.

'Of course it must,' Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: '*my* name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.'

'Why do you sit out here all alone?' said Alice, not wishing to begin an argument.

'Why, because there's nobody with me!' cried Humpty Dumpty. 'Did you think I didn't know the answer to *that*? Ask another.'

'Don't you think you'd be safer down on the ground?' Alice went on, not with any idea of making another riddle, but simply in her good-natured anxiety for the queer creature. 'That wall is so *very* narrow!'

'What tremendously easy riddles you ask!' Humpty Dumpty growled out.

'Of course I don't think so! Why, if ever I *did* fall off—which there's no chance of—but *if* I did—' Here he pursed his lips and looked so solemn and grand that Alice could hardly help laughing. '*If* I did fall,' he went on, '*The King has promised me—with his very own mouth—to—to—*'

'To send all his horses and all his men,' Alice interrupted, rather unwisely.

'Now I declare that's too bad!' Humpty Dumpty cried, breaking into a sudden passion. 'You've been listening at doors—and behind trees—and down chimneys—or you couldn't have known it!'

'I haven't, indeed!' Alice said very gently. 'It's in a book.'

'Ah, well! They may write such things in a *book*,' Humpty Dumpty said in a calmer tone. 'That's what you call a History of England, that is. Now, take a good look at me! I'm one that has spoken to a King, *I* am: maybe you'll

never see such another: and to show you I'm not proud, you may shake hands with me! And he grinned almost from ear to ear, as he leant forwards (and as nearly as possible fell off the wall in doing so) and offered Alice his hand. She watched him a little anxiously as she took it. 'If he smiled much more, the ends of his mouth might meet behind,' she thought: 'and then I don't know what would happen to his head! I'm afraid it would come off!'

'Yes, all his horses and all his men,' Humpty Dumpty went on. 'They'd pick me up again in a minute, *they* would! However, this conversation is going on a little too fast: let's go back to the last remark but one.'

'I'm afraid I can't quite remember it,' Alice said very politely.

'In that case we start fresh,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'and it's my turn to choose a subject—' ('He talks about it just as if it was a game!' thought Alice.) 'So here's a question for you. How old did you say you were?'

Alice made a short calculation, and said 'Seven years and six months.'

'Wrong!' Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. 'You never said a word like it!'

'I thought you meant "How old *are* you?"' Alice explained.

'If I'd meant that, I'd have said it,' said Humpty Dumpty.

Alice didn't want to begin another argument, so she said nothing.

'Seven years and six months!' Humpty Dumpty repeated thoughtfully. 'An uncomfortable sort of age. Now if you'd asked *my* advice, I'd have said "Leave off at seven"—but it's too late now.'

'I never ask advice about growing,' Alice said indignantly.

'Too proud?' the other inquired.

Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. 'I mean,' she said, 'that one can't help growing older.'

'*One* can't, perhaps,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'but *two* can. With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven.'

'What a beautiful belt you've got on!' Alice suddenly remarked.

('They had had quite enough of the subject of age, she thought: and if they really were to take turns in choosing subjects, it was her turn now.') 'At least,' she corrected herself on second thoughts, 'a beautiful cravat. I should have said—no, a belt, I mean—I beg your pardon!' she added in dismay, for Humpty Dumpty looked thoroughly offended, and she began to wish she

hadn't chosen that subject. 'If I only knew,' she thought to herself, 'which was neck and which was waist!'

Evidently Humpty Dumpty was very angry, though he said nothing for a minute or two. When he *did* speak again, it was in a deep growl.

'It is a—*most*—*provoking*—thing,' he said at last, 'when a person doesn't know a cravat from a belt!'

'I know it's very ignorant of me,' Alice said, in so humble a tone that Humpty Dumpty relented.

'It's a cravat, child, and a beautiful one, as you say. It's a present from the White King and Queen. There now!'

'Is it really?' said Alice, quite pleased to find that she *had* chosen a good subject, after all.

'They gave it me,' Humpty Dumpty continued thoughtfully, as he crossed one knee over the other and clasped his hands round it, 'they gave it me—for an un-birthday present.'

'I beg your pardon?' Alice said with a puzzled air.

'I'm not offended,' said Humpty Dumpty.

'I mean, what *is* an un-birthday present?'

'A present given when it isn't your birthday, of course.'

Alice considered a little. 'I like birthday presents best,' she said at last.

