

# THE BOUNTY BLINK

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Written and illustrated  
by

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## CHAPTER ONE

## A BEACH BEYOND REACH

There was once a funny little man who lived in a funny little hut on a deserted beach. The beach was part of a small peanut-shaped, deserted and nameless island, in the middle of the Great Blue Sea. I suppose it was nameless because either the island was too small or too unimportant. Or maybe it was nameless because it had never been discovered by someone important. Or, as it may indeed seem, the island was simply not meant to be there in the first place; for no map of the Great Blue Sea, not even any mariner's chart (which always show things in greater detail)--gave any indication that such a small peanut-shaped island existed at all.

But anyhow, this is where the funny little man lived, and somehow he survived. How he ended up in such a place--no-one knows. Perhaps he, like the island itself, was not meant to exist either. Yet although he shared a few basic characteristics with the island, like being undisturbed and being completely remote from the world, he did not feel like a non-entity. He was not anonymous to himself. He had a name. His name was Numboss. But no-one knows how he got such a name, or where he came from.

All alone he lived on the small peanut-shaped island, and upon its beaches he spent all his time, living the life of a hermit. No desire did Numboss ever feel to find a way to escape his solitude and set forth on a voyage across the Great Blue Sea. The little island was his home and on it he resolved to make his life meaningful; as meaningful as any human life could be. In fact, as far as Numboss was aware, the island was the only home he



would probably ever have in a vast universe of water and sky. He never saw any sign of other land or other people. He was encircled by an empty flat horizon upon which no boat, mast or sail ever appeared. It was easy for him to imagine that he could well be the only living person under the Sun.

Numboss had no memory of any family or origin; even what he did in his youth was beyond all recollection. For Numboss, his distant past, like the water and sky, was an infinity of mystery. It would, he thought, be foolish to explore his future by venturing far from his shores, because if he lost his way upon the sea, there was every likelihood he would likewise end up forever adrift in the same ocean of infinite mystery as his past. Because his life, both in time and space, seemed fringed by a boundless void, his familiar home was thus very precious to him. He dared not tempt knowing what existed beyond the edge of the flat blue horizon. Only the Sun, the Moon and the stars knew that secret.

The island was about a mile long and a quarter of a mile across in the middle. It was mainly yellow sand and rocks. Many of the rocks were always underground, or ended up underground, because the waves kept sweeping up such vast quantities of sand from the seabed, and the wind kept piling up higher and higher sand dunes. Only here and there were there a few rock outcroppings and stone piles. Very occasionally a new boulder would appear, as the sand dunes shifted about across the island, only to be buried again at some later time as new dunes developed, according to the seasonal changes of the winds. Near one end of the island there was a conspicuous dome of pinkish rock that was permanently exposed from the terrain. Numboss thought of this feature as the Pink Mountain, even though its humble peak was only a minute's climb high.



The home of Numboss

Over the years Numboss had thoroughly explored all the various parts of the island. He never ever got lost--the island was too small and symmetrical for that--but he did once make a detailed map, and on it he wrote some names he thought up at the time (such as Pink Mountain), which served to identify certain key areas and features. Sometimes he would look at his old map and compare how the sand dunes were advancing, or if a swamp was drying up, or whether the curves of a beach were changing. The map showed that he was very skilled in working out the scale of the topography, and understanding the shape of the shoreline. The fact that Numboss had bothered to invent names also showed that he had a curious imagination, even though to himself he never once uttered such names or ever really used them in his daily thoughts. And it is also rather odd that he never thought to give the island itself a name (or at least there is nothing on his map to indicate this).

Apart from all the sand and rocks, the island was also the home of various forms of vegetation, which in turn, provided the homes for several different kinds of animals and birds. Many conical evergreen trees dotted the island, some sparsely located as single trees and small clumps (especially nearer the shoreline), and others forming denser groves and small forests (especially towards the inland areas at both ends of the island). Sparrows, squirrels and a woodpecker or two, busied themselves among the thicker clusters of these trees. Other creatures, like rabbits, grouse and grass-snakes preferred the grasses and shrubs. These hardy plants rooted themselves in the dunes, and kept here and there the sand fairly stable under a patchwork of sprawling low greenery.

The island's lowest areas were in the mid-section, between the two wider and higher lobes which formed the peanut shape. A small wiggly stream (which he called Flybite Creek) trickled through this low area, down from the Pink Mountain, through a swamp where herons sometimes nested, across a beach where many wild pea plants grew, and out to the Great Blue Sea. Elsewhere, across the island, were patches of blackberries, a few crab-apple trees, leeks, and other edibles. None of these various foods were abundant enough to support teeming life--the island was too far north and too cool to be a jungle--, but for the few secretive creatures of fur and feather, and the belly of one solitary little man, there was enough to keep everybody alive and minding their own business. Even though mastering the arts of catching fish, collecting bird's eggs, snaring rabbits and harvesting wild greens may not truly be "minding your own business" (as far as the other creatures were concerned), Numboss interfered with the natural order of the island as little as possible. In fact his presence there became as much a part of the natural order as any bird, tree or rock. Over the years a harmonious state of everything peacefully co-existing developed, which promised to practically go on forever. Numboss felt very balanced with the elements around him, and he never feared that anything would threaten his continued existence.

He maintained a robust health, and because he lived entirely beyond the reach of the rest of the world, he never caught a cold and never worried about his bones, or his teeth, or his hair, or his hearing, or...., the list goes on. He certainly never worried about acting his age. For one thing, Numboss did not even know what his age was. He could have been 50, or 60, or 70; or, for that matter, even 150, or 160, or 170. He knew that he

wasn't young like a child, but because he could not remember his own childhood, he assumed that he was still "growing up" which meant that actually growing old, and perhaps "growing down", was therefore still far away in the future. He knew that one day all living things died, for he saw dead things on the island all the time, but except for some trees which presumably died from excessive age, most of these things were dead because they had been killed. Because Numboss knew that no creature on the island had the power to kill him, he realized that there was no reason why he should not theoretically be able to go on being alive for an indefinite length of time. He therefore never worried about getting old, and what's more, he was too extraordinary to worry about not worrying about it.

## CHAPTER TWO

### NUMBOSS

Numboss certainly was a peculiar looking little man. He had a large head with a weathered face, topped by a mop of grey-green curly hair. He had a wiry beard of the same colour, which grew around his serious mouth like moss. Bushy grey-green eyebrows sprouted across his furrowed brow, casting a deep shadow from which his dark eyes peered out with intense thought. He had particularly excellent eyesight; he could pick out a dead fish on the beach from a dead seagull at a distance of 300 yards in the right light. And in the wrong light he could see a strand of spider's web at three feet (which is pretty good, because most people are blind to a spider's web in any kind of light).

Almost every day he wore a purple-red sweater and green striped shorts, and no matter the heat of the day, he always liked to wear shoes and socks. Where he got his socks, no-one knows, but he had many pairs and colours. But his shoes were limited to two pairs; one quite normal looking, the other rather abnormal because the leather had been cut off at the toes. Because his feet often got rather hot in the warmer seasons, he had ingeniously cut off the ends so that his toes could be exposed to the air and cooled. You, I, or any ordinary person, when experiencing overheated feet, would probably choose to take off our footwear and go barefoot, especially if we lived on an island of warm soft sand. It is unlikely, at least, that socks would be an essential part of our survival outfit. But Numboss was too extraordinary for such conventions. He simply wore his open-ended shoes in

hot weather, kept his favourite socks on (which, incidentally were also full of holes at the ends), and thus remained cool yet properly dressed in shoes and socks. Occasionally he would go paddling barefoot, but he never ventured far from where he left his shoes and socks. Sometimes he liked to go walking along the water's edge with only one bare foot idly paddling, and the other foot still wearing a shoe and sock. When he turned around he would switch feet, so that the previously shoed foot would now get to swish the water, while the other would wear the shoe and sock and do most of the walking and supporting.

You can tell by now that Numboss was indeed a funny little man of rather eccentric habit. But he was not at all funny in the sense of being particularly happy. What I mean is that he was never inclined to laugh or be funny just for the sake of having fun. After all, he was always by himself and therefore never had anybody to laugh with or at. One may naturally assume that he had very little to laugh about, for although he survived in a very basic manner, he often felt incapable of having a jolly good time. The notion of having pure fun by himself was simply out of the question. Or, what is more probable, the basic idea of fun itself just never occurred to him.

He never cried to himself because of his solitude, and neither did he laugh in the face of loneliness. Because Numboss had no memory of being with others and enjoying the treats of good society, he was not aware of this aloneness in the same way anybody else would be, which normally eventually creates feelings of loneliness and a yearning for company.

You may think that both crying and laughing are normal aspects of life, whether you are with other people or all by yourself. But if such behaviour could have been described to Numboss, he would have probably

frowned and wondered what such alien phenomena as crying and laughing could possibly mean. For some strange reason, which you may think quite sad, something as natural as laughing was simply not part of his character.

What did come very naturally to Numboss was an extraordinary capacity for serious intellectual mental activity--deep thinking, in other words. Deep thinking was essentially all that Numboss did and wanted to do, and it was because of his devotion to deep thinking that Numboss believed his life on that deserted island could be meaningful and fulfilling.

You may wonder what it was that Numboss spent all his time thinking so deeply about. What was going on inside his big brain that caused him to remain calmly at peace with his solitude, and not get all depressed?

That is not an easy question to answer, but a clue to how different his thoughts probably were can be gained by imagining what would happen to yourself if you lived where he did. For example, just pretend every day you wake up to the sound of gently breaking waves, instead of the drone of various engines; or the soft whispers of wind across sand dunes, instead of the whine of alarms, sirens and horns; or the wild mewing of gulls, instead of the bash and clang of civilization and the clamour of crowds. The thoughts in your head, connected to ears now used to the gentle sounds of a quiet world are obviously going to be different from the thoughts of one whose ears are filled with the racket of a noisy world. No-one can say exactly what such a difference would be, but it is clear that whatever thoughts Numboss had, they must have been very spacious, free, clear, delicate, and wonderfully uninterrupted by the confusion often created by other people's activities and ideas. His thoughts could have been stranger than the strangest dream, yet simpler than the innocence of a child. Whatever they were, they kept him





Numboss often collected eggs near the Pink Mountain

going year after year. One thing he definitely experienced was the freedom from being told his thoughts were “wrong” or “inappropriate”.

As he wandered endlessly all around the little peanut-shaped island, Numboss became obsessed with pondering the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe. For better or worse, that is what often happens when a mind, detached from all other minds, is left alone. Why Numboss occupied himself with what must surely have been such a daunting task, no-one can guess, but this is what he did and there was nobody else around to tell him he would perhaps be wiser to think about other things--things a little less weighty

Numboss had the peculiar ability to complicate his thinking habits by both thinking ahead about what he could think about in the future and, at the same time, thinking back about what he could have thought in the past. In this sense he did not just occupy his time with deep thinking, but both preoccupied and postoccupied himself as well. Because of this peculiarity, he developed what might be called a problem knowing exactly what was happening in the present moment, for both the immediate past and the immediate future seemed to him to overlap into the same happening. That may be hard to imagine, but for Numboss the concept of time ticking away like a clock was too ordinary, and he was too extraordinary to believe that. He never assumed, for example, that one particular wave crashes up on the beach always after the previous wave and always before the next. He did not perceive waves, or moments in time, lined up in such a simple sequence. He would watch a wave crash at his feet, yet he could see further up the beach the same wave about to crash in several seconds, while in the other direction the same wave had already crashed several seconds ago. The same wave

therefore crashed in the past, present and future, and not in one single moment--but many moments spread out, depending on what direction he chose to look in. Perpetually pondering odd experiences and puzzles like this, the mind of Numboss seemed to have no limits, and he never got bored with deep thinking. Being bored was simply not part of his character. With the deepest questions he only got more heavily involved, and whatever the Meaning of Life was, or whatever the Purpose of the Universe could be, he was determined to find it all out.

### CHAPTER THREE

## LOST AND FOUND

Much of what Numboss thought about linked with the things he found on his excursions around the island. Almost every day he would collect interesting bits of flotsam and jetsam that had been washed up by the waves.

Much of the rubbish and junk he found was quite familiar, like empty bottles, knotted bits of rope, old fishing nets, buoys, rubber boots, warped wooden planks with bent and twisted hinges attached to them, and so on. But he also came across much more unusual things, many of which he could not so quickly identify. Things like bits of wood with the remains of strange mechanical devices bolted on, or splintered crates full of waterlogged books from which the ink had disappeared leaving only coloured blotches on every page, or crumpled up bird cages full of bones and strange metal rings linked together with rusty wire. Then there was also the endless assortment of completely inexplicable things made of unfamiliar materials, and having shapes and details too bizarre to describe. Numboss once found a contraption that looked like a combination between an oversized mechanical insect and a bagpipe. What it was actually originally used for, no-one knows, but Numboss considered it a thing of great significance and thought about it a lot.

Occasionally he found great bounties of packaged food and other extremely valuable goods. He once salvaged a large oak barrel full of the most delicious biscuits. Each biscuit was in the shape of a little bone, and





The oddities Numboss found kept him thinking deep thoughts

was very crunchy and wholesome tasting. Another barrel he found was full of sacks of tea. The drinks he prepared from this tea were so salty, however, that he ended up using the tea leaves as a kind of spice for his special soup concoctions. Another crate he found was crammed with dozens of matchboxes, each one holding over 200 matches, all perfectly dry and ready to use. The only drawback was that each match-head was stuck together with all the other match-heads, forming one slab of match-head stuff in each box. Every time Numboss tried to break one match free from the rest, the match would ignite, causing the whole lot to burst into flames. So what he did was he dissolved all the remaining matches in a pot of water, so that the wooden matchsticks all floated on the top, and all the special match-head phosphorus stuff formed a sediment on the bottom. Then he put the pot in the sun, allowed it to partially dry out, until he was left with a mud-like paste on the bottom. Into this he then carefully dipped the tip of each matchstick, one at a time, like making tiny candy apples. He laid out each reformed match on a plank of wood to dry and harden, then put them all back in their boxes. Each one worked perfectly. The only difference was that he ended up with only half the number of matches than he originally had, because each new match-head averaged twice as fat than before.

Sometimes Numboss found containers cast upon the beach packed with the most unlikely odds and ends. He once opened a paint can only to find it full of shoe laces. Each shoe lace had a huge knot in it so tight and complex it eventually took Numboss months to unravel the whole lot. If you think that's odd, then consider this: Another time he found a large leather bag that had in it a few unused pipe cleaners, a badly crumpled up peacock's feather, and a thick piece of blue cardboard with the words FIND POLKY

painted on it in red and gold. At the bottom of the bag were hundreds of tiny glass beads, and a small octagonal piece of thin copper with an image of an owl stamped on one side, and a mushroom on the other. The meaning of this bag and its cryptic contents baffled Numboss for ages. But one thing that he did conclude, based on most of the things he found washed up on the island, was that he was obviously not completely alone in the Universe. There was clearly a human history to much of the rubbish he collected. But how far in space, and how long in time, all these objects had been afloat before reaching his little island, was not easy to guess. If other people did exist, Numboss could not imagine where, or indeed when, they existed. And whether or not they still existed was another question he could not conclusively answer. You may think that just realizing the possibility that he was not alone would have a profound effect on his thoughts. Well, it really didn't. He knew that he was still just as alone as ever, whether or not there actually was a world of people somewhere out there. The truth was that he was so completely absorbed in his own world, he never gave the subject of other worlds much serious contemplation. This was probably because he didn't like to speculate on things far removed from his path in life, but preferred to deal with the dynamic course of events stemming from the realities of his day to day existence.

