



A Series of Unfortunate Events



Book the *First*

by LEMONY SNICKET

* THE BAD BEGINNING *

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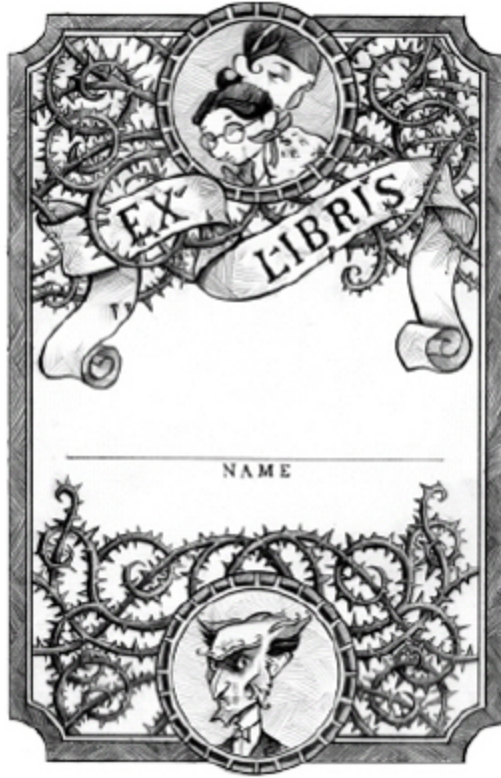
BOOK the First

THE BAD BEGINNING

by **LEMONY SNICKET**

Illustrations by **Brett Helquist**

 HarperCollins e-books



Dear Reader,

I'm sorry to say that the book you are holding in your hands is extremely unpleasant. It tells an unhappy tale about three very unlucky children. Even though they are charming and clever, the Baudelaire siblings lead lives filled with misery and woe. From the very first page of this book when the children are at the beach and receive terrible news, continuing on through the entire story, disaster lurks at their heels. One might say they are magnets for misfortune.

In this short book alone, the three youngsters encounter a greedy and repulsive villain, itchy clothing, a disastrous fire, a plot to steal their fortune, and cold porridge for breakfast.

It is my sad duty to write down these unpleasant tales, but there is nothing stopping you from putting this book down at once and reading something happy, if you prefer that sort of thing.

With all due respect,

Lemony Snicket

Lemony Snicket



To Beatrice—

darling, dearest, dead,

Contents

[Dear Reader](#)

[To Beatrice—](#)

[CHAPTER One](#)

If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you...

[CHAPTER Two](#)

It is useless for me to describe to you how...

[CHAPTER Three](#)

I don't know if you've ever noticed this, but first...

[CHAPTER Four](#)

The Baudelaire orphans copied the puttanesca recipe from the cookbook...

[CHAPTER Five](#)

Unless you have been very, very lucky, you have undoubtedly...

[CHAPTER Six](#)

The next morning, when the children stumbled sleepily from their...

[CHAPTER Seven](#)

There are many, many types of books in the world...

[CHAPTER Eight](#)

Klaus stayed up all night reading, which was normally something...

[CHAPTER Nine](#)

“Yes,” Count Olaf continued, “it certainly is strange to find...

CHAPTER Ten

That night, Klaus was the Baudelaire orphan sleeping fitfully in...

CHAPTER Eleven

“How pleasant that you could join us,” the hook-handed man...

CHAPTER Twelve

As Violet and Klaus Baudelaire stood, still in their nightgown...

CHAPTER Thirteen

“And now, ladies and gentlemen,” Count Olaf said, stepping forward...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

TO MY KIND EDITOR

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER



CHAPTER

One

If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. In this book, not only is there no happy ending, there is no happy beginning and very few happy things in the middle. This is because not very many happy things happened in the lives of the three Baudelaire youngsters. Violet, Klaus, and Sunny Baudelaire were intelligent children, and they were charming, and resourceful, and had pleasant facial features, but they were extremely unlucky, and most everything that happened to them was rife with misfortune, misery, and despair. I'm sorry to tell you this, but that is how the story goes.

Their misfortune began one day at Briny Beach. The three Baudelaire children lived with their parents in an enormous mansion at the heart of a dirty and busy city, and occasionally their parents gave them permission to take a rickety trolley—the word “rickety,” you probably know, here means “unsteady” or “likely to collapse”—alone to the seashore, where they would spend the day as a sort of vacation as long as they were home for dinner. This particular morning it was gray and cloudy, which didn't bother the Baudelaire youngsters one bit. When it was hot and sunny, Briny Beach was crowded with tourists and it was impossible to find a good place to lay one's blanket. On gray and cloudy days, the Baudelaire had the beach to themselves to do what they liked.

Violet Baudelaire, the eldest, liked to skip rocks. Like most fourteen-year-olds, she was right-handed, so the rocks skipped farther across the murky water when Violet used her right hand than when she used her left. As she skipped rocks, she was looking out at the horizon and thinking about

an invention she wanted to build. Anyone who knew Violet well could tell she was thinking hard, because her long hair was tied up in a ribbon to keep it out of her eyes. Violet had a real knack for inventing and building strange devices, so her brain was often filled with images of pulleys, levers, and gears, and she never wanted to be distracted by something as trivial as her hair. This morning she was thinking about how to construct a device that could retrieve a rock after you had skipped it into the ocean.

Klaus Baudelaire, the middle child, and the only boy, liked to examine creatures in tide-pools. Klaus was a little older than twelve and wore glasses, which made him look intelligent. He *was* intelligent. The Baudelaire parents had an enormous library in their mansion, a room filled with thousands of books on nearly every subject. Being only twelve, Klaus of course had not read all of the books in the Baudelaire library, but he had read a great many of them and had retained a lot of the information from his readings. He knew how to tell an alligator from a crocodile. He knew who killed Julius Caesar. And he knew much about the tiny, slimy animals found at Briny Beach, which he was examining now.

Sunny Baudelaire, the youngest, liked to bite things. She was an infant, and very small for her age, scarcely larger than a boot. What she lacked in size, however, she made up for with the size and sharpness of her four teeth. Sunny was at an age where one mostly speaks in a series of unintelligible shrieks. Except when she used the few actual words in her vocabulary, like “bottle,” “mommy,” and “bite,” most people had trouble understanding what it was that Sunny was saying. For instance, this morning she was saying “Gack!” over and over, which probably meant, “Look at that mysterious figure emerging from the fog!”

Sure enough, in the distance along the misty shore of Briny Beach there could be seen a tall figure striding toward the Baudelaire children. Sunny had already been staring and shrieking at the figure for some time when Klaus looked up from the spiny crab he was examining, and saw it too. He reached over and touched Violet’s arm, bringing her out of her inventing thoughts.

“Look at that,” Klaus said, and pointed toward the figure. It was drawing closer, and the children could see a few details. It was about the