'You don't know what you're talking about!' cried Humpty Dumpty. 'How many days are there in a year?'

'Three hundred and sixty-five,' said Alice.

'And how many birthdays have you?'

'One.'

'And if you take one from three hundred and sixty-five, what remains?'

'Three hundred and sixty-four, of course.'

Humpty Dumpty looked doubtful. 'I'd rather see that done on paper,' he said.

Alice couldn't help smiling as she took out her memorandum-book, and worked the sum for him:


$365 - 1 = 364$

Humpty Dumpty took the book, and looked at it carefully. 'That seems to be done right—' he began.

'You're holding it upside down!' Alice interrupted.

Chapter 6

Humpty Dumpty

OWEVER, the egg only got larger and larger, and more and more human: when she had come within a few yards of it, she saw that it had eyes and a nose and mouth; and when she had come close to it, she saw clearly that it was HUMPTY DUMPTY himself. 'It can't be anybody else!' she said to herself. 'I'm as certain of it, as if his name were written all over his face.'

It might have been written a hundred times, easily, on that enormous face. Humpty Dumpty was sitting with his legs crossed, like a Turk, on the top of a high wall—such a narrow one that Alice quite wondered how he could keep his balance—and, as his eyes were steadily fixed in the opposite direction, and he didn't take the least notice of her, she thought he must be a stuffed figure after all.

'And how exactly like an egg he is!' she said aloud, standing with her hands ready to catch him, for she was every moment expecting him to fall.

'It's *very* provoking,' Humpty Dumpty said after a long silence, looking away from Alice as he spoke, 'to be called an egg—*Very!*'

'I said you *looked* like an egg, Sir,' Alice gently explained. 'And some eggs are very pretty, you know' she added, hoping to turn her remark into a sort of a compliment.

'Some people,' said Humpty Dumpty, looking away from her as usual, 'have no more sense than a baby!'

Alice didn't know what to say to this: it wasn't at all like conversation, she thought, as he never said anything to *her*; in fact, his last remark was evidently addressed to a tree—so she stood and softly repeated to herself—

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall:

‘To be sure I was!’ Humpty Dumpty said gaily, as she turned it round for him. ‘I thought it looked a little queer. As I was saying, that *seems* to be done right—though I haven’t time to look it over thoroughly just now—and that shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents—’

‘Certainly,’ said Alice.

‘And only *one* for birthday presents, you know. There’s glory for you!’

‘I don’t know what you mean by “glory,”’ Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. ‘Of course you don’t—till I tell you. I meant “there’s a nice knock-down argument for you!”’

‘But “glory” doesn’t mean “a nice knock-down argument,”’ Alice objected.

‘When *I* use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’

‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.’

‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master—that’s all.’

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. ‘They’ve a temper, some of them—particularly verbs, they’re the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, *I* can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That’s what *I* say!’

‘Would you tell me, please,’ said Alice ‘what that means?’

‘Now you talk like a reasonable child,’ said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. ‘I meant by “impenetrability” that we’ve had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you’d mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don’t mean to stop here all the rest of your life.’

‘That’s a great deal to make one word mean,’ Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

‘When I make a word do a lot of work like that,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘I always pay it extra.’

‘Oh!’ said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

‘Ah, you should see ’em come round me of a Saturday night,’ Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side: ‘for to get their wages, you know.’

(Alice didn't venture to ask what he paid them with; and so you see I can't tell *you*.)

'You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir,' said Alice. 'Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called "Jabberwocky"?'

'Let's hear it,' said Humpty Dumpty. 'I can explain all the poems that were ever invented—and a good many that haven't been invented just yet.'

This sounded very hopeful, so Alice repeated the first verse:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.

'That's enough to begin with,' Humpty Dumpty interrupted: 'there are plenty of hard words there. "*Brillig*" means four o'clock in the afternoon—the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner.'

'That'll do very well,' said Alice: 'and "*slithy*"?'

'Well, "*slithy*" means "lithe and slimy." "*Lithe*" is the same as "active." You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.'

'I see it now,' Alice remarked thoughtfully: 'and what are "*roves*"?'

'Well, "*roves*" are something like badgers—they're something like lizards—and they're something like corkscrews.'

'They must be very curious looking creatures.'

'They are that,' said Humpty Dumpty: 'also they make their nests under sun-dials—also they live on cheese.'

'And what's the "*gyre*" and to "*gimble*"?'