Numboss always silently marvelled at all the things he found for many different reasons, one of them obviously being the sheer variety and oddity of what they were. Another reason was rather less obvious. He puzzled over the fact that despite how many things clearly floated, many other things were heavy, and should have theoretically sunk far out at sea before reaching the island. Indeed they should have sunk as soon as they

entered the water. For example, one morning he found an old broken and badly ripped umbrella, dumped onto the sand after a stormy night. The sea was a strange olive green colour, and the sky still dark and purple, when he waded a short distance into the water with the umbrella to wash all the sand off it. The thing that really baffled Numboss was not so much finding such an object in the first place, but realizing that when he put it back in the water it refused to remain on the surface, no matter what angle or arrangement he made of the thing as he lowered it down. He tried this exercise for quite a while, but could never get the umbrella to show any inclination to float. It always just sank to the bottom. How then, Numboss mused, did it get to the beach? Had someone, during the night, visited his island, and accidentally left it behind during the storm? It seemed very unlikely that such a person would not have stayed ashore and waited out the storm in safety, instead of leaving so hastily. And why would they have bothered to bring an umbrella with them in the first place? The storm had been so violent, the rain so heavy, and the sea so rough, that any survivor making for his little island surely would have been already so soaked that holding on to an umbrella would have been quite pointless. Besides, as Numboss realized after a close scrutiny of the sand texture along the shore, there was no sign of any footprints. Wet sand, like wet cement, records imprints really well, but he could not find any except his own. At the same time, however, there did seem to be a connection between the found object and the weather. Umbrellas are obviously associated with rain, and there had been plenty of rain that night. That coincidence seemed to Numboss too meaningful to just overlook.





Testing the umbrella for floatability

The umbrella mystery puzzled Numboss for quite a while, until he settled on two possible solutions. The umbrella must have been blown off the deck of a cruise ship from the hand of a passenger during the storm, and got entangled in some floating driftwood. It then made its way to his island, where, along with the driftwood, it was dumped on his beach. Even though he found no driftwood where he found the umbrella, this could be explained by supposing that the waves disentangled the umbrella from the driftwood at the water's edge, causing the wood to float back into the sea, leaving the umbrella stranded on the sand, broken and ripped. The other possible solution was that the umbrella landed on the sea upside down. Perhaps it flew off far to the side of the ship, thus escaping the turbulence of the ship's wake. It then managed to float like a water lily pad on the waves. Obviously umbrellas must be waterproof, and therefore as long as it did not have any holes or rips, it would not leak, but remain afloat. It must have got broken and torn in the storm just as it reached the island. Perhaps one big wave came along and threw it forcefully upon the beach where it fell apart.

Neither of these theories particularly satisfied Numboss. Later on he stitched up the rips in the umbrella's fabric, straightened the handle, and put the thing above the doorway to his hut as a reminder to himself to never assume that any theory regarding a puzzle is necessarily the right one just because there seems to be no other way of explaining it. But these theories did tell him one astounding thing. Even though he had never ever seen a cruise ship, neither out at sea, or in pictures, how was it possible that he could conceive of such a thing in such detail? Was there, somewhere in the back of his memory, a knowledge of ships?

Numboss once experienced another event of similar mind-baffling quality. One autumn afternoon he found one of those silvery Christmas tree balls, made of very thin glass, with a pale green and red poinsettia painted on it. It was in perfect condition, and even had the little wire hook still attached. Most people, of course, would quickly identify such an object for what it was--a Christmas tree ornament. But Numboss had not the slightest clue about such things, and for him it was an extremely curious discovery to see this shiny sphere at his feet, glinting up at him from among the stones, just a few feet from the reach of the waves. He had no idea that it was hollow, and made of such fragile stuff. As soon as he picked it up, even though he was very careful, it instantly fragmented into numerous shards in his fingers. As they tinkled on the stones, he then realized that the ball was not metallic, but made of glass. Because he had been paddling barefoot at the time, he did not dare to try to pick up all the deadly sharp fragments without his shoes and socks on. (Indeed it could well have been some unpleasant past experiences with broken glass on the beach that made Numboss such a devoted wearer of shoes and socks ). As he went to get his shoes and socks, which he had left only a few yards away, something very strange happened. During those few moments, even though the water had all the time been lapping its waves a good few feet from the ball, a big wave suddenly rolled up and crashed right up on the stones, and then washed all the bits of shattered glass back into the sea.

All this really bewildered Numboss. For days he pondered all the many very puzzling aspects of the whole incident. First of all, how was it physically possible that such an obviously delicate object could be deposited upon the stony beach without breaking in the first place? Then, just as he





Finding the silver ball precipitated a most puzzling paradox

was momentarily getting his shoes and socks, and intending to collect the pieces, a freak wave just happened to appear right there at that spot, and wash all the pieces back into the water. And even when he looked for any remaining fragments afterwards, he could not find a single splinter or shard of glass. How was it that the wave managed to remove every bit of evidence? He would have been quite delighted to have collected just one single shiny piece, as a little memento of the whole affair, but nothing was there.

Numboss actually began to question whether the whole event had actually occurred in reality--perhaps he had somehow dreamt it while yet being wide awake. A small fresh cut on his finger, however, made presumably when the ball fragmented in his hand, reminded him that it must have happened, even though absolutely no trace of the ball was left only moments later.

As you can imagine, such puzzles as the umbrella and the silver ball intrigued Numboss intensely, and kept his mind both preoccupied and postoccupied with the deepest thoughts. Such experiences never made him laugh, or outwardly express anything-- he did not even mumble a single word to himself-- but they did inwardly induce a lot of heavy thinking. And it was having enough deep things to keep thinking about that Numboss believed would make his life more meaningful. Thinking seriously and objectively about all these strange things that occurred on the beaches was for him the only way to find clues as the mysterious Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MOONBEAMS AND DREAMS

The silvery ball experience was especially significant to Numboss because he had always been naturally very fond of things that glinted, glistened or glimmered due to the reflection of light. Much of the stuff he found on the beach was rusty and badly corroded by the salt water, or bleached and blotched by the elements. Very few things were shiny and untarnished. When he came across a piece of unusual metal, such as copper or brass, he would always try to polish it up. And all the bottles he found were thoroughly cleaned so that they looked bright and new. He had a few highly prized bottles, made of very clear and unscratched glass. Numboss was fascinated with the optical effects these bottles produced. Looking through them at his own fingers, he would see all kinds of warped distortions and visual dislocations, and sunbeams projected onto a wall through such bottles would make little coloured rainbows and strange ripply patterns of light and shadow. Sometimes Numboss thought about these effects while he observed similar wonders on a larger scale, like when he looked down into the water, or up at the sky. Whatever his glass bottles showed, he could always find an equivalent effect outdoors. He believed then that by studying the bottles he could perhaps see in them a miniaturized version of the whole sphere of natural optical phenomena. By doing this he hoped to understand something of the mystery of what light is and how it behaves--for Numboss knew that light was the most mystifying thing of all.

The silvery ball would have been a real treasure for Numboss, because he remembered how unique the reflections were off a spherical surface. Even though he had only a glimpse of such peculiar effects, before the ball disintegrated, they stuck in his mind for a long time. He knew that finding another shiny object that produced such weird reflections like that was a very remote possibility. Finding a ball in which you can see a reflection of almost everything around you at the same time was probably a once in a lifetime event.

Numboss never allowed himself to get sad over the strange disappearance of the silvery ball, but he knew that there was something within him that felt somewhat bothered by what happened. Of course he always had enough other things to think about and ponder in respect to the effects of reflected light. He began to more closely study the waves, which glittered gloriously in the Sun and made all kinds of sparkling patterns that absorbed him endlessly. He hoped that such studies would allow him to almost forget about the whole incident of the smashed ball. Yet sometimes, while watching the water, Numboss would only be reminded of the big wave that snatched the pieces of the ball from his possession.

Then, rather than looking at things that avoided the subject of the smashed ball, he decided instead to focus directly on this subject, and deal with it face to face. It was clear that, for whatever strange reason, something in his mind was irresistably drawn to reflecting balls and spherical surfaces; so why not let it freely explore these ideas?

Having had these thoughts, he then spent more time gazing at the Moon and thinking about the light it produced. It too was a ball that looked silvery and beautiful. He wondered that if it was possible to step on the

Moon would it also fall apart into little pieces, and then be washed away into the dark ocean of twinkling stars? That thought seemed to him rather silly and not very deep. It reminded himself of the similarly shallow ideas he had a long time ago, before he became such a deep thinker, when he would imagine that the horizon was the edge of the world, and only the Sun and Moon and stars could go beyond it. He now knew better--that the horizon was not the edge of anything, but simply the farthest point his eyes could see across a curved surface. How did Numboss come to this understanding? By watching an ant crawl across his knee. As the ant disappeared over the horizon of his kneecap, it had crossed the "edge of the world", but only from Numboss's point of view. The ant had not experienced any edge at all, but kept on going down his leg.

Combining his ingenious imagination with diligent awareness, Numboss made a thorough study of moonlight. In all its varied manifestations, the way this particular kind of light behaved became the focus of some of his deepest thoughts. He scrutinized the Moon's movement and phases in relation to the Sun. He concluded that it did not generate its own light, but acted like a spherical mirror. Because it shone with an even lustre, without any sparkling highlights, it was clearly not a very polished mirror. Its surface was pitted and stained, and from this texture sunlight was reflected to his eyes. Only one half of the Moon was ever lit up by the Sun, and depending on its position relative to himself and the Sun, he would see varying portions of this illuminated hemisphere, as the Moon waxed and waned. Even when it was "full", Numboss realized that an equal half of the Moon, on the opposite side of the sunlit face, was dark and in shadow. He then sometimes regarded a full Moon as a half Moon; there really was no



such thing as an absolute full Moon, because, unlike the Sun, the Moon did not radiate light in every direction.

Numboss then realized that if the Moon reflects the light of the Sun, which then becomes moonlight, then one kind of light has produced another. It is essentially the same light and from the same source, but with a difference. The surface of the Moon has somehow made the very bright yellowish sunlight more silvery, or even bluish, and much weaker. Something, therefore, happens to the solar light as it bounces off the Moon. Numboss then reasoned that this transformation, which creates moonlight, is caused not only by the texture of the Moon's surface, but also the substance of that surface. The special character of moonlight comes from whatever stuff the Moon is made of.

Numboss then understood that almost all the special luminous things he saw--rainbows, haloes, sparkles on the water, patterns in his bottles, colours in the sky--must be because of sunlight behaving in different ways. Stuff like air, water and glass obviously does not actually create light, but only mirrors and borrows it from the original source. And each individual phenomena he saw possessed a special light, unique to itself, caused by different transformations of sunlight as it reacted to different substances and textures. Numboss then made a list of all the different kinds of light he noticed, not just up in the sky, but in his immediate surroundings. The list got very long, because he quickly realized that almost every visible object had its own special light. There was sandlight, rocklight, pebblelight, driftwoodlight, birdwinglight, rusty metallight, treelight (which included needlelight, twiglight, and barklight), and numerous others. In fact,

Numboss soon lost count of how many different kinds of light there were, and it all started because of moonlight.

Numboss wondered if moonlight would be called moonlight if a person was to stand on the surface of the Moon, surrounded by whatever stuff the Moon was made of. Perhaps for someone on the Moon, looking at Earth, all the numerous kinds of light on Earth's surface, like rocklight, treelight and sandlight, would be mixed together as earthlight. Numboss wondered what earthlight would look like. He guessed it would be very blue because of all the blue waterlight and blue skylight that was so common.

It was this kind of brainwork--often quite abstract at first, but then becoming more and more reasonable--that Numboss went to bed doing, and woke up doing. And always his mind kept gravitating towards the all-encompassing power of the Sun. With regards to light, he knew that only a few things in nature were seemingly independent of the Sun's power. Things like shooting stars, lightning, fireflies, and even his own cooking fire, were all quite unique because they generated a special light of their own, which was not simply reflected sunlight. Yet, even with these phenomena, Numboss had suspicions that somehow the Sun was probably still responsible for powering these lights in some roundabout way. In his engrossment with light, any little clue as to the secret links between all these things was highly valued and sought after.

On nights of the full Moon (or half Moon!) Numboss could never sleep. Almost all night long he would ponder the mysteries of existence. The links between little things like bottles and big things like oceans and skies, or silvery balls and the Moon, or kneecaps and horizons, were always on his mind. The bright frosty light of the full moon would compel him to

wander about outside his little hut, in and out of the indigo-blue shadows among the sand dunes. The lunar light would be so beautiful all around him--twinkling like quicksilver on the water, making ghostly rings in the high icy clouds, and casting strange shadow patterns on the sand. While observing such a scene as this, Numboss realized that all the different kinds of light coming from his surroundings were now twice, or even thrice, removed from the source of the Sun. For example he once saw an isolated cloud, low in the night sky, illuminated by the full Moon. The cloud's image was faintly mirrored in the calm ocean, producing a luminous patch on the dark horizon. Numboss contemplated this luminous patch, and realized that the light of this image was a combination of moonlight, cloudlight, and waterlight. Forming a string of separate and quite different images, each one dependant on the preceding one, sunlight had been reflected and transformed three times. Indeed the world he lived in was one of multiple reflections. Some of these images were very transient, and like ghosts, they made it very tricky for Numboss to mentally pinpoint their actual reality. Some things he saw did not seem to have a definite location or distance from his position. Depending on his own perspective of the reality around him, they shifted about. The strange and capricious behaviour of light sometimes suggested that parts of reality were like twofold mirrors, reflecting not just the power of the Sun, but also his own perceptive powers as well. The existence of things was, to some varying degree, a combined result of a special duality--light and his own awareness.

As close to pure moonshine as these ideas may seem to more ordinary modes of thought, they were for Numboss very serious things to consider. And on nights of the bright Moon his thoughts went deeper than



During nights of the full moon Numboss mused  
on the meaning of it all

usual upon the subtle subject of “what makes reality?” When he finally went to bed after such restless nights of deep thinking, he would invariably have weird dreams, which, in turn, like multiple reflections, would alter his thinking mode later on, after he awoke.

It often happened that such moonlight induced dreams would strangely link with the events that took place the next day, as he wandered about the island under the bright Sun. He would sometimes find a previously undiscovered object on the beach which he would then remember had appeared in his dream just several hours earlier. For example, Numboss once went to bed just after moonset and just before sunrise, and had a dream about a window. In the dream the window kept banging in the wind, until finally all the glass panes fell out onto the floor in little pieces. Later, after waking up, he went for a long walk around the island. On one beach, half buried in the sand, he actually found an old window frame. All the glass was missing from it. As coincidental with the precise details of his dreams this was, Numboss was reluctant to immediately assume that the window was somehow put there because he dreamt about it. He could tell that the window had been buried there for a very long time, and only recently had the shifting sands revealed it. Rather than his dream creating the experience of the window, he tended to think of the whole thing the other way around. Perhaps the window had created the experience he had in his dream. He theorized that his dream had somehow leapt into the future and overlapped with the actual event of discovering the window. Then his dreaming mind took the ingredients of that experience and built an imaginative story of how the glass panes were knocked out of their frames. When he actually woke up and then later found the window, he was simply returning to an event which

he had already visited. The strange feeling which he had of “being there before” was caused by him subconsciously remembering the dream. In a sense he was remembering the future. If, as dreams such as this suggested, it was possible to remember the future, then this was further evidence to support the basis of the Special Time Theory that Numboss kept working on. Time, he believed, was not so rigidly structured like a flowing stream going in one direction and creating a sequence of moments that make the past, present and future. With dreams, which at first seem like an illusion of the mind, the true illusion of time is ultimately revealed, for in the dreamstate the mind gets out of the flowing stream and runs along the banks, back and forth as freely as it desires.

Very peculiar experiences like this, linking up so many odd elements such as washed up rubbish, moonlight, dreams and altered time, caused Numboss to surmise that whatever the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe was, it certainly was weirder than he may have originally guessed.

The more sensitive Numboss became to all this weirdness, the more he realized how every day brought a whole new mixture of subtleties, different from any previous day. He began to observe that each new blue sky was always a slightly different blue than past blue skies. Sometimes he saw blue skies that were not really blue at all, but perhaps a very rare limpid green, or pinkish lilac. Some days he saw strange colours he had never seen before, or indeed, would probably ever see again. It seemed reality never simply repeated itself, but was constantly creating new variations on certain themes.

Over time, Numboss became increasingly aware of a latent weirdness in almost everything and every event. But it must be said, however, that all this weirdness never overwhelmed him or caused him to lose faith in his own capacity to somehow understand it. While it did serve to make his thoughts go even deeper, it never made him go mad or become really weird himself. He knew that he was too extraordinary for that. Being mad or moonstruck was simply not part of his character, and he never worried about it. Why would he? He was enjoying a robust health. His age didn't seem to have any expiry date, and his life on that island, as bleak as it may have seemed, was becoming more and more meaningful as the years went by. How could madness ever be a possibility?



## CHAPTER FIVE

### A SCIENTIFIC BENT

Numboss maintained a robust and down-to-earth manner of applying his thinking powers to the challenges of survival. This was not an optional thing, but a vital necessity of life. The secret to his continuing existence on that island was directly linked to not just the finding of various things, but also the clever and practical use of it. There are all kinds of problems with living on a tiny plot of sand in the middle of a vast empty sea. For example what does one do about drinking water? Seawater is no good--it's too salty. Rainwater is usually the only alternative, (unless one also tries to salvage some moisture from fog and dew, which can be done-as long as there is a regular supply of fog and dew, which on Numboss's island there wasn't). So he had to work out a method to collect rainwater, using whatever tools and raw materials he could find. And that meant using his brain properly, not just filling it with profound thoughts, but actually putting its thoughts to work (which is sometimes a more profound thing to do). So this is what Numboss did--with the water problem (which he solved with the help of some barrels, canvas and trough-shaped sections of tree bark linked up into a kind of eavestrough at the back of his hut), and many other problems of survival. And even though he was able to also retrieve freshwater from Flybite Creek, which drained rainwater into the sea from the Pink Mountain area, he took greater satisfaction in rigging up a water system at his hut, for this required him to think more--and thinking, whether it be

deep thinking, practical thinking, or whatever kind of thinking, was something he was dedicated to.

He was very resourceful with all the junk he found, no matter how weird the circumstances surrounding such stuff, and the funny little hut set back in the sand dunes was furnished and equipped with all kinds of odd makeshift fixtures designed to make his otherwise very exposed existence more comfortable and cosy.

The hut itself was built from all kinds of odd pieces of debris collected over many years of beachcombing. With driftwood, planks, boards, sheets of metal, old barrels, paddles, oars, lobster cages, broom handles, and all sorts of other rubbish, Numboss had somehow put up four walls and a roof. Using old nails, rope, nets and wire, he fastened these things together into one solid structure. Over the doorway, on the roof, he fixed in place the ribs of an old boat hull, which looked a bit like the antlers of some huge beast.

Parts of his hut looked like a jigsaw puzzle, but wrongly put together; pieces of junk were wedged and interlocked in the most awkward way, creating gaps here and there where the blue sky shone through. It may have all looked very rickety, but his hut was in fact very strong and rigid. It had proudly remained essentially the same shape after many storms. Over time Numboss gradually fastened additional objects into his patchwork walls and roof, and so made his hut more windproof and less leaky.

Inside he had a few items of furniture--a small stool, a little table with rocks for legs, a workbench made from a thick plank, a bed made from an old door with a mattress of dried grass, a rusty old oil drum stove with a tin can chimney, and a candle holder made from a hollow log, into which

Numboss had carved simple decorative patterns. Here and there were shelves along the walls, holding bottles, shells, collections of feathers, a few unusual crystals, and other oddments. Also there was an old tennis racket, a broken picture frame, and other ornaments, some of them completely inexplicable (like the thing that looked like the offspring between a huge robotic insect and a bagpipe). Many of these things he temporarily displayed on his walls and ceiling, until he could figure out how to put them to a more practical use. The floor was only hard packed sand. He had once laid down an old rug, but it became so caked with sand that it soon submerged into the ground, and he soon forgot it was still there, underneath the hard packed sand.

His little hut may sound rather like a glorified chicken coop, but for Numboss it was solid, simple and airy. It was his little castle where he felt completely relaxed and comfortable, and where he could be sure of fairly reliable shelter from weird weather. He never considered it his home, but simply part of his home, for the whole island was his residency. He had other makeshift shelters here and there, (not so luxurious, for the hut was his main headquarters) which he sometimes used overnight if he was spending a lot of time around one particular part of the island. But his hut was his favourite place, built near his favourite beach, and it had all his best junk.

He could lay on his bed and stare at his hodgepodge ceiling, pondering the gallimaufry of different shapes and oddities with the same serious fascination that other people in more sophisticated homes might study a piece of intricate art. At night he could watch the stars peep through the holes. When it rained he would sometimes set up on the floor, in key locations, lots of tin cans to collect the drips. Each can would make a

different metallic pop or tink, as a raindrop fell into it. In this way a kind of orchestra was assembled, each tin can positioned properly for producing certain sounds. He would then lay on his bed and thoughtfully listen to the Symphony of Drips, with all the various rhythms and pizzicato notes as the rainwater percolated down through the intricacies of his roof. Of course during such a rainy spell he would tie down a piece of canvas across the roof above where he had his bed, so even though the rest of his hut may end up full of puddles (if the tin cans overflowed), he could fall asleep knowing he would wake up perfectly dry and comfortable.

You may think that this peculiar pastime proves that Numboss could indeed have fun for the pure sake of having fun. Not so. For him it was an intellectual exercise, and one in which he indulged for purely cerebral satisfaction, for he was very curious about the natural evolution of synchronized drip sequences, emerging from the chaotic input of rain falling on his roof. There was also a very practical aspect to any performance of the Symphony, because in the morning he would take what rainwater had been collected both indoors and outdoors, and pour it all through a special sand filter he had made, to make the water cleaner and fit for drinking.

When Numboss wasn't roaming the beaches, or collecting food, or doing his laundry, or chopping up driftwood, or filtering rainwater, or any of his other many domestic chores, he would spend much time experimenting with new ways to understand and make use of sunlight. As mentioned earlier, he had for a long time been aware that sunlight, whether coming directly from the Sun or reflected from the Moon, was the source of practically everything that ultimately mattered. In addition to his studies of light in all its manifestations, Numboss had also studied the clouds and

movement of the winds. He had noticed that at night the sky was often clearer than it was than in the day, and the air would be calmer. As soon as the sun came up, increased cloud formation would ensue and winds would develop. The Sun must somehow be responsible. Likewise, in the cooler seasons, when the Sun was always lower in the sky, the clouds were also always lower. If the Sun so clearly influenced the clouds and winds, and the winds influenced the waves and the movement of the Great Blue Sea, and the waves influenced what was dumped on his beaches, and what was dumped on the beaches influenced what Numboss thought about, then ultimately the Sun was the source of all the mattered. Numboss wanted to understand this source in a deep way, and so that meant he devoted a large part of his spare time to the study of sunlight and all its peculiarities.

He had made himself an observation post on top of his hut. This consisted of a chair and a table on a platform, which was fixed to a tripod-like trestle made of wooden posts, with a ladder up the side of the hut. On the table top he would arrange various upright pegs of wood, which looked a bit like large chess pieces, into various patterns according to the position of the Sun in the sky. He then sat in the chair and watched the shadows of the wooden pegs move and interact as the Sun moved. This procedure gave rise to a whole ritual, which in its subtlety and lengthy duration, was rather like a game of chess, except in this case Numboss sat across from a very distant player; the Sun itself. As the Sun took its move, creating certain configurations of shadows cast on the table surface, Numboss would slightly rearrange one or two of the pegs. Because some of the pegs had very odd profiles, and even holes of different sizes bored right through them, the resultant shadows made very complex patterns. Numboss

would stare thoughtfully at the outcome of a move, wondering what the Sun would do next as, over the course of the day, the Sun's rays changed their angle. Sometimes Numboss would climb down after making a move, and then busy himself with other things--leaving the Sun an hour or so to decide its strategy. Then, when he returned, the game of "solar chess" would continue, sometimes all the way until sunset without a break if the sky's clouds allowed it. I cannot describe the rules and purposes governing this very strange activity, for Numboss himself only knew these. Clearly it was a very esoteric exercise, and I suppose it gave Numboss the opportunity now and then to imagine some kind of one-upmanship over the Sun.

He would also sit and watch the sunset at different times of the year, and in a more scientific manner observe which peg would line up with other pegs parallel with the direction of the position on the horizon of the setting Sun. Twice a year, at the opposite seasonal times of summer and winter, Numboss noted that the position of sunset reached an extremity along the horizon to either the left or right. Then, over the next days, the positions of the setting Sun would start, ever so slightly, to shift back towards a more central position, which it reached in either the spring or autumn. His table top was inscribed with all kinds of lines, markings and compass points, corresponding to his observations through the seasons. He also kept records of his observations in a floppy notepad, which he called his "source book". How Numboss learnt to write using words, and make calculations using geometry and numbers, no-one knows. Yet even though the scribbles and diagrams in his source book may have been indecipherable in many ways, any able astronomer looking over them would realize that this funny little



**Numboss on top of his hut, playing "Solar Chess"**



man had worked out, all by himself, the times of both the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and both the winter and summer solstices.

Because of these observations, and many others, Numboss correlated the timing and position of the Sun with certain events. There seemed to be particular harmonies between intensities of sunlight, both on a daily and yearly scale, and intensities of elemental activity in nature. The clouds, the winds, the birds, the fish, the waves, plants, flowers, insects,--the timing of the activity of all these things responded to key times when the light and heat from the Sun was of a certain intensity. What time of year it was, and the relative coolness or warmth of these times, intrinsically connected to what kind of light it was. In Numboss's way of thinking, time and light were therefore bound together. He then did a lot of deep thinking which led to some peculiar deductions regarding the logical consequences of this. If time, whatever time was, was somehow closely linked with light--and light, whatever light was, was likewise closely linked with time, then could both things be simply abstracted aspects of a single phenomenon? Every moment in time, whether forwards or backwards, or overlapped into concurrent past and future as in dreamtime, had a certain value or quantity of light energy associated with it. His perception of time was illuminated by light, through looking at things and having light enter his eyes into his mind. Remembering images and apprehending events also involved seeing in his mind's eye an effect of light, reflected off the surface of objects which were involved in the event. Every image, whether mental or otherwise, had a certain value or quantity of light associated with it. And likewise, every event had a certain value or quantity of time attached to it. Every perceivable image or experience was real because of light and time. Numboss then

theorized that he might be able to ultimately define any aspect of reality by knowing its co-ordinates in light and time.

But then he wondered about sound, smell, and the realities of things perceived in the dark. No light was surely involved then, yet certain aspects of existent things were still clearly perceivable. Did time cease to exist just because the senses no longer relied on light to establish the co-ordinates? Numboss did some simple experiments with sounds, aromas, and other things, all with his eyes closed so that no light was involved in his own perceptions. He found that time did indeed become different during such experiments. It obviously still existed, for outside of his own darkened senses there was still light. But within the blacked out enclosure of his mind, as he listened to sounds and smelled smells, he could not detect as clear a sense of time as he did when he opened his eyes. With his eyes closed, the flow of time wavered and jumped about, according to the flow of images flickering through his mind. He suspected that being fully asleep allowed the full permutation of this altered time to become dreamtime, which freely operated outside the normal constraints of everyday light/time functions. Time, as far as he could tell, was indeed definitely structured around the presence of light, or even vice versa.

In order to more objectively test this astounding theory, Numboss set up an elaborate experiment, which was inspired, (as many noble ideas are), by a piece of music--in his case a performance of the Symphony of Drips one rainy night. He put a tin can at the bottom of an old empty oak barrel, and on the top of the barrel, over a hole in the lid, he placed another tin can. The top can had a small hole in its base. When he filled the top can with water, it would drip out the bottom and into the barrel. As in the

Symphony, the drips would then make a distinct “tink” sound as they fell through the empty space of the barrel and hit the can sitting on the bottom. Because no light could get inside the barrel, the time that the drips occupied as they travelled from one can to another, should always be the same, regardless of whether it was daytime or night-time outside the barrel.

Once he had this part of his apparatus set up, he then assembled the next part. He built a framework out of scrap wood next to the barrel, and hung another tin can, exposed to the light, at the same height as the can on top of the barrel. Like the latter, the former also had small hole in its base, and a “target” can underneath it on the ground. Numboss then filled both upper cans with water at the same time, using a special double-spouted funnel he had made, which he attached to the top of the framework. When the water-filled cans dripped onto the lower cans, Numboss carefully listened to the steady pulse of tinkling sounds. In the bright noonday Sun, the can dripping in intense light should drip at a different rate, and occupy a different time dimension, than the can dripping in the dark barrel. But during a moonless night, when both cans dripped in darkness, they should be nearly the same and last almost the same period of time.

Numboss worked hard and long with this experiment. Because it was fraught with all kinds of variables and problems, he made many technical modifications to his apparatus. He crammed many pages of his source book with confusing numbers and drip counts. He had a most frustrating time trying to keep track of the number and spacing of the numerous tinkling sounds. And not only that, but also filling the cans precisely in the first place, at exactly the same starting time, and with exactly the same amount of water, was exceedingly tricky. Even a discrepancy of a



Numboss puts his sneaking suspicion, concerning time's link with light, to the test

single drip could be significant--but he had no way of knowing for sure whether such a discrepancy was due to any actual time difference between the two systems, or his own unreliable operation of the equipment.

In the end he abandoned the experiment. He did not abandon the theory, but he knew that his apparatus was simply too rudimentary for such a delicate test of the relationship between time and light. He reoriented his thoughts towards more practical projects, dealing almost exclusively with light, and the latent energy contained in it.

Numboss had great success with an experiment that led to the construction of a special "fire glass". Because matches had rapidly become such a rare commodity, he had to come up with an alternative solution to the problem of lighting his cooking fire. His special "fire glass" consisted of three particular glass bottle bottoms, carefully fixed in place in a triangular frame made of scrap wood. When he aimed this device at the Sun, the light focused through the three bottle ends, each one acting like a magnifying lens. The light and heat, instead of forming three separate spots, concentrated at a distance of about eight inches into one single spot. Anything easily burnable, like dried leaves or needles, put under that intense spot of light at the right time of day would begin smouldering and then leap into flames. He would then place the burning tinder into the pile of firewood which he had all ready. This device thus enabled Numboss to save his matches for use only on cloudy days.

Numboss had also tried to make a telescope out of such bottle ends, but his eyesight had been so distorted by all his experiments with this idea, that he abandoned the project, and instead turned his thoughts towards

the idea of making a moondial (the idea of a sundial had, strangely enough, never occurred to him).

Numboss was clearly possessed by what we would call a scientific bent. Maybe he was in some way ahead of his time, or perhaps just simply behind the times; but because he had no idea of where he really was in time, none of these thoughts bothered him. He just went deeper and deeper in his thoughts, hoping that he would eventually arrive at that ultimate answer to the most profound question of all--who was he, and why did he exist? If he could answer that question, then he would know everything there was worth knowing. He hoped that there were enough blank pages left in his source book to let him finally work out this most profound puzzle of all. He really felt that this could be done. He was too extraordinary to doubt his own potential. Being doubtful about himself was, at least for a while longer, simply not part of his character.

## CHAPTER SIX

### A SHADOW OF DOUBT

Much time went by as Numboss kept on accumulating more and more washed up junk. Endless days were spent preoccupying and postoccupying himself with his abstract thoughts, his time-transcending dreams, and his strange experiments. The pages in his source book became more and more crammed with incomplete formulae, half finished sentences and notes, and numerous crossed out diagrams. Day after day, month after month, the Sun rose and set, the Moon went through her phases, the constellations played games of “join the dots” with the planets, and all the elements did their stuff with flawless continuance. But as Numboss just got deeper and deeper into his thoughts, and ever more puzzled by the weirdness of it all, his brainwaves flowed ever more chaotically.