'To "*gyre*" is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To "*gimble*" is to make holes like a gimlet.'

'And "*the wabe*" is the grass-plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?' said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

'Of course it is. It's called "*wabe*," you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it—'

'And a long way beyond it on each side,' Alice added.

'Exactly so. Well, then, "*mimsy*" is "flimsy and miserable" (there's another portmanteau for you). And a "*borogove*" is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round—something like a live mop.'

So she went on, wondering more and more at every step, as everything turned into a tree the moment she came up to it, and she quite expected the egg to do the same.

in spite of a series of little shrieks of ‘Oh, oh, oh!’ from poor Alice, it swept her straight off the seat, and down among the heap of rushes.

However, she wasn’t hurt, and was soon up again: the Sheep went on with her knitting all the while, just as if nothing had happened. ‘That was a nice crab you caught!’ she remarked, as Alice got back into her place, very much relieved to find herself still in the boat.

‘Was it? I didn’t see it,’ said Alice, peeping cautiously over the side of the boat into the dark water. ‘I wish it hadn’t let go—I should so like to see a little crab to take home with me!’ But the Sheep only laughed scornfully, and went on with her knitting.

‘Are there many crabs here?’ said Alice.

‘Crabs, and all sorts of things,’ said the Sheep: ‘plenty of choice, only make up your mind. Now, what *do* you want to buy?’

‘To buy!’ Alice echoed in a tone that was half astonished and half frightened—for the oars, and the boat, and the river, had vanished all in a moment, and she was back again in the little dark shop.

‘I should like to buy an egg, please,’ she said timidly. ‘How do you sell them?’

‘Fivepence farthing for one—Twopence for two,’ the Sheep replied.

‘Then two are cheaper than one?’ Alice said in a surprised tone, taking out her purse.

‘Only you *must* eat them both, if you buy two,’ said the Sheep.

‘Then I’ll have *one*, please,’ said Alice, as she put the money down on the counter. For she thought to herself, ‘They mightn’t be at all nice, you know.’

The Sheep took the money, and put it away in a box: then she said ‘I never put things into people’s hands—that would never do—you must get it for yourself.’ And so saying, she went off to the other end of the shop, and set the egg upright on a shelf.

‘I wonder *why* it wouldn’t do?’ thought Alice, as she groped her way among the tables and chairs, for the shop was very dark towards the end. ‘The egg seems to get further away the more I walk towards it. Let me see, is this a chair? Why, it’s got branches, I declare! How very odd to find trees growing here! And actually here’s a little brook! Well, this is the very queerest shop I ever saw!’

‘And then “*mome raths*”?’ said Alice. ‘I’m afraid I’m giving you a great deal of trouble.’

‘Well, a “*rath*” is a sort of green pig: but “*mome*” I’m not certain about. I think it’s short for “from home”—meaning that they’d lost their way, you know.’

‘And what does “*outgrabe*” mean?’

‘Well, “*outgrabe*” is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle: however, you’ll hear it done, maybe—down in the wood yonder—and when you’ve once heard it you’ll be *quite* content. Who’s been repeating all that hard stuff to you?’

‘I read it in a book,’ said Alice. ‘But I had some poetry repeated to me, much easier than that, by—Tweedledee, I think it was.’

‘As to poetry, you know,’ said Humpty Dumpty, stretching out one of his great hands, ‘*I* can repeat poetry as well as other folk, if it comes to that—’

‘Oh, it needn’t come to that!’ Alice hastily said, hoping to keep him from beginning.

‘The piece I’m going to repeat,’ he went on without noticing her remark, ‘was written entirely for your amusement.’

Alice felt that in that case she really *ought* to listen to it, so she sat down, and said ‘Thank you’ rather sadly.

‘In winter, when the fields are white,

I sing this song for your delight—

only I don’t sing it,’ he added, as an explanation.

‘I see you don’t,’ said Alice.

‘If you can *see* whether I’m singing or not, you’ve sharper eyes than most,’ Humpty Dumpty remarked severely. Alice was silent.

‘In spring, when woods are getting green,

I’ll try and tell you what I mean.’

‘Thank you very much,’ said Alice.

‘In summer, when the days are long,

Perhaps you’ll understand the song:

In autumn, when the leaves are brown,
Take pen and ink, and write it down.'

'I will, if I can remember it so long,' said Alice.
'You needn't go on making remarks like that,' Humpty Dumpty said:
'they're not sensible, and they put me out.'