And then one day a catastrophe happened. Whether it was because of the increasing disorder of his erratic thoughts, or just plain bad luck, I cannot say. But it happened very suddenly, and what made it worse, it happened right under his nose. He lost his source book.

At first Numboss reacted with little concern, for he assumed that he had simply misplaced the book, as he had done lots of times. But after a complete search of his hut and surrounding area, he concluded, with much consternation, that it was indeed fundamentally lost, not just misplaced. It had apparently dematerialized. Numboss was, on one hand, perturbed by its disappearance, and yet, on the other hand, quite intrigued by the basic concept that such material objects could actually spontaneously disappear.



For a while he even got excited by this new tangent to his thoughts, and with a sudden impulse he grabbed his pencil to write down the details of new and brilliant brainwaves in his source book. Of course the book itself was the very thing that had disappeared, so how could he write in it any ideas about its disappearance? All this, as you can probably imagine, just added to his confusion.

Several hours went by as Numboss gathered his thoughts together into a more orderly and sensible state. He never murmured a word to himself about how he felt, and certainly he never cried about the loss of his book, because being that emotional, as you know by now, was just not part of his character. Grim and silent, Numboss continued to go about his business on the island, and soon gave up the search for the book. If the thing had just dematerialized, then so be it. Maybe, he thought, it would likewise rematerialize again right under his nose. In the meanwhile, it was pointless wasting his time and energy looking.

But many days went by, and the source book did not rematerialize. Numboss tried to convince himself that he didn't care. A deepening heaviness, however, loomed over him, and he had to finally admit that he was indeed very bothered by its disappearance. After a long while the weight of something ominous began to bear down on his soul. Something deep within him, deeper and stranger than his thoughts and dreams, had become disturbed.

Numboss was very surprised by these strange new feelings coming from within--they seemed alien and inconsistent with whom he thought he was. He had never felt disturbed by anything possessing this kind of heaviness before. Because the disturbance was very real, and clearly had the

power to interfere with his otherwise indomitable train of thought, he was cautious not to disregard it. Indeed he began to shift his thinking energy on to this new problem, for he felt that if he ignored it, it would itself sap his thinking energy, and leave him drained of his vital powers. The problem would have to be dealt with.

Numboss realized that whatever was so deeply disturbed within him, it cannot have been caused by just the fact that his source book had gone missing. The book after all was largely just a record of confusing theories and many failed experiments. Surely it was not really such a terribly catastrophic loss, because he still carried all the vital stuff in his head. If he found some more paper he could, if he wanted to, write down the basics of what he knew and start another book. So it must, he concluded, be because of something else.

One evening, as he sat on a log and watched the Sun set, he wondered what on earth could be the matter with him. The loss of the book had clearly triggered something deep within him, something very important but incredibly elusive, something that now made him feel as if there was a whole entire dimension to life that he had somehow missed. He went through a number of things that he thought might possibly be clues as to what could be missing. Of course the most obvious thing he did was re-evaluate the fact that he was alone, and probably always would be. But that, as it had always, did not at all disturb him. He knew that he was still quite comfortable with this. He then wondered whether the fact that, because of his monastic solitude, he would never be able to share his insights into the mysteries of reality with others, could be responsible. But this fact did not upset him either. In fact, the idea of sharing his mind with others



As the sun set, Numboss contemplated his predicament

was, if anything, rather disturbing in itself. He was very content to accept the freedom of his remote solitude, which gave him complete scope to think and do whatever he wanted, without having to harmonize with, or convince and please, other minds. (Indeed the possibility of other minds existing somewhere beyond his world was still technically a hypotheses, not a proven and experienced certainty). Numboss naturally now and then felt a curiosity regarding meeting other people, but it certainly was not something he yearned for, and neither was it in any way a necessity in the process of him fulfilling a meaningful existence. In fact, the idea of communicating with other intelligent beings was as remote and unessential for Numboss as the desire for meeting extraterrestrials is for most of society. Whatever disturbance was bottled up within him could not be because of this.

Numboss then wondered whether it was because of boredom. Was he running out of things to think about, thus causing his mind to become desperate for fresh new thoughts? But that did not seem likely either. He always had numerous new puzzles to solve, and just as many old ones to work on in new ways. The very fact that he was now fully engaged with trying to solve this new puzzle, of understanding why he felt so disturbed, was immediate proof that boredom could not be responsible. Numboss realized that boredom, whatever it was, was obviously the opposite of action. It was a state of mind characterized by inactivity and dim thoughts, causing all of reality to appear drab and meaningless. His mind had always been very bright, and his thoughts often brilliant with insight. Dullness had never been part of his character. Boredom, therefore, could not possibly be the cause of his disturbance.

It soon became obvious to Numboss that something was going on inside him that possibly had the power to defy his own analysis. Even though he was rapidly becoming more and more aware that something had gone amiss in his mind, he could not identify it, and all this naturally left him extremely perplexed, and believe it or not, even a little bit worried. This just added to his distress, because he had never worried about himself in any serious way before. He had always been too extraordinary to worry. Worry had simply not been part of his character. But now, apparently, it was part of his character. He was now starting to doubt himself.

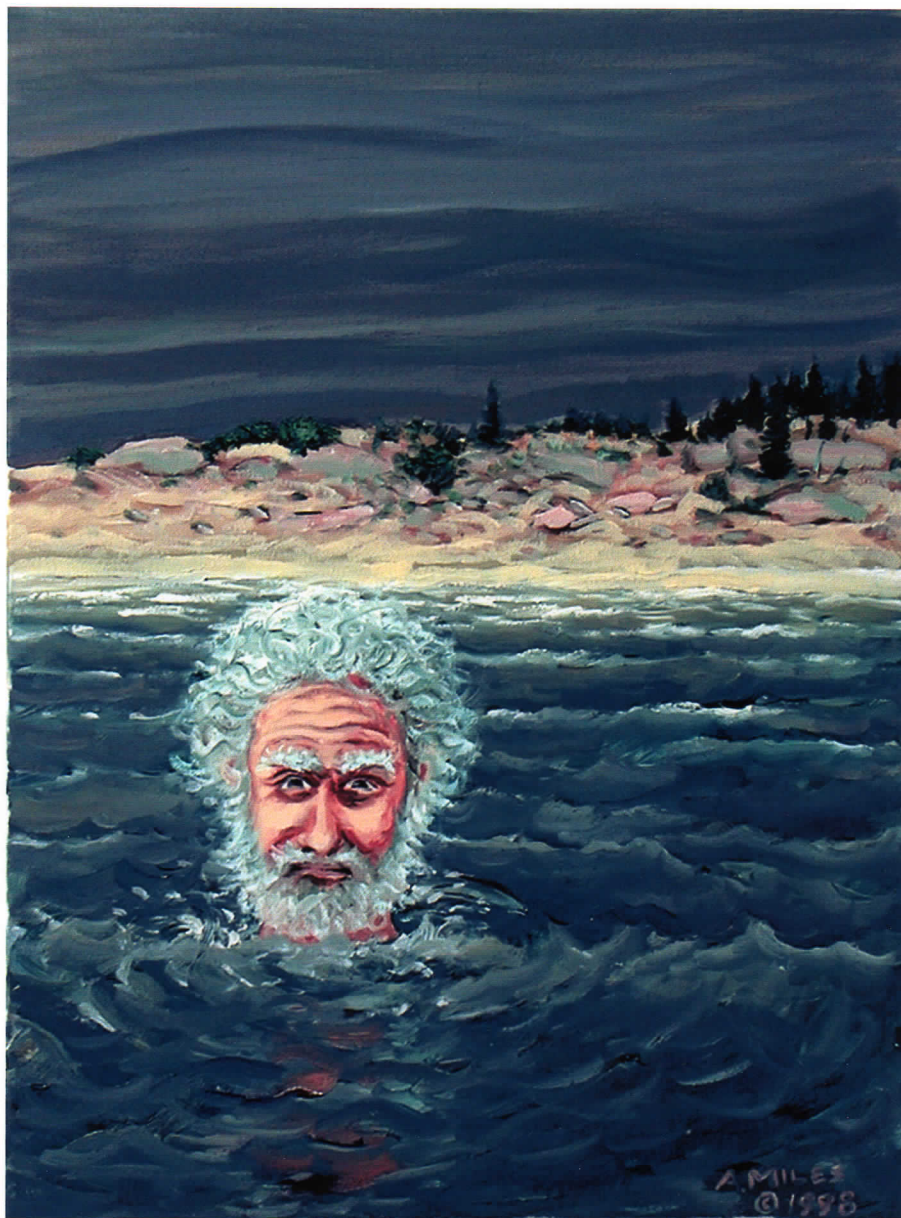
Much time went by as Numboss got more and more concerned about what was the matter with himself. And as more time went by, and his self-analysis compounded itself, he almost lost sight of where his mind was trying to go. And then one day, he had the first real clue as to what the problem could be. The clue came to him when he suddenly realized, after a session of very deep thinking, that he was losing touch with himself. He had suddenly become aware that, in a way so strange and paradoxical it almost escaped his own detection, he was becoming detached from who he was and what he was doing. Numboss had gone so far and so deep in all his thinking, and in all his analysis of both his inner reality and the outer reality, that it seemed he had almost finally lost all sense of being alive in the body and character of the little man called Numboss with the red and purple sweater, and the funny shoes and socks. He became aware that he was more like a bundle of disembodied thoughts, a fluttering of ideas floating between the worlds of dreams and reality, a kind of ghost or transparent abstract cloud, about to evaporate into the infinity of emptiness. Numboss, at this point, felt so groundless that he actually went for a walk across the island and straight

out into the sea without knowing it. It was only when the waves were slopping into his face that he suddenly realized where he was, up to his shoulders in water and fifty yards from the shore. This experience alone convinced him that he was not in danger of only losing his mind, but also his body.

For the first time in his life Numboss sat down with himself and contemplated his own sanity. Something, he knew, had gone horribly wrong with his mind. Again and again he kept re-evaluating the recent experience of almost losing touch with all reality and drowning in the sea. What had caused that event? He soon realized that it was his own obsession with deep thinking that had nearly done him in.

If he could curb, or even better yet, give up this obviously dangerous habit of deep thinking, then he may come out of this whole nightmare alive. It seemed an imperative experiment, perhaps the most vital test of his own intelligence, he had ever faced. After all, what had all his deep thinking really accomplished, apart from just a very basic mode of day to day existence? After so many endless years of the grandest perplexity, was he really any closer to understanding the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe than when he began? The puzzles of reality had always piled up twice as high as the loftiest thought he had ever managed. His source book had been more a record of endless frustration than any process of enlightenment. And if madness was ultimately the only consequence of trying to keep up with it all; if blindly walking into the sea like an idiot was the final result of all his mental work over such a long time, then what was the point of it all? Was he becoming a fugitive from reality?





One day Numboss nearly lost his marbles

A crackpot, obsessed by the intangible and verging on becoming intangible himself? No. Deep thinking must stop.

And so it was that one night, after days of coolly reflecting on all this, he went to bed after making a special Promise to himself. It was a Promise that he would have never in a million years thought he would have to make: He promised that he would give up deep thinking. And as he seriously repeated this solemn and silent vow in his mind (he never actually voiced these things to himself), he then felt within himself a certain peace, as if that strange part of his soul which had been disturbed was now finally appeased. This comforted Numboss, and told him that, however contradictory this Promise seemed to his age-old pattern of deep thinking, there was obviously some wisdom in it. Perhaps being able to make such a Promise--to give up deep thinking--is ironically in itself the result of so much deep thinking. Numboss did not know, and did not care to. All he knew was that he had elusively made some kind of breakthrough, and he felt more relaxed and more grounded. He felt safer from what was obviously a threat of madness if he didn't watch himself. In the end he actually felt rather glad that he had lost his source book. The thought of not bothering with all those ludicrous numbers, calculations and formulae for a while, made him shake his head and roll his eyes with relief.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE DREAM

That night, after falling asleep with the Promise fresh on his soul, Numboss had a dream. It was the most extraordinary dream he ever had.

In the dream, initially at least, he was his same old self; preoccupied and postoccupied with exploring the labyrinths of time puzzles, trying to decipher the meaning of strange new junk found on the beaches, and experimenting with light in eccentric ways. But instead of being generally overwhelmed by the mind-boggling nature of reality, he started to rapidly possess a fresh capacity to understand things which before were entirely incomprehensible and unthought of. His mind was actually no longer boggled by anything. In fact, it was now very close to being perfectly enlightened. He found himself having the intellectual and intuitive power to tap into the source of all phenomena. The secret was that he only had to use his incredible mind in just the right way.

Being enlightened meant that Numboss possessed a fantastic ability to do calculations. He had become a mathematical genius, and was now able to solve any complex numerical or geometrical problem with elegant ease. Not only did he have unparalleled mathematical insight, but he had also been endowed with a kind of transcendental power to twist and bend the laws of physics for whatever purpose he imagined. He had become aware that some of the so called rules of nature were extremely flexible - they could even be flouted and then reconstituted according to his own personal fancy, so long as the mathematics worked. In defiance of ordinary logic,

Numboss applied a unique form of “ultracreative mathematics”, with which new and otherwise impossible feats of boundless wonder became feasible. This meant that whatever he wanted to do - he could do it. This wasn’t the same as whatever he dreamed of doing (for he was, you remember, already dreaming). There was a distinct doubtlessness about his intentions, and a kind of boundless certainty that left no room for petty and inhibiting questions caused by common sense.

Reality was at his disposal. As long as he had access to the basic raw principles and materials of nature, such as light, gravity, sound, wind, heat and more solid stuff like trees, rocks and water, he could achieve any goal. He knew that he could not yet actually create these fundamental things, but by fully understanding their secrets, he could use them to create amazing new dimensions and phenomena unprecedented in nature. All it would take would be a few all powerful calculations and the unorthodox juggling of complex numbers in a way that would cause ordinary mathematicians to swoon with disbelief and awe. Equipped with his transcendental genius, Numboss could appropriate the basic elements and forces of his environment to fulfil a sensational destiny. His potential to attain untouchable authority over whatever he put his mind upon, promised him, ultimately, the freedom to enjoy immortality. He could now quite seriously reach for the stars and outlive them. To encompass the infinite glory of the whole universe was now a very real possibility, and the mathematical complications of doing this did not daunt him at all.

But he first chose to begin with an idea of a more moderate magnitude. He had always been a very prudent man, and naturally cautious not to bite off more than he could chew on. Instead of applying his mind to

reaching out to the whole cosmos and every remote galaxy, he chose something a little closer to home. Even our own galaxy of the Milky Way had billions of stars. But that was still, for the time being, too extravagant. For him only one star in particular was on his mind. A star that he had known and honoured all his life. A star that had seemed to beckon him every day, and stirred his deepest yearnings. This special star was the Sun, the Day Star of Earth, and the source of everything he had ever thought about. Numboss planned to go on an incredible trip. He would go to the Sun.

His journey began when he saw a rainbow near the end of the island. The rainbow, he knew, was caused by the reflection and twofold refraction of sunlight in raindrops. It was an ideal phenomenon with which to begin his preparations. He then approached the rainbow while doing some rapid calculations in his head regarding the laws of optics. After those calculations were finished he boldly walked right underneath the rainbow. This is not ordinarily possible of course (for a rainbow, like one's own shadow, always moves as the observer moves) , but remember Numboss, in his dream, had transcended what is ordinary, and was free to create new realities, as long as his mathematics held good. Once inside the archway of the rainbow, he looked up and considered what special procedure would be required to alter the gravity field of where he was. When a bumble bee, which naturally defies both gravitational and aerodynamic laws, buzzed by him, he saw his opportunity to solve this complex problem the easy way. He reached out and gently seized the bee in his hand. The bee crawled to a fingertip and peered up into Numboss's eyes. Some deep and rare alchemy between two living beings then took place in the silence that followed, as

Numboss listened intently to the bee telepathically explain his “buoyancy theorem”. When all was done, and the vital information conveyed, Numboss thanked him with words of praise to all bees and their kin. The bee happily flew off, while Numboss, endowed with the knowledge of weightlessness, looked up again at the rainbow above his head estimating, its optical distance. After a quick calculation, using the bee’s special buoyancy theorem, he then jumped lightly in the air and was elevated twenty feet or so. He settled upon the topmost curve of the rainbow, and sat upon the outer red band of the spectrum. Even though the colours were translucent and entirely immaterial, Numboss remained nicely suspended on his prismatic perch. His seat up there was a bit dewy, but considering how well he had done so far, having a wet rump was a very minor discomfort.

He then looked up at the Sun and contemplated his next move. This was now the real test of his mathematical genius and transcendental creativity. With getting up on the rainbow he had had help from a bee. Now he was truly by himself. But he had not the slightest shadow of doubt that he could do what he intended to, as long as the calculations and formulae were infallible. And thus he then launched himself into the deepest profundity his mind could manage. It is impossible to describe the mathematical music his genius then sang to. It was a veritable symphony of logic, bursting into his brain like fireworks. Many of the geometric abstractions of his thinking magically appeared all around him in the form of luminous lines, arcs, arrows and notations. Numbers and bits of celestial diagrams moved about across the sky, linking angles and trajectories from the rainbow to the Sun. As he did his calculations the elements around him shifted and shimmered, as if the air was his blackboard and his thoughts were the chalk.

From the bee's buoyancy theorem he had learned the invaluable potential of knowing hyperbolic antilogarithms. Once he had worked out the hypercube root of the quadratic ecliptic factor, this gave him the differential submultiple of the hyperbolic antilogarithm for his time-light co-ordinates. It was easy then to calculate the polynomial metavector of the exponential tangent of the solar trajectory. With a dash of garden variety universal calculus and a pinch of invariant subalgebra, Numboss then computed the geometric denominator of the rainbow's angle with the antisolar constant. Then, using transcendental photo-ballistic theory, he was able to determine the necessary spring-back force of a stressed rainbow. Optical laws are very strict, and it turned out that the latent resiliency of twofold refracted light was ideal for generating the escape velocity needed for cosmic flight.

With all these calculations now complete, the rainbow then obediently tilted itself according to the exact angle he determined. Between the two ends of the rainbow a silvery cord appeared and stretched itself behind a stiff spruce tree. A precise amount of tension was reached as the silvery cord, which became a bowstring, formed a V shape, with the kink in its midpoint just to one side of the tree. Notched in the kink of the bowstring was an arrow, its silver feathers glistening coldly in the Sun. This arrow was to be Numboss's cosmic missile. Its sharp pointed tip, just ahead of where he straddled the shaft, was aimed straight for the heart of the Sun. The whole rainbow had become a giant photic bow and arrow. The energy stored up in the stressed spectrum was light - light from the Sun. Numboss then realized that the Sun itself was to be the Great Archer, which created the paradox that the target was itself. Light from the Sun, bent into a rainbow,

and then bent again against the stiff laws of optics, was going to propel him to the Sun.

But as he got ready for the launch, an unexpected event occurred in the sky. Out of nowhere, with no warning, the Moon began to eclipse the Sun. The black edge of the lunar world notched into the bright solar disc, its thick shadow threatening to devour all the sunlight. For Numboss this was a last minute emergency, which challenged his genius and wits to the extreme. He then had to come up with some rapid adjustments to all his calculations regarding his intended velocity and trajectory. If he travelled too quickly he would likely smash right into the Moon. He would have to time his cosmic flight so that the Moon would be out of his way once he left the Earth. He could not simply wait until the eclipse was over because during totality, when all the sunlight would be obscured, the rainbow itself would vanish. Rainbows, he knew, were extremely delicate and sensitive things. An eclipse of the Sun was sure to ruin the rainbow's beautiful vault, and once it was extinguished, there was no guarantee it would appear again.

With an extra surge of transcendental mathematics, Numboss quickly worked out a new set of equations which gave him a modified trajectory. Then, just as the Sun was almost totally eclipsed, and the last beams of light still reached the rainbow, Numboss gave the word for blast off. The tree holding back the silvery bowstring snapped. With a great twang and a flash Numboss was sent into space. Only a few seconds later the eclipse reached totality, putting the little island into gloom and completely extinguishing all traces of the rainbow. Like a meteor Numboss whizzed beyond the blue curve of Earth's horizon, and he did not look back.





As he rapidly approached the eclipsed Sun, a crescent of dazzling light appeared at the Sun's edge, and the Moon slowly moved aside, its occultation waning. By the time Numboss reached the Sun, the eclipse was over. A flood of seething radiation caused him to shield his face as he plummeted down into the boiling surface. Flares and streamers of blazing light, and a torrid heat, engulfed his arrow. But he remained true and intact, and in a split second he was sucked in greedily by the intense gravity. With tremendous force he plunged into the bullseye of his destiny - the Solar Core.

His speed was so great that the heat had no time to harm him, in the same way that a hand moved swiftly through a candle flame is immune to being burnt. In a great spiral, ever tightening inwards, Numboss orbited the Solar Core. Thanks to some very clever computations he did using inverted hyperbolic antilogarithms, his velocity decreased quickly because he had reversed the law of conservation of angular momentum (which normally causes an orbiting body to increase speed as it spirals inwards). This final leg of his trip was just one aspect of the many calculations he had mentally worked out during the short period of time while in space-flight--calculations which would enable him to survive the incredibly hostile forces he expected to encounter once inside the Sun.

But at the heart of the Sun things were very strange, and they did not quite tally with the forces Numboss was mathematically prepared to deal with. He was expecting a solar interior of great density, incredibly high temperature and extreme turbulence. It was, surprisingly, quite "airy". There were certainly a lot of swirling incandescent gases and fiery eruptions, but it was not the torturous inferno he had anticipated. The reason for this was something he would have never guessed, no matter how far his

transcendental mathematics could go in apprehending and altering the laws of physics.

During the eclipse, unbeknown to Numboss, something very special had taken place in the Sun. The Man in the Moon, also known as the Lunar Lord, had done some “house cleaning”, so to speak. He had gone inside the Sun and opened up the Solar Windows to allow things to cool down a bit, ready for Numboss’s arrival. And not only that, the Lunar Lord had gone right into the Solar Core, and there, in the dense nucleus of the Sun’s orb, he had straightened up and swept clean a most remarkable piece of cosmic furniture. He had prepared the Solar Throne for its new occupant.

While Numboss was soaring through interplanetary space, pondering how the Moon, after the eclipse, may still yet interfere further with his mission, the Lunar Lord had been busy making sure the Solar Throne was properly set up, and not covered in ash and cinders. The Throne Chair itself was an exquisite object of majestic beauty, made of purple alabaster, with a high back of ornately carved design, and scrolled arms made of silver. It was flanked by two noble pillars made of some marble like material, and great steps of the same led up to the Throne’s feet. An elaborate tapestry embroidered with colourful jewels, moonstones and mother-of-pearl, hung behind the Throne Chair. Arching above the domed top of each pillar was the spectrum of the rainbow. The refracted prismatic colours of the rainbow, combining with all the softly diffracted iridescence of the Throne’s surroundings, gave the whole Throne Chamber a shimmering beauty of infinitely varying hues. Encircling all this was a dazzling golden luminescence emanating from the Sun’s interior, where, as soon as the Lunar Lord finished his work and went back inside the Moon, the heat and intensity

quickly returned to its usual severity. Tongues of fire licked around the base of the steps leading up to the Throne, and serpentine flames snaked around the pillars, but no heat scorched the Throne itself. The Man in the Moon, knowing the sensitivity of mortal flesh, had carefully cooled down the Throne's area to a comfortable level, so much so that when Numboss dismounted his arrow and walked up onto the wide steps, he was pleased to realize that he could still wear shoes and socks without discomfort.

Everything was just right--neither too hot, nor too cold, and neither too stuffy nor too draughty. On the seat of the Solar Throne, which was upholstered in opalescent silk, he sat down with a gasp of delight. His trusty arrow was at his side like a staff, leaning against one of the pillars. As he sat there, somewhat flabbergasted by what he had actually achieved, great golden flames fanned out from his presence around the Throne Chamber, and a burst of new energy circulated throughout the entire Sun, finally causing great loops of fire to erupt from the solar surface. The hair of Numboss became charged with electrical sparks, which then shot up and bolted from the top of the Throne as lightning.

The Solar Throne was at the Source, and whoever got to sit on it without being consumed by heat, became the Mind Behind The Source. Numboss was, in fact, the first Lord of the Sun since Apollo had abdicated the Throne tens of thousands of years before. Ever since Apollo's departure, the Man in the Moon had prepared the same Throne for many other historical attempts to claim its inheritance, yet no mortal had ever succeeded. And because all the gods were off doing other things in other galaxies, he had almost given up hope that the Sun's future was secure.

But now, a mortal called Numboss was the Man in the Sun, and the Man in the Moon was happily at his service. Both were Lords of Light, but a Solar Lord had, in the Cosmic Hierarchy, an office closer to the Supermind of All Creation, and was therefore invested with actual creative power akin to a god. (The Lunar Lord was more of an archivist than an active creator, a collector of past events and a source of otherwise forgotten and primeval history.) The Lunar Lord would have been honoured to have personally congratulated Numboss on his ascendance, but because of strict orbital obligations he was unable to. Only during the next solar eclipse would he have the opportunity to personally show his pleasure. Numboss's claim to the Throne was therefore a bit unceremonial. He had just suddenly appeared, dressed in his sweater and shorts, and after walking up the steps he then plonked himself down on the Throne Seat, and that was that. He didn't care. He was used to doing things simply, without fuss, and always by himself. Pomp and circumstance was simply not part of his character. All he wanted to do now was get down to business.

Light, energy and power emanated from Numboss's face as he sat there on the Solar Throne, pondering his new position in life. His face had assumed a countenance of great nobility, and his whole head, whenever he exercised his mind, suddenly grew to massive dimensions. In fact, he would have to sometimes stand up in front of the Throne so that his expanding head would not get stuck between the pillars, like a walnut caught in a nutcracker. On certain occasions, when his head billowed out, it would even fill most of the solar interior. This caused the sphere of the Sun to become inflated somewhat, which was not always a good thing because the gravity perturbations this caused were notoriously prone to triggering certain

imbalances which could potentially lead to total solar breakdown. Because of this Numboss had to learn to watch his thinking. He didn't want one of his brainstormers to cause a supernova!

Numboss had become transfigured into a demigod. He had not only found the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe, but was now seated at the very core of its creation, for this Solar System at least. Numboss now devoted himself to his new calling as the Lord of the Sun. For the next several billion years, before he moved on to even greater galactic duties proportional to his wisdom, he would shine with ceaseless light upon the worlds, and the brilliance of his mind would ensure that a dynamic power continued to pervade all of creation. With his profound genius he would maintain the sun's health and keep it operating flawlessly, (providing, of course, that he would control his head swelling habit within reasonable limits that didn't threaten the sun's stability).

These were the headstrong intentions with which Numboss began his reign. But he soon became aware that he was perhaps jumping the gun; that it was not good enough to simply sit back and become a Solar Lord. What about all the mechanics of it all? What about actually doing the homework, and knowing what were the true nuts and bolts of the very thing he was now in charge of? He then wondered how he could be sure he knew exactly why the Sun operated the way it did. What kept the solar furnaces burning? What kind of mechanism was at work behind all the heat and light? What determined the dynamic flux of gravity and time? How did the Sun keep its stability and its steady output of power? These were questions any true Solar Lord would justifiably know the answer to at the snap of a finger. But Numboss felt a bit dumbfounded by them, despite his



Numboss had become the Solar Lord

transcendental mathematical genius. He knew that he would have to investigate things.

Obviously the place to look into these mysteries was at the nucleus of the Sun's core, which was precisely where the Throne Chamber was located. This was the "holy of holies", so to speak; where what mattered became matter, and where matter became energy--the very crucible of creation. Numboss got up and walked around to the back of the Throne Chair. And there, to his surprise, moving back and forth ever so slightly, was a great golden pendulum, pivoting on the spectrum of the rainbow above him. This was none other than the Solar Pendulum, which modulated the very heartbeat of the Sun. Numboss quickly realized that very little movement was remaining in its swing. The Solar Throne had been abandoned and unclaimed for so long that the Pendulum's swing, originally maintained by Apollo, tens of thousands of years ago, was now almost expired. Numboss had arrived at just the right time, for if and when the pendulum stopped, the Sun would die, and all light and time for the solar system would end. Numboss gave the great golden weight a generous push, setting it swinging energetically again on a wide arc. With an infinitesimal respect to friction, the Pendulum went to and fro with a perfectly measured beat. As he did this, and watched what happened, Numboss then understood the principle behind the creation of light. And with this understanding came an acute knowledge of what precisely light was, and how all things under the sun were influenced by it.

Oscillations of the Solar Pendulum, like a cosmic metronome, measured out the periodic pulsations of Creation Waves. These Creation Waves, which constituted the essence of both gravity and electromagnetism,

as well as other fundamental forces, confined within atoms, then reverberated and reoscillated within the solar interior. The electromagnetic waves shortened and lengthened, and assumed every possible frequency, forming the entire spectrum of radiant energy of which sunlight is just a small part. The Solar Pendulum was the mechanism which unified the attributes of gravity and light with the dimension of time, and whoever set it going to and fro established the pulse of solar pull, solar energy and solar time. In turn, the rhythms and vibrations of all life and events under and orbiting the sun were determined. From the throb of a tadpole to the undulations of the uppermost cloud, from the fluctuations of earth's deepest fires to the swing of a spider on its thread, the various vacillations of all things were ultimately patterned at the Solar Core by the motion of the Solar Pendulum.

Numboss, even though he knew intuitively that maintaining the pendulum's swing was critical, still felt a little daunted by it all, despite his transcendental genius. He wished that he had some kind of instruction just to get him familiarized with the fundamentals of Solar Theory, for there were an infinite number of mathematical ideas fluttering about in his head, but perhaps there was somewhere only one ultimate equation which encapsulated the essence of it all. Wouldn't it be nice if he could just have that one absolute formula straight up, and then go on from there, without all the preliminary nonsense of sorting out the clutter of a million billion brainwaves?

Just then he noticed that by the side of the Throne Chair was a small round table, and on it was a book. The book was bound in burnished leather, without ornament or title. Numboss picked it up and opened it to the first few pages. The pages were not paper, but a special kind of platinum



leaf, so incredibly thin that the metal was translucent, yet amazingly strong and tearproof. On each page were words printed in a strange luminous purple ink, which gave the whole book a peculiar phosphorescent glow. Reading some passages, Numboss recognized their style and that these were actually his very own words. This book was his source book, which he had lost on his island back on earth when he was a mere mortal. The only difference was that now the words were completely free of puzzle and perplexity--they flowed in glorious sentences of the profoundest logic, one concept naturally splicing into another, with not the slightest hint of abstract awkwardness or difficulty. Page after page revealed that all his old and forgotten notes and ideas had not been in vain, as fragmented and obscure as they then had seemed. They had now been redeemed from all error and made complete. Perfected in every aspect, from the nature of hyperspace, right down to every detail of subatomic dynamics, the book demystified and explained everything Numboss could have possibly imagined. It told him all about the Solar Pendulum; how it worked and why its oscillations were so critical for all Creation under the Sun. It explained how every star, in every constellation, had its own pendulum at its core, which generated the Creation Waves for its particular portion of the Cosmos. It mapped out the gigantic ensemble of a hundred billion pendulums of the Milky Way Galaxy, all of which, despite much local chaos, ultimately oscillated in accordance with the orderly orchestration of the entire galactic spiral. It diagrammed the pattern and rotation of this spiral, and revealed that this was just one of billions of outward expressions of a divine dance, a celebration of stellar harmony on a scale vaster and more mysterious than the transcendental number pi.