'I sent a message to the fish:
I told them "This is what I wish."

The little fishes of the sea,
They sent an answer back to me.

The little fishes' answer was
"We cannot do it, Sir, because—"

'I'm afraid I don't quite understand,' said Alice.
'It gets easier further on,' Humpty Dumpty replied.

'I sent to them again to say
"It will be better to obey."

The fishes answered with a grin,
"Why, what a temper you are in!"

I told them once, I told them twice:
They would not listen to advice.

I took a kettle large and new,
Fit for the deed I had to do.

My heart went hop, my heart went thump;
I filled the kettle at the pump.

Then some one came to me and said,
"The little fishes are in bed."

I said to him, I said it plain,

'Oh, please! There are some scented rushes!' Alice cried in a sudden transport of delight. 'There really are—and *such* beauties!'

'You needn't say "please" to *me* about 'em,' the Sheep said, without looking up from her knitting: 'I didn't put 'em there, and I'm not going to take 'em away.'

'No, but I meant—please, may we wait and pick some?' Alice pleaded. 'If you don't mind stopping the boat for a minute.'

'How am *I* to stop it?' said the Sheep. 'If you leave off rowing, it'll stop of itself.'

So the boat was left to drift down the stream as it would, till it glided gently in among the waving rushes. And then the little sleeves were carefully rolled up, and the little arms were plunged in elbow-deep to get the rushes a good long way down before breaking them off—and for a while Alice forgot all about the Sheep and the knitting, as she bent over the side of the boat, with just the ends of her tangled hair dipping into the water—while with bright eager eyes she caught at one bunch after another of the darling scented rushes.

'I only hope the boat won't tipple over!' she said to herself. 'Oh, *what* a lovely one! Only I couldn't quite reach it.' And it certainly *did* seem a little provoking ('almost as if it happened on purpose,' she thought) that, though she managed to pick plenty of beautiful rushes as the boat glided by, there was always a more lovely one that she couldn't reach.

'The prettiest are always further!' she said at last, with a sigh at the obstinacy of the rushes in growing so far off, as, with flushed cheeks and dripping hair and hands, she scrambled back into her place, and began to arrange her new-found treasures.

What mattered it to her just then that the rushes had begun to fade, and to lose all their scent and beauty, from the very moment that she picked them? Even real scented rushes, you know, last only a very little while—and these, being dream-rushes, melted away almost like snow, as they lay in heaps at her feet—but Alice hardly noticed this, there were so many other curious things to think about.

They hadn't gone much farther before the blade of one of the oars got fast in the water and *wouldn't* come out again (so Alice explained it afterwards), and the consequence was that the handle of it caught her under the chin, and,

‘Are you a child or a teetotum?’ the Sheep said, as she took up another pair of needles. ‘You’ll make me giddy soon, if you go on turning round like that.’ She was now working with fourteen pairs at once, and Alice couldn’t help looking at her in great astonishment.

‘How *can* she knit with so many?’ the puzzled child thought to herself. ‘She gets more and more like a porcupine every minute!’

‘Can you row?’ the Sheep asked, handing her a pair of knitting-needles as she spoke.

‘Yes, a little—but not on land—and not with needles—’ Alice was beginning to say, when suddenly the needles turned into oars in her hands, and she found they were in a little boat, gliding along between banks: so there was nothing for it but to do her best.

‘Feather!’ cried the Sheep, as she took up another pair of needles.

This didn’t sound like a remark that needed any answer, so Alice said nothing, but pulled away. There was something very queer about the water, she thought, as every now and then the oars got fast in it, and would hardly come out again.

‘Feather! Feather!’ the Sheep cried again, taking more needles. ‘You’ll be catching a crab directly.’

‘A dear little crab!’ thought Alice. ‘I should like that.’

‘Didn’t you hear me say “Feather”?’ the Sheep cried angrily, taking up quite a bunch of needles.

‘Indeed I did,’ said Alice: ‘you’ve said it very often—and very loud. Please, where *are* the crabs?’

‘In the water, of course!’ said the Sheep, sticking some of the needles into her hair, as her hands were full. ‘Feather, I say!’

‘*Why* do you say “feather” so often?’ Alice asked at last, rather vexed. ‘I’m not a bird!’

‘You are,’ said the Sheep: ‘you’re a little goose.’