His scrappy old source book had become the Book of the Source. This book not only contained the seeds of all knowledge, but was in particular was also potentially the source of much new phenomena for the Solar System

Sitting on the Solar Throne Numboss then read to the Solar Family from Chapter One. The planets and moons listened intently to his pronouncements and the Man in the Moon smiled to himself upon hearing some of these early passages, for he had heard such things before, eons ago, when the Sun was young, and the first Solar Lord had set up his empire of order and chaos. As Numboss kept reading, with the Pendulum swinging steadily behind him, new comets, never before seen, appeared on sweeping elliptical orbits. As they closely looped around the Sun, these comets saluted the new Solar Lord with tails of shimmering light, and then they faded back into the depths of space. Every chapter he read would unfold whole epochs of dynamic creation and destruction upon the various worlds within his reign. Great cycles of elemental activity--bringing abundant life to some worlds and catastrophic upheavals to others--would take place as he spent millions upon millions of years slowly progressing through the Book of the Source. And because the pages of the Book were so incredibly thin--perhaps only several atoms thick--it seemed that the chapters would go on forever. Chapter Three began on page five trillion and four, and there were still one thousand, four hundred and twelve chapters left to go.

Those who watched the sunsets and sunrises from earth would never know what was actually happening inside the Sun, for to hear a single sentence read by Numboss from the Book of the Source would require more time than a human lifespan offered. But occasionally, the presence of

Numboss was perceived by those with keen sight. When the atmosphere was hazy, and the Sun appeared just above the horizon like an oversized red egg, some people would imagine seeing a noble and godlike face frowning thoughtfully inside the fattened Solar disc, the transfigured face of Numboss, with his bloated head. Children worldwide would tug at parent's sleeves and say excitedly, "Look! I see the Man in the Sun!"

Suddenly, at that point, the dream ended. Numboss woke up, bashing his head on a beam of wood that, like a pendulum, was dangling down from his roof. Frustrated, Numboss yanked at the thing. The beam suddenly fell loose, along with lots of other bits of junk, and his bed was soon covered with rubbish. Too tired to clean it all up, Numboss yawned with resignation, and laid back to gaze at the stars shining through the gaping hole in his roof. It was still night-time, and dawn was far away. He rubbed his skull, frowned at the junk all around him, then fell back to sleep. The extraordinary dream he had just had was now gone. With neither its memory or continuance did his slumbering mind further involve itself, and as if he had dreamt nothing at all, he slept until dawn without the slightest thought for anything.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### TEMPTATION COVE

In the morning Numboss woke up with something he rarely ever experienced--a headache. Not remembering the dream, or thinking of anything else, he ascribed the cause of his headache to one thing--hunger. So after getting up, before attending to any other priority (such as fixing the hole in his roof), he prepared himself an extra-large breakfast. He plundered his larder, cleaned some vegetables, went out and netted a big fish, and in no time at all put together a huge feast of fried fish, scrambled heron eggs, leek and snail salad and crabapple stew, with salted wild pea mush on the side. It was all washed down with a big mug of evergreen needle and chicory tea. The headache quickly vanished, and Numboss refilled his kettle.

As he munched away on his breakfast, he gazed out at the Great Blue Sea and admired the sparkling clarity of the morning air. It was a bright, almost windless and very gentle morning. The Sun glinted on the softly lapping wavelets of the calm water. The sky was cloudless, and as blue as any blue sky could be--a very pure cobalt blue, with a hint of lilac nearer the zenith.

Numboss sat there in front of his hut, calmly finishing his breakfast, and began to contemplate the events of the last few days. On such a beautiful morning these events all seemed rather remote and inconsequential, as if they had all been part of a rather silly and nonsensical dream, in which he had almost lost his marbles and made a fool of himself. He still didn't remember the actual extraordinary dream he had had that

night, but he did soon begin to recall the special Promise he had made to himself earlier: The Promise to not do any more deep thinking. Even though the implications of that Promise now seemed to him rather severe and even unfair to himself, he was wise enough to realize that he would not have made such a Promise unless there was a good reason to. Nevertheless, avoiding deep thinking--especially on a morning like this, after such a hearty breakfast--did seem a bit unreasonable. He then decided that he would judiciously modify the Promise a bit, to make it more practical. He would still agree to keep the Promise, but now with a special condition. Only that deep thinking which came from finding new pieces of junk on the beach would be prohibited. If too much deep thinking had truly messed his mind up, then it was probably because of trying too hard to unravel the puzzles associated with all the endlessly weird objects he kept finding. The deep thinking he did with his other ongoing projects, his experiments with sunlight, seemed more stable, and therefore, he reckoned, much less dangerous to his own mental health. To Numboss, this modification of the Promise seemed very reasonable, and it made him feel more at ease with remembering the disturbing events of the last few days.

His time-honoured routine of searching the beaches for rubbish had been so consistent and habitual day after day, that it then seemed difficult for Numboss to think of any direction he could go for a walk that wouldn't tempt him back into his old thinking patterns. Naturally he considered exploring the island inland, because the chance of accidentally stumbling upon new junk away from the shoreline was quite remote. Not finding junk meant not being tempted by deep thoughts about the junk. But how would he then know that he was taking his own Promise seriously if he

did not experience such temptations? Numboss then realized that he would have to test himself, for a limited time only, on the beaches; just to see whether he really meant what he thought he meant.

He remembered a little rocky cove half a mile or so down the beach that he had not visited for a long while. The reason that he had avoided the place was because every time he had approached the area hundreds of seagulls had dive-bombed him and made it clear he was not welcome. He now realized that the birds would have probably moved on, for the nesting season for gulls was almost over, leaving the area more accessible. This seemed a good plan. The distance along the shoreline to the little rocky cove should be enough for Numboss to test his resistance to any potential deep thinking upon finding any new curiosities washed up on the sand. If he got to the rocky cove without violating his Promise, then he could go inland, knowing that he had passed the test. He would then theoretically be safe from any future danger of excessive deep thinking due to new junk.

Numboss cleaned up his plate and frying pan, and got ready to go. His belly was full, his mind felt clear and resolved, and his eyes under his bushy grey-green eyebrows twinkled with an unusual light. He had on his favourite pair of pink socks, which helped to make the morning all the more special.

As Numboss began strolling along the beach he almost immediately became aware that he really was taking himself seriously. He was spending much more time than he usually did admiring the beautifully clear atmosphere, and the smooth turquoise surface of the sea. Naturally he still instinctively kept scanning the stones and sand, and not without a little apprehension of seeing something unusual lying there beckoning his mind;

but for the first time in his life he actually felt genuinely not in the mood for serious junk hunting. This really impressed him, and he knew then that this test was going to be much easier than he thought.

By the time Numboss had reached the little rocky cove, he felt pleasantly carefree and unburdened. Relieved of the potential worry of what to do with a broken promise, he congratulated himself on his performance. He had enjoyed the walk along the beach in a completely new way. He was glad that his steady relaxed rhythm had not been drastically interrupted by any pause or distraction caused by finding an interesting object. Even though he knew he had actually seen a few things, which normally would have made him stop and think, he had not only passed them by, but happily passed them by.

But the real temptation, and the true test of his resolve, came when Numboss entered the little rocky cove. Here was an area that he had not explored for quite a long time. It possessed a special allure of hidden treasures that had long eluded his discovery. An atmosphere of latent mystery and accumulated intrigue hung in the air, which made the more familiar beach of the first part of his walk seem comparably somewhat boring and empty. His self-assured mood changed quickly as he stepped over the first few rocks bordering the cove.

He was right about the seagulls being less defensive of this area. In fact, except for two perched on some boulders, they were all gone. These two lone gulls cautiously eyed Numboss as he slowly made his way along the water's edge. His original plan had been to simply climb over the rocks of the cove and then go inland, having passed the test of the beach, with his promise kept intact. But Numboss had underestimated the power which

those rocks possessed to tempt him to start poking around, looking for junk. An irresistible urge for finding new and strange pieces of flotsam and jetsam, and all the inevitable deep thinking that went with it, started to well up within him. The feeling caused him to experience an intense and sudden mental anguish, and he regretted having entered the cove in the first place.

Numboss knew then that he had come face to face with his own weakness. He had always been a person of great resolve and integrity, but if now it was shown that he lacked the will to keep his own promises, then that proved he was weak. And weakness, Numboss knew, was not good for him. Weakness had always been linked with worry, fear and confusion. It was the opposite of being extraordinary. It was the sign of decay, of becoming old and frail, of losing everything he had ever lived for and valued.

He had seen weakness in nature; in the way a tree's roots rotted under the moss, or the way a dark cloud, promising a good rain, had evaporated into pathetic wisps because it just couldn't get up steam. Even though Numboss knew weakness was probably essential in the cycle of the elements, he still was not enthused about it becoming part of his nature. Like the squealing gulls, he admired vigilance and intensity. He saw what happened to a bird with a broken wing. A merciless force in nature absorbed it and put it in the belly of something stronger. Numboss did not want to be absorbed. He wanted to continue being an absorber, getting stronger and stronger. He wanted to maintain his resiliency to all danger. Yet the greatest threat of all, was not the elements, not nature, but his own crumbling sanity. He was his own creator and destroyer. Only his own self-imposed doubt and criticism were the potential enemies of his peace.



Just then, as he stopped in those painful moments in which his mind seemed so precariously balanced between the worse and most conflicting inner forces he had ever felt, he glanced down at the stones several feet ahead of where he was. He saw an object which seemed to have been placed right there, right at that crucial moment, that would finally bring the whole matter to a climax. The ominous urgency of his sudden mental upheaval now seemed focused on this object, as if it was not only the deciding factor of how his day would go, but indeed his whole life from hereon.

For what seemed eternity Numboss stood there, transfixed, with his hands on his hips, leaning forward and peering down at the object. It was not a particularly weird looking object, but quite the contrary, a simple brown wooden box, about a foot square and few inches deep.

Without touching it or picking it up Numboss could see that the box was in good shape--in fact it looked completely undamaged. The wood was very well finished, the corners of the box neatly dovetailed, and the lid was held shut by a really nice brass latch. Even without further study, Numboss could tell that this box was not your usual beaten up old packing crate or fruit carton. But what was he to do about it? What about his Promise? Was he to revise the Promise yet again, to suit the moment? How far could he bend the rules before his own mind snapped? What about his all important integrity, which was at the root of his entire self-worth.

With a flash of incredible brilliance, Numboss then thought that if he chose to pick this box up, and proceeded to entertain some deep thoughts concerning it, he would not actually be violating any part of his Promise at all. But had he not resolved to abstain from deep thinking that resulted from



Arrested by indecision, Numboss frowned at the strange box,  
remembering his promise

finding new junk? Yes, of course. But this little box was obviously not junk. It was a piece of craftsmanship, made of fine wood, and with high quality brass hardware. What a beautiful loophole he had found in the legalities of his own integrity.

Numboss picked the box up, extremely tenderly, and examined it, feeling no inner conflict whatsoever. Balancing the box in his hand, he guessed that it was not empty, but contained something of significant weight. He turned it around and noticed that in addition to the really nice brass latch, it also had two really nice brass hinges at the back. Numboss thought to himself that, if nothing else, he could treasure these brass fixtures for their own beauty and polish them up to a glorious sheen.

Now for most treasure hunters, it would probably have been too much of a temptation to try and open such a box like this almost immediately upon finding it. But Numboss was too extraordinary for that. Giving in to temptation was simply not part of his character, and what is more, he h'd had a too mentally exhausting morning so far to just rush into any more episodes of deep decision making. Just surviving his own self-imposed tests, was enough already to deal with. Even though he had given himself the licence to go into any deep thinking concerning this box and its secret contents, he now chose to really savour this special privilege. He had earnt this reward with much mental ordeal and hair pulling. His test of self-discipline had paid off. Now he would return to his abode and enjoy the luxury of pondering about what to do with the box in comfort, free of anxiety, and free of the worry about being weak, breaking promises, or losing his mind.

## CHAPTER NINE

### ASSUMPTION

Once back inside his hut Numboss sat down on his stool and put the box on his knobbly knees. He looked at the little brass latch which held the lid shut, and wondered if a key would be needed to unlock it. But as he could not see any keyhole, he reasoned that it was just one of those “snap lock” latches, which only requires finger pressure to get it open.

Numboss didn't feel any great urgency to open the box. He could have easily prolonged his contemplation of the latch for hours, without actually making any attempt to snap it open. The box looked so well-made and of such fine quality that just the study of its exterior details was compelling enough, without the additional speculation of its interior aspects, and wondering what its secret contents could be. Numboss intended to indulge every possible nuance and subtlety offered to his mind by the finding of the box. To just rush ahead and open it seemed sacrilegious. He perceived that the universe would perhaps object to such dishonourable impatience by responding with a disappointing consequence. Perhaps if he just madly opened the box with the greed of expecting something really special, its contents, whatever they were, would somehow change or even disappear. As super-superstitious as this may seem, Numboss believed that his attitude to the box could affect its contents. And in order to ensure that he would properly access the box's interior secret, he made sure he had fully absorbed its exterior reality. This all may seem a very extreme procedure, even agonizingly so, but Numboss had too frequently been reminded in the

past (such as with the silver ball) that some things do not necessarily just exist independently from one's thoughts and intentions. It was a mistake, Numboss believed, to assume that reality, no matter how solid and seemingly indifferent to his presence, was so reliably fixed in space and time. He had experienced too many strange events in which he had become convinced that what he was thinking at the time could in some very weird way actually modify or even bring about drastic changes in the dynamic arrangement of substance and energy. Such a concept, that thought moulds matter, was one of the most startling things Numboss had ever learnt in all his research into the nature of reality. This did not conflict with the idea that the Universe had a mind of its own, bigger and better than his, which kept things orderly and consistent with certain laws. He just knew that every now and then he had stumbled across a few loopholes in which his very own thoughts had been given the opportunity to play a special creative role in the affairs of reality. At such times Numboss himself had always felt bigger and better than he normally did.

It was with these deep thoughts then that Numboss properly prepared himself for the moment of actually opening the box. He knew that there was something very auspicious about this box--not just its physical characteristics, but also all the characteristics of when and where he found it, and the special concurrence of these with the unusual characteristics of his mental state at the time. As his thoughts got deeper on these matters, the box, sitting there on his knobbly knees, assumed a deeper and deeper significance. It soon got to the point where he became completely transfixed, and for at least a whole hour he did nothing but remain motionless, staring at

the box with such a peculiar otherworldly look that if anyone had walked in and saw him they would have sworn he was dead

Outwardly Numboss was as still as a statue, but his mind was a flurry of activity, swept up by whirlwinds of deep thought, continually spiralling around that haunting idea that substance and energy in nature are never static, but always potentially animated by mind power. Numboss then considered that if dynamic thoughts could contribute to or even fundamentally create perceivable physical phenomena, then they could likewise work in the opposite manner. They could destroy parts of reality. He then had a sneaking suspicion that his mind was capable of antithought, which he believed was linked, or even identical to, the principle of doubt; and this caused aspects of reality around him to disintegrate and even disappear. Perhaps the dematerialization of his source book was somehow caused by his own subconscious faithlessness regarding its worth. Perhaps a growing sense of futility had somehow fulfilled itself by actually physically disposing of the very thing deemed futile. He also recalled how he had likewise even started to uncreate his own existence, when he began doubting his sanity; just by his own antithoughts he had almost dissolved into the Sea and met his own death. If doubt had had such antcreative power, then the opposite, faith, must logically possess an equivalent creative power.

At that point he focussed again on the box, and as he did so, he suddenly remembered his theory about time and light, and the experiment he had conducted with the barrel and the dripping tin cans. Whatever surprise was in the box, because it was in complete darkness and as of yet unknown to him, it could theoretically exist outside his current time dimension. Therefore, he thought, it was probably all the more susceptible to the

moulding forces of thought or antithought. In the same way that dreams are created or uncreated freely without reference to normal time/light co-ordinates, perhaps the interior of the box was a portion of dreamspace somehow intruding into the normal world. A kind of womb of creation, pregnant with the potential to physically materialize whatever he chose to think about.

Suddenly a bee buzzed past his nose. Numboss blinked and shook his head, as if waking himself up from a state of hypnosis. He looked again at the box, but this time with a more decisive expression. He felt the weight of the box again. Clearly it was not empty. Something solid was in there, and had been since he found it. Surely, whatever it was, this object was intrinsically indifferent to his thoughts. How could it change or metamorphosize into something else, just because of his mind? Why had he become so self-deluded to think that by some absurd alchemy of his deep thinking he could just magically influence or even create the contents of the box? Hadn't he already seen how such weird deep thinking messed up his mind? There were two basic answers that now reigned supreme in his head: The first was no -- no for no more of this abstract metaphysical speculation. The second was yes -- yes for opening the box without further ado. The time had come. He would try and open the box and thereby put a stop to the madness that yet again was creeping up on him because of his spiralling thinking habits. Yes--the time had come. He would try and open it.

Without any further procrastination, he pressed his fingers against the latch, expecting it to snap open. But nothing happened. It was either locked or jammed, and no matter how he gripped the lid and applied pressure to the latch at different angles, nothing would free it.

Numboss then decided that some special technique was called for. He got up and from his workbench lifted his tool box down onto the sandy floor. Thoughtfully rummaging through all his tools, he looked for a special thing which he called a “gripper”. His tools were not by any means as specialized as you may think. He had no real screwdrivers, sockets, pliers, drills or files. Most of what he had were just odd small pieces of scrap metal, most of it very rusty, blunt, and of very limited use for any job you care to mention. The “gripper” was one of only five real tools he had (a real hammer, a real axe, a real G clamp and a real sewing needle were the other ones). Everything else in his tool box was essentially rusty junk - bent nails, washers, old hinges, bottle caps, broken fishing hooks, buckles, broken springs, and so on. Sorting through it all he finally found the “gripper”, which was made of soft copper wire and looked like a small pair of tongs.

He took the “gripper” and applied it carefully to the little brass latch of the box. Squeezing hard and pulling firmly, Numboss’s knuckles whitened as he slowly increased the force of his effort. Then suddenly the “gripper” slipped and made a long curved scratch across the smooth wood of the lid.

Now you, I, or any ordinary person, might have exclaimed something rude at this point. Certainly there would have at least been a “Phooey!” or a “Shoot!”. But being emotional was simply not part of his character - he was too extraordinary for that. He realized the mistake of using the “gripper”, and wasn’t too impressed by the ugly scratch he had made on the beautiful wood. But he did not lose his temper or call himself names for his blunder. It was simply an honest accident, and not because of any carelessness on his part. He then re-examined the latch, and saw that it



had opened a little bit, forming a small gap under the part where it was originally clasped shut. Using the tip of a clean nail, he then pried the latch up, and without any further ordeal, it popped open. Even though the brass latch was now slightly bent out of shape, and a little scratched as well, he knew that he could easily straighten it later and polish it up. As for the scratch on the lid - well, he would also figure that out later.

Now the box was technically open, even though he had not yet lifted up the lid. He noticed that his fingers were very orange and powdery, having handled all the rusty bits of metal in his tool box. So before Numboss actually proceeded to look inside the box, and be tempted to touch and dirty whatever was in it, he first went down to the water's edge to clean his hands.

At the edge of the Great Blue Sea Numboss dipped his rusty fingers into the calm water. It was now about noon, and the dazzling summer Sun was high in the clear blue sky. Numboss looked down at his hands, gently moving under the warm shallow water. Little orange clouds of rust swirled around his fingers. As he lifted his hands out of the water, and as the water became clear again, he saw a very strange sight. Bending over the water, he saw his reflection. But because the Sun was right behind his head, all he saw was a wobbly silhouette of himself, his fuzzy hair haloed by a blinding ring of sunlight. Thin rays of light emanated from his image, creating sparkling stars and glinting reflections on the gently rippling water. His face was too dark to see any expression, and like a black moon it eclipsed the face of the Sun. The sight of this amazing reflection caused Numboss then to remember his extraordinary dream of the previous night. All the fantastic details of it came rushing into his mind like a cataract of images from a burst dam, one incredible vision following the next with ever

increasing power and majesty. He remembered his mathematical genius, the profound exchange with the bumble bee, the transcendental launch from the rainbow across the depths of space, just before the total eclipse, the plunge into the Sun's fiery heart, and the cool silvery throne prepared for him by the Man in the Moon. Numboss was completely astonished by the memory of his dream, and all that it signified symbolically. He realized that it was the only dream he had ever had in which he had actually journeyed to the Source, and become one with the Purpose of Life and the Meaning of the Universe. As he stood there, bent over his dark image blocking the Sun, he saw the corona of golden light glittering around his head, a corona which was like a glorious crown; the crown which he would have worn when he became the Lord of the Sun and sat upon the Solar Throne. He was simply overwhelmed by the symbolism of all this. To eclipse the Sun--to be at the Source, yes--to actually be the Source--must be his true destiny.

Then he considered the box, which awaited him in his hut, remaining to be opened. How could this little box be possibly connected with this incredible destiny of ultimately being at the Source and knowing everything there is to know? What could such a small object possibly contain that would finally give him the key to the puzzle of puzzles? Then suddenly, with great clarity and doubtlessness, Numboss knew. He knew, even before going back to open the box, precisely what it contained. Even though just several minutes earlier he had ridiculed himself for slipping into abstract metaphysical speculation, and had perceived the warning signs of madness due to inordinate deep thinking, his mind was now once again on the astral plane of hyperphysics. But this time things did not seem so



His reflection eclipsed the sun, and was  
charged with symbolic significance

abstract. Without a shadow of doubt he now knew what was in the box, and these are the thoughts which gave him this certainty:

As Numboss remained at the water's edge, all the pieces of a grand puzzle fell into place. As a reward for all the deep thinking he had ever done, all the devotion of his ardent investigations into the phenomena of light and time, all his relentless striving for knowledge and wisdom, perfecting the purpose of his solitude and the longevity of his age--as a reward for all these things the Universe had sent across the waves of time to the shores of his existence a very special prize. In tribute to both his integrity and genius, a little brown box had been left on his island for him, and only him, to find. Numboss was convinced that a supreme logic was at work, a kind of superlogic which defied ordinary calculation. All the events had perfectly conspired to fulfil his destiny. Having the extraordinary symbolic dream, passing the test of the unbroken Promise, finding the box, washing his hands, seeing his face eclipse the Sun, then finally remembering the dream. Both the principles of light and time were flawlessly unified in this experience. Not only was there the presence of a very special kind of light, radiating gloriously around the reflection of his head, but also the timing of the whole event was very special too. Everything had brilliantly coincided to produce the most intense and meaningful culmination of light and time he had ever experienced, and there he was, right at the focus of it all. Only something equally intense and consummating could logically follow--indeed must follow. And what could that be? Only one thing. Only one thing fitted in with the predetermined pattern of these events. Only one thing perfectly matched both the details of his dream and the physical dimensions of the box. The box must contain the Book of the Source. Out of an immaterial

symbolic dream a purely physical non-symbolic object had emerged--the actual real and tangible Book of the Source. Just as his old scrappy source book had so inexplicably dematerialized, so now it had inexplicably rematerialized as the Book of the Source. His dream foretold this. As with many other dreams he remembered, which so precisely premonitored real future events, he knew that this dream of being at the Source with the Book of the Source, could be no less prophetic. In fact, it was the ultimate premonition he could have ever imagined. All the synchronicity was perfectly in place. Everything underlined the predestination of a glorious plan. Everything was supremely and superlogically pointing to a beautiful conclusion: The box contains the very Book of the Source.

The Book will have elegant formulae encapsulating the nature of reality. It will reveal the workings behind the mysteries of light and time. It will explain exactly what a dream is, and how the mind works. It will clear away the fog of intellectual frustration, and finally make that which hitherto was mind-boggling perfectly clear. It will contain errorless diagrams and instructions on how to answer the ultimate question of all--who Numboss is, and why does Numboss exist? It will finally deliver him from all ignorance and uncertainty. For the book is the Book of the Source. The only book of its kind in existence, and for Numboss, the only book worthy of reading. For this is the book that he had begun writing himself, with all its flaws, but which the universe had finished and now published in all perfection.

With these incredibly lofty thoughts pulsating through his head, which seemed to Numboss so elegantly inevitable, he stood straight up and shook his hands. Then he strode back to his hut to claim his destiny.





His destiny hinged on what the box contained

## CHAPTER TEN

### TRANSFIGURATION

Sitting down on the stool, Numboss put the box across his knees. His face assumed a deep frown. His fingers gently gripped the edges of the lid. This was the moment of truth. It was a very strange moment. Time seemed to stop, and like a spectator, waited for what came next. It was as if outside of time's normal flow another kind of flux, quite different and much more mysterious and powerful than familiar time, determined the sequence of moments such as this. Then, with a tiny squeak from the little brass hinges, Numboss opened the box. And this is what he saw: A sunflower. Not a real sunflower, but an imitation of one, clearly moulded by someone with imagination. Fashioned out of some kind of hard clay-like material, it had about a dozen thick petals. These were painted such a bright yellow that Numboss almost thought they were on fire. In the middle of the ring of sunflower petals, where the seedhead would have been, was an unbroken circular mirror. The entire thing was without doubt beautiful, exquisite, and completely extraordinary. He had never seen anything like it.

But it was not a book. It was not The Book. As gorgeous as it was, the sunflower mirror was not at all what he had expected. Numboss had, by a profound mixture of deduction and premonition, prepared himself for something much more serious and much deeper than this. Where was the Book of the Source? Hadn't he determined that his proper destiny was to be the recipient of the Cosmic Magnum Opus? How could this simple sunflower mirror be anything but a cruel trick played by the universe on his



A sunflower! What kind of cosmic joke was this?



great mind? No, this was not what he had expected at all. Something, something very weird, had gone wrong.

But neither had he expected to see what he then saw. For as he held out the sunflower mirror at arms length in bewilderment, he then saw his own reflection in it, and this reflection was something completely unprecedented. For the face of Numboss had undergone a dramatic change. His eyes were wide in dumbfoundment, his mouth dropped to his chin with wonder and his hair and beard bristled out as if charged with energy. This reflection of his expression was so completely new that he barely recognized himself. He had seen mirror images of himself in the water lots of times. But they had always appeared dark and somewhat grim. In the water-reflection which he had just experienced minutes earlier, where he had so splendidly and auspiciously eclipsed the Sun, he then remembered how completely black he was, his own deep shadow completely concealing his own facial expression. That had been, as symbolic and momentous as it was, an image in which he could not see his own face. With that reflection the blinding brilliance of the source had made him invisible.

This mirror image of himself was clear, unobscured and strikingly perfect in every detail. Surely this sunflower mirror was not a cruel trick conspired by the universe to mess up his mind? Perhaps it was more like a joke, a sensational Cosmic Joke. For here he was, his own face, framed by a ring of fiery yellow petals of a sunflower - a flower of the Sun, a symbolic blossom of the Source - and he could see himself for what he really was, an absurdly funny looking little man. So if he really was to be The Man in the Sun, this is what he would look like. How ludicrous! Even though this ultimate destiny had been a purely symbolic idea, conceived in a dream, the

picture in his mind of people worldwide having to watch the Sun setting every day with a face like that ogling down on them was simply ridiculous. Why had he imagined, as he had seen in his extraordinary vision, that he would somehow look more stupendous and godlike? Why had he imagined that he would be so transfigured? Here he was, as plain as day, with a face that looked the complete opposite - rather fuddlebrained and dazed. To think that he would be transfigured into the Solar Lord. How preposterous! Transfiguration was surely not part of his character. If anything, the older he got, the more his face had become weirdly distorted, patterned after all the years of mind-stretching and brain-bending deep thinking he had done. Disfiguration was more likely to be part of his character. But cosmic transcendental solar-powered transfiguration was obviously the biggest joke his mind had ever played on itself.

And then, without himself actually realizing it at first, something so remarkable and extra-extraordinary occurred. Indeed it was something quite transcendental and cosmic. It escaped the bounds of all the deepest and loftiest thoughts he had ever pre- or postoccupied his mind with. And even though it was quite illogical, it happened right there in front of himself in the sunflower mirror, so he could not doubt its reality. He got the joke. And because he got the joke, he laughed. And because he was looking at himself when he got the joke, he saw himself laugh. And with that he indeed saw that a transfiguration had taken place.

At first he heard nothing, as if he was watching someone else laugh through a telescope, but too far away for any sound to reach his ears. But then, swiftly and ecstatically, the sound of his own laughter rushed into his ears, and triggered off a kind of feedback loop of increasing force,

oscillating inwards and outwards. What was at first an inside joke, somehow got outside. That was the crucial factor, that the energy got outside himself--it became outwardly expressed. It's one thing to privately indulge in an inside joke. But it's something else altogether more powerful when it is externalized, for it then affects the physical reality of the environment in dynamic ways. A sense of humour only becomes truly meaningful when you laugh and create special Laugh Waves that radiate in all directions, reaching other sensitive ears. Then, while watching absurd facial contortions, while picking up these weirdly contagious Laugh Waves, a harmonious reaction is created in someone else's mind, which keeps the laughter regenerating itself. The joke, whatever it may have been, blossoms into a phenomenon that possesses the very peculiar attribute of celebrating something that is far beyond the original meaning of the joke that started it. Laughter itself, in its fullest and most ideal state, with all its wonderful ridiculousness, becomes its own joke. Laugh Waves have the potential to start a chain reaction that defies all known Wave Theory. Laughter laughs at itself, and with its profundity of not needing any justification, it breaks down the stifling bonds of logical and sensible behaviour. It is the most transforming power in nature.

This is what precisely caused the transfiguration of Numboss. It could have never happened, or at least got started, without the sunflower mirror, with all its cosmic symbolic significance for Numboss's mind at that exact time in his life. The iconoclastic Inside Joke which it represented, and which he finally got, was the very first joke he had ever got, and it sent him into a whole new dimension.

As Numboss laughed, he laughed even more, for he laughed at seeing himself laughing. Even though he had nobody else to share his laughter with and keep it going, he did have the mirror. Every time he looked at his face, with the sunny petals radiating out from his reflection, he thought of the irony this experience was, because of his dream and his quest for the Solar Throne. Not even having the Book of the Source could have created such an irony, such a twist of destiny, such a new way of looking at things. It was a veritable miracle, if ever he had witnessed one. A miracle all the more miraculous because it was fundamentally very funny. A divine funniosity, a cosmic comedy, so superwitty that not even a god could outsmart it, was at the root of this miracle.

With his newly found sense of humour, and his transfigured face doing all kinds of weird things that he barely knew himself, Numboss laughed even more. Like a runaway train Numboss had unwarily launched himself into a fit, which kept feeding itself with its own hilarious energy. Very soon he was shaking like jelly and almost bursting at the seams with uncontrollable convulsions and spasms. His giggles and howlings rattled and roared through his every bone and nerve until he was almost exhausted. But he just kept on going. The walls and roof of his hut wobbled and clattered. Little clouds of dust puffed out from the doorway as he stomped about, trying to find a way to vent all the excess Laugh Waves bursting forth from his whole being, as he kept getting and re-getting the joke.

And then, from a crevice in his vibrating roof, a small floppy object fell onto the floor in front of him. It was his source book, all damp and crumpled with many pages falling out. It must have originally fallen down from his observation post and slid into some nook in all the junk of his



The laughter of Numboss blossomed beyond all reason

ceiling. Giggling with astonishment, Numboss paused to pick up a few pages. He looked at some of his old notes, and all those bewildering scribblings of numbers and crossed out diagrams. And then, with an even more energetic spasm of laughter, he flung the pages one by one in the air and around the hut like confetti.