This offended Alice a little, so there was no more conversation for a minute or two, while the boat glided gently on, sometimes among beds of weeds (which made the oars stick fast in the water, worse then ever), and sometimes under trees, but always with the same tall river-banks frowning over their heads.

“Then you must wake them up again.”

I said it very loud and clear;

I went and shouted in his ear.’

Humpty Dumpty raised his voice almost to a scream as he repeated this verse, and Alice thought with a shudder, ‘I wouldn’t have been the messenger for *anything*!’

‘But he was very stiff and proud;

He said “You needn’t shout so loud!”

And he was very proud and stiff;

He said “I’d go and wake them, if—”

I took a corkscrew from the shelf:

I went to wake them up myself.

And when I found the door was locked,

I pulled and pushed and kicked and knocked.

And when I found the door was shut,

I tried to turn the handle, but—’

There was a long pause.

‘Is that all?’ Alice timidly asked.

‘That’s all,’ said Humpty Dumpty. ‘Good-bye.’

This was rather sudden, Alice thought: but, after such a *very* strong hint that she ought to be going, she felt that it would hardly be civil to stay. So she got up, and held out her hand. ‘Good-bye, till we meet again!’ she said as cheerfully as she could.

‘I shouldn’t know you again if we *did* meet,’ Humpty Dumpty replied in a discontented tone, giving her one of his fingers to shake; ‘you’re so exactly like other people.’

‘The face is what one goes by, generally,’ Alice remarked in a thoughtful tone.

‘That’s just what I complain of,’ said Humpty Dumpty. ‘Your face is the same as everybody has—the two eyes, so—’ (marking their places in the air with this thumb) ‘nose in the middle, mouth under. It’s always the same. Now if you had the two eyes on the same side of the nose, for instance—or the mouth at the top—that would be *some* help.’

‘It wouldn’t look nice,’ Alice objected. But Humpty Dumpty only shut his eyes and said ‘Wait till you’ve tried.’

Alice waited a minute to see if he would speak again, but as he never opened his eyes or took any further notice of her, she said ‘Good-bye!’ once more, and, getting no answer to this, she quietly walked away: but she couldn’t help saying to herself as she went, ‘Of all the unsatisfactory—’ (she repeated this aloud, as it was a great comfort to have such a long word to say) ‘of all the unsatisfactory people I *ever* met—’ She never finished the sentence, for at this moment a heavy crash shook the forest from end to end.

‘Then I hope your finger is better now?’ Alice said very politely, as she crossed the little brook after the Queen.

‘Oh, much better!’ cried the Queen, her voice rising to a squeak as she went on. ‘Much be-etter! Be-etter! Be-e-etter! Be-e-ehh!’ The last word ended in a long bleat, so like a sheep that Alice quite started.

She looked at the Queen, who seemed to have suddenly wrapped herself up in wool. Alice rubbed her eyes, and looked again. She couldn’t make out what had happened at all. Was she in a shop? And was that really—was it really a *sheep* that was sitting on the other side of the counter? Rub as she could, she could make nothing more of it: she was in a little dark shop, leaning with her elbows on the counter, and opposite to her was an old Sheep, sitting in an arm-chair knitting, and every now and then leaving off to look at her through a great pair of spectacles.

‘What is it you want to buy?’ the Sheep said at last, looking up for a moment from her knitting.

‘I don’t *quite* know yet,’ Alice said, very gently. ‘I should like to look all round me first, if I might.’

‘You may look in front of you, and on both sides, if you like,’ said the Sheep: ‘but you can’t look *all* round you—unless you’ve got eyes at the back of your head.’

But these, as it happened, Alice had *not* got: so she contented herself with turning round, looking at the shelves as she came to them.

The shop seemed to be full of all manner of curious things—but the oddest part of it all was, that whenever she looked hard at any shelf, to make out exactly what it had on it, that particular shelf was always quite empty: though the others round it were crowded as full as they could hold.

‘Things flow about so here!’ she said at last in a plaintive tone, after she had spent a minute or so in vainly pursuing a large bright thing, that looked sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a work-box, and was always in the shelf next above the one she was looking at. ‘And this one is the most provoking of all—but I’ll tell you what—’ she added, as a sudden thought struck her, ‘I’ll follow it up to the very top shelf of all. It’ll puzzle it to go through the ceiling, I expect!’

But even this plan failed: the ‘thing’ went through the ceiling as quietly as possible, as if it were quite used to it.