There was so much cooped up laughter in Numboss that the whole island soon began to resonate from dune to dune and rock to rock with the vibrations radiating from his hut. Flocks of noisy gulls rose up in alarm on the beaches. Trees trembled and shook the lazy sparrows into a twittering frenzy. Rabbits twitched their ears to a strange new sound quivering through the grasses. Eventually even the rocks themselves quaked a bit, widening their cracks and dislodging patches of lichen. And the sand agitated, sifting down into hollows and nooks between roots. The island had become a giant sounding board that reflected, echoed and amplified the resounding laughter of Numboss.

Like music from a never used instrument, laughter flowed out of Numboss as naturally and gloriously as if his whole mind and body had been designed for producing nothing but laughter. His soul felt like a set of cymbals that had been dug up from the ground, where they had rusted away in silence, but now were polished to a sparkling gleam, and now flashed brilliantly in the sun as they rang out loud a wild penetrating sound of uninhibited joy and understanding. The release of all his jammed up mental mechanisms was soon more like an explosion of an entire orchestra. Peals of laughter echoed across the island like chimes and gongs; cries of bliss soared into the air like brass fanfares, followed by descending woodwind tremolos as he regained his breath. And all the while, as he stumbled about inside his

hut, he did not lose his grip on the sunflower mirror, but kept holding it up to his tear-flooded face as if he just couldn't get enough of it.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE BOUNTY BLINK

After a long while, when he gradually simmered down and the laughter subsided because he just could not keep it up without collapsing completely, Numboss took the sunflower mirror outside and looked at it in the sunlight. As he held it up, the petals glowed in the golden light with such a cheerful beauty that he was simply spellbound . He looked at himself again in the reflection, and saw himself grinning, but he was now so overwhelmed by what he then realized was the happiest day of his life to start laughing again. He was so moved by it all that he started to cry instead. And even though that alone--to cry--was yet another extra-extraordinary breakthrough for him, something else, perhaps even more incredible, then happened. Numboss spoke to himself. This, between wordless laughter and wordless crying, was the final missing link enabling Numboss to become one with himself.

“You will never understand every mystery, Numboss, you old fool”, he said, grinning. “And this must be the best mystery of all. Yet you know,--yes--you know, that what all along you’ve missed has always been right under your nose. You thought the Source was only in the Sun. You thought that you would somehow, symbolically or whatever, have to get inside the Sun, to reach the Source, to know the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe. You thought that to be complete you would have to be at the Source and have a special book at your side. You thought that you would have to be transfigured and become like the gods. But now you know





"Look at yourself.....you are happy!"

that the Sun only wants to get inside you, to warm up your cold soul. It wants to get to your Source as much as you want to get to its. Well, what does that prove? Think! Yes, that's it! Ah ha! You've got it! The source is everywhere! You already are a god! In the Sun; in the flowers; in you, you nitwit; in every wave on the beach, in every grain of sand, the Source is to be found. There are gods everywhere. Who needs the Book of the Source? The Universe has given you this sunflower mirror as a gift, just as you yourself have given the Universe your own laughter today. The Source has given itself laughter and joy through you. Look at yourself, Numboss--you are happy. That means the Universe is happy. If the source is everywhere and in everything, then everywhere and everything must feel connected by the same happiness. By golly! These are the best deep thoughts you've ever had, you old numbskull Numboss!"

Just to hear himself speak, and see his own mouth move and voice these words, or any words for that matter, was such a sensational moment in his life that from that day on Numboss was never quite the same again. With knowing the things he knew that day came a deeper, a wilder, and a more expressive love for life. This new dimension to his character immediately jumped into action. For it was only moments after he spoke those words to himself that he then suddenly felt compelled to start running across the sand dunes, singing out loud weird and spontaneously invented rhymes. This is only a sampling of the kind of nonsense Numboss sang, (it's not really nonsense, but rather the perfectly beautiful expressions of a free soul):

What a delight

What a paradox

It's so dynamite  
Nothing's orthodox  
Pretend I'm a kite  
I'm animated  
Feel like a sprite  
Less antiquated

There is no arithmetic  
Oh what a treat  
To feel so elastic  
It's all so sweet  
So very fantastic  
To feel complete

Berries and nuts  
Fruit of my dreaming  
No ifs and buts  
The Sun is a-beaming  
Oh what a consequence  
Peanuts and pine cones  
Fruit of intelligence  
Rock, sand and stones

Some of his stuff, however, did become definitely quite silly:

Wind all gusty

Sand in my eye  
Tools all rusty  
Where's my fish pie?

No excuse had the spruce  
At my birthday party  
Not to introduce the juice  
I was feeling hearty

And so on and so on. Numboss obviously had an inborn gift for inventing nonsense, and where it all came from -- no-one knows. None of it was necessarily good poetry, but it wasn't bad for someone who hadn't ever spoken a word. And at least the words did rhyme. Whatever it all actually meant, did not matter at all, because he never stopped to consider its meaning. Only after a long while, (which produced so much nonsense that I would not dare to repeat it here for fear that you may seriously end up questioning his sanity), did he suddenly pause in his prancing about the dunes. Then he held up the sunflower mirror to the dazzling Sun, and in a more solemn tone said:

And I do conclude  
There's no substitute  
For the gratitude  
Of the Sun's salute

Then with that, contrary to any conclusion, he danced away down the beach, continuing to sing and spontaneously invent yet more short rhymes, according to whatever came to mind.

And what happened then, as he merrily danced and skipped along the beach, gave rise to a phenomenon which could be considered by some a miracle, by another a form of magic, or by someone else a rare oddity of natural science which cannot be explained by existing knowledge. For as he ran along the water's edge, Numboss began tossing the sunflower mirror gently in the air like a hat. Then he would gracefully catch it again in the other hand, and like a juggler, throw it back up, and then catch it again likewise. Because of this the bright Sun reflected from the mirror, and sent flashing beams of light shooting in every direction. And it just so happened that some of these light beams reached a fishing boat far offshore on the Great Blue Sea. The extraordinary thing about this is that these flashes of light from Numboss's mirror, radiating out from the beach, were the first ever to make the whole island visible to the world. For, as you may remember, that little peanut-shaped bit of land was not really meant to be there at all--as far as the rest of the world was concerned it simply should not have existed.

"Will you look at that, Jim!" called the boatman to his mate, "There's someone signalling to us from that island. Look! Over there, on the horizon!"

"Nah! You must be seeing things, Bert!" his mate replied from the other end of the boat, without bothering to look. "There're no islands 'round 'ere in these waters. What you see must be a mirage or something. We're nowhere near land." And just then, before Bert could argue, Jim





The sunlight bounced off the sunflower mirror, as Numboss skipped along the beach

called out: “Hey! Look at our catch! Whoa! Give me a hand Bert! We’ve struck gold today!” And indeed, just at that moment the fishermen hauled up their net onto deck, and it was more loaded with fish than any other catch they had ever got. After they emptied the net, Bert looked again in the direction of where he had seen the island, but it was gone.

Indeed what Bert had seen was, as his friend had told him, a mirage. And the weird thing about a mirage, as you may know, is that it will show something to appear in a place where it does not really exist. It was true that the little peanut-shaped island that Numboss lived on was, for reason beyond all reason, outside the reach of all other people. Numboss had been, as he himself somehow knew, quite detached from the rest of the world in the most peculiar and extraordinary way, even though, paradoxically, the junk of the world ended up on his beaches. The place had always been like a cobweb, trapping light, energy and matter, but never releasing it back, causing itself to be invisible. Nothing about the island or its lone human occupant, neither reflected light, soundwaves or any other form of information, was ever dispatched outwards for others to perceive or discover.

This, at least, had been the state of affairs up until now. When Numboss experienced the iconoclasm of the sunflower mirror, which caused his breakthrough into the dimension of laughter, things changed. Because he laughed, and because he danced along the beach with his sunflower mirror, flashing in the Sun, he had, for the first time, finally made contact with the eyes of another living human. That it was all simply an accident of reflected sunlight flashing across the waters cannot be an adequate explanation for what happened, because the mirage of the whole island was seen only when he danced and laughed along the beach with the mirror. It was as if by

finally outwardly expressing the joy of his own existence, Numboss had also finally made the whole island outwardly existent.

The mirage only appeared when Numboss celebrated his happiness. Without any knowledge himself of how far they went, he would send scintillating beams of sunlight shooting many miles across the wide waters. If, on certain days when he celebrated his happiness, the sky was cloudy and the Sun obscured, then the mirage would not appear. It was only direct sunlight that had the power, by first reflecting off the mirror, to escort the other reflected light from the whole island into the realm of visibility. As soon as Numboss ended his joyful antics with the mirror, the whole mirage of the island vanished. The image of the island never appeared without his flashing mirror, and the image of his flashing mirror never appeared separately from the image of the island.

Numboss treasured the sunflower mirror in a very special way. He kept it exclusively for the purpose for which it was given to him by the universe. He never subjected it to any scientific treatment. As invaluable as a perfect mirror is for experiments dealing with light, Numboss felt that his mirror was endowed with a special power that belonged to a dimension outside of scientific inquiry, and it would be pure sacrilege to abuse that power.

For as much as he never abandoned his scientific pursuits, he never deluded himself by assuming that the intellectualisms of deep thinking were somehow superior to the absurd happiness he could now experience by laughing at himself and making up silly poems. In fact he now felt better equipped for scientific pursuits, for he was now no longer enslaved to the idea that he must find the answers to every possible question. He already



had the quintessential answer, and was now more inclined to look for questions, just for the pure intellectual pleasure of it, without trying to desperately define any particular conclusions.

Every time Numboss felt unfulfilled, or too immersed in the abstractions of deep thought, or weirdly detached from reality, or disturbed by dreams, or overpuzzled by experiences with new junk, he would take the sunflower mirror out of its box and look at himself in it. Then, as always, he would compulsively start laughing and singing, and inventing funny little poems. With the bright yellow petals that someone with imagination had moulded and painted, gleaming cheerfully in the Sun, Numboss would then dance and skip up and down the beach, tossing and flashing the mirror in the air.

And not ever did he realize that while he did this, he created the mirage of the whole island, and in so doing, a legend for others. For it became folklore among the boatmen that to see the mirage with the strange flashing light was a good omen. The mirage became known as the Bounty Blink. This was because that any day that the Blink was seen, the catch of fish would always be unaccountably bountiful. And at the end of such a day all the boatmen and fishermen of the Great Blue Sea would go home laughing among themselves for how uncanny was their luck.

THE END



The Bounty Blink

# THE BOUNTY BLINK

by A. Miles

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## A CHAPTER BY CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

### Chapter One: A BEACH BEYOND REACH

A description of a desert island in the middle of nowhere sets the stage. A hermit, called Numboss, lives on the island, unaware of where he came from, why he is where he is, and what his purpose in life is.

### Chapter Two: NUMBOSS

Portrays the eccentric character of this "funny little man", and introduces the weird nature of his mind and his penchant for "deep thinking".

### Chapter Three: LOST AND FOUND

Numboss routinely collects odd bits of rubbish washed up on the sand. Finding such junk provides clues as to the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe. His quest for knowledge begins with pondering the puzzles he encounters on the beaches.

### Chapter Four: MOONBEAMS AND DREAMS

As he gets deeper into thought, Numboss grows fascinated by the moon and the optical effects of moonlight. He has some strange dreams induced by the lunar mysteries, which unexplainably link with future events. He becomes ever more mystified by the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe.

### Chapter Five: A SCIENTIFIC BENT

Describes the "practical" side of Numboss - how he survives, how he built his hut etc. Also explores his scientific preoccupations with "solar research", Time Theory, and other experiments. Tells how he keeps records of his brainwaves in his "source book".

### Chapter Six: A SHADOW OF DOUBT

Numboss loses his "source book" and then begins to question whether it is possible to ever know the Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe. The cool rational structure of his thinking begins to crumble. He wonders if he is cracking up. He then makes a vow not to engage in any more deep thinking.

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Chapter Seven: THE DREAM

While asleep, Numboss has an extraordinary vision of going to the core of the Sun and becoming the Solar Lord. The dream fulfills his lifelong quest for ultimate knowledge and immortality.

Chapter Eight: TEMPTATION COVE

The following morning Numboss feels better about himself. Has no memory of the dream, but remembers his vow. While out walking he finds a small wooden box washed up in a secret cove. Almost suffers a mental breakdown while deciding what to do with the box.

Chapter Nine: ASSUMPTION

Absurd metaphysical speculations concerning the possible contents of the unopened box cause intense self-delusion. He then remembers the dream of becoming the Solar Lord, and has yet another vision in which he sees himself deified. Prepares to open the box, convinced it was sent to him by the Universe as a "Divine Gift" which must contain the ultimate key to his destiny.

Chapter Ten: TRANSFIGURATION

The box contains a mirror in the shape of a sunflower - not at all what Numboss expected. This represents the iconoclasm of the whole story. All the pieces of a grand puzzle fall into place. Numboss finally bursts into laughter at seeing his reflection in the mirror, and then understands the profound irony of the event. Moved to joy by a new and deep understanding about himself, he spontaneously expresses how he feels. His intellectual madness evaporates and he feels free. The Meaning of Life and the Purpose of the Universe is, he realizes, not found by what he thinks, but what he feels.

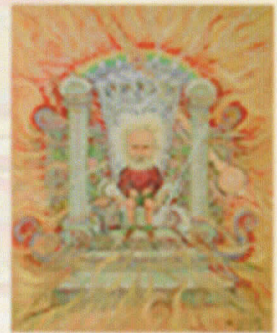
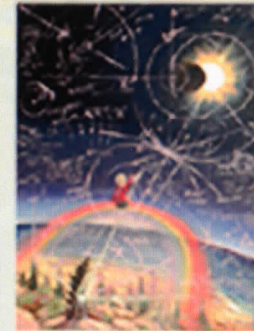
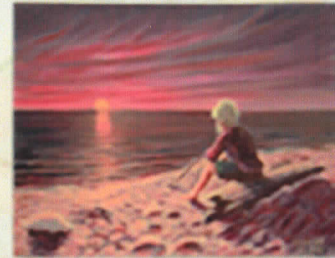
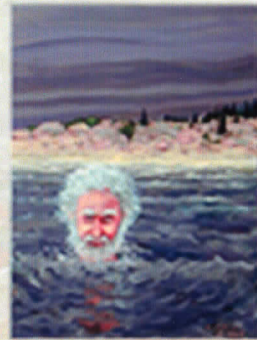
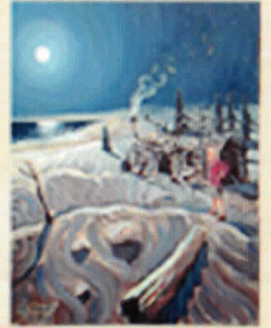
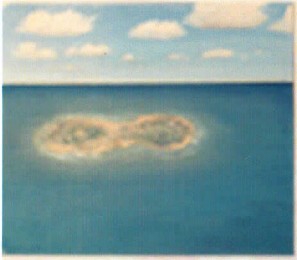
Chapter Eleven: THE BOUNTY BLINK

Having experienced this breakthrough, Numboss feels so liberated from the burden of deep thoughts, that his happiness causes a strange and quite transcendental effect in his environment. Up to now, the desert island had always been invisible to the rest of the world, as if it somehow did not really exist. But now, every time Numboss dances along the beaches with his sunflower mirror, he unknowingly creates a flashing light that is seen from afar by some fishermen. The reflection of sunlight from the mirror, flashing in every direction as Numboss merrily tosses it in the air, unexplainably forms a mirage of the whole island. Over time, the strange mirage becomes known, in the folklore of the fishermen, as The Bounty Blink\*, because it is always associated with abundant catches of fish. No-one ever finds out what actually causes this strange phenomenon, and likewise Numboss never knows that his happiness is the source of a curious local legend.

\* The word "blink" is used here as a noun. A blink is a sparkle or glimmer of light, or a whitish reflection of light about the horizon (as with "iceblink").



# Illustrations for the "Bounty Blink"



By A.Miles