

anyone so early, and since it might be his only chance to try, and since the musicians were already poised and ready, he would—but just for a little while.

11. Dischord and Dynne

One by one, the hours passed, and at exactly 5:22 (by Tock's very accurate clock) Milo carefully opened one eye and, in a moment, the other. Everything was still purple, dark blue, and black, yet scarcely a minute remained to the long, quiet night.

He stretched lazily, rubbed his eyelids, scratched his head, and shivered once as a greeting to the early-morning mist.

"I must wake Chroma for the sunrise," he said softly. Then he suddenly wondered what it would be like to lead the orchestra and to color the whole world himself.

The idea whirled through his thoughts until he quickly decided that since it couldn't be very difficult, and since they probably all knew what to do by themselves anyway, and since it did seem a shame to wake



And so, as everyone slept peacefully on, Milo stood on tiptoes, raised his arms slowly in front of him, and made the slightest movement possible with the index finger of his right hand. It was now 5:23 A.M.

As if understanding his signal perfectly, a single piccolo played a single note and off in the east a solitary shaft of cool lemon light flicked across the sky. Milo

smiled happily and then cautiously crooked his finger again. This time two more piccolos and a flute joined in and three more rays of light danced lightly into view. Then with both hands he made a great circular sweep in the air and watched with delight as all the musicians began to play at once.

The cellos made the hills glow red, and the leaves and grass were tipped with a soft pale green as the violins began their song. Only the bass fiddles rested as the entire orchestra washed the forest in color.

Milo was overjoyed because they were all playing for him, and just the way they should.

“Won’t Chroma be surprised?” he thought, signaling the musicians to stop. “I’ll wake him now.”

But, instead of stopping, they continued to play even louder than before, until each color became more brilliant than he thought possible. Milo shielded his eyes with one hand and waved the other desperately, but the colors continued to grow brighter and brighter and brighter, until an even more curious thing began to happen.

As Milo frantically conducted, the sky changed slowly from blue to tan and then to a rich magenta red. Flurries of light-green snow began to fall, and the leaves on the trees and bushes turned a vivid orange.

All the flowers suddenly appeared black, the gray rocks became a lovely soft chartreuse, and even peacefully sleeping Tock changed from brown to a magnificent ultramarine. Nothing was the color it should have been, and yet, the more he tried to straighten things out, the worse they became.

“I wish I hadn’t started,” he thought unhappily as a pale-blue blackbird flew by. “There doesn’t seem to be any way to stop them.”



He tried very hard to do everything just the way

Chroma had done, but nothing worked. The musicians played on, faster and faster, and the purple sun raced quickly across the sky. In less than a minute it had set once more in the west and then, without any pause, risen again in the east. The sky was now quite yellow and the grass a charming shade of lavender. Seven times the sun rose and almost as quickly disappeared as the colors kept changing. In just a few minutes a whole week had gone by.

At last the exhausted Milo, afraid to call for help and on the verge of tears, dropped his hands to his sides. The orchestra stopped. The colors disappeared, and once again it was night. The time was 5:27 A.M.

“Wake up, everybody! Time for the sunrise!” he shouted with relief, and quickly jumped from the music stand.

“What a marvelous rest,” said Chroma, striding to the podium. “I feel as though I’d slept for a week. My, my, I see we’re a little late this morning. I’ll have to cut my lunch hour short by four minutes.”

He tapped for attention, and this time the dawn proceeded perfectly.

“You did a fine job,” he said, patting Milo on the head. “Someday I’ll let you conduct the orchestra yourself.”

Tock wagged his tail proudly, but Milo didn’t say a word, and to this day no one knows of the lost week but the few people who happened to be awake at 5:23 on that very strange morning.

“We’d better be getting along,” said Tock, whose alarm had begun to ring again, “for there’s still a long way to go.”

Chroma nodded a fond good-bye as they all started back through the forest, and in honor of the visit he made all the wild flowers bloom in a breathtaking display.

“I’m sorry you can’t stay longer,” said Alec sadly. “There’s so much more to see in the Forest of Sight. But I suppose there’s a lot to see everywhere, if only you keep your eyes open.”

They walked for a while, all silent in their thoughts, until they reached the car and Alec drew a fine telescope from his shirt and handed it to Milo.

“Carry this with you on your journey,” he said softly, “for there is much worth noticing that often escapes the eye. Through it you can see everything from the tender moss in a sidewalk crack to the glow of the farthest star—and, most important of all, you can see things as they really are, not just as they seem to be. It’s my gift to you.”

Milo placed the telescope carefully in the glove compartment, and reached up to shake Alec by the hand. Then he stepped on the starter and, with his head full of strange new thoughts, drove out the far end of the forest.

The easy rolling countryside now stretched before them in a series of dips and rises that leaped up one side of each crest and slid gently down the other in a way that made stomachs laugh and faces frown. As they topped the **brow** of the highest hill, a deep valley appeared ahead. The road, finally making up its mind, **plummeted** down, as if anxious to renew acquaintance with the sparkling blue stream that flowed below. When they reached the floor of the valley the wind grew stronger as it funneled through the rocks, and directly ahead a bright-colored speck grew larger and larger.

“It looks like a wagon,” cried Milo excitedly.

“It is a wagon—a carnival wagon,” seconded Tock. And that’s exactly what it was—parked at the side of the road, painted bright red, and looking quite deserted. On its side in enormous white letters bordered in black was the inscription **KAKOFONOUS A. DISCHORD**, and below in slightly smaller black letters bordered in white

was **DOCTOR OF DISSONANCE**.

“Perhaps if someone’s at home he might tell us how far we have to go,” said Milo, parking next to the wagon.

He tiptoed timidly up the three wooden steps to the door, tapped lightly, and leaped back in fright, for the moment he knocked there was a terrible crash from inside the wagon that sounded as if a whole set of dishes had been dropped from the ceiling onto a hard stone floor. At the same time the door flew open, and from the dark interior a hoarse voice inquired, “Have you ever heard a whole set of dishes dropped from the ceiling onto a hard stone floor?”

Milo, who had tumbled back off the steps, sat up quickly, while Tock and the Humbug rushed from the car to see what had happened.

“Well, have you?” insisted the voice, which was so raspy that it made you want to clear your own throat.

“Not until just now,” replied Milo, getting to his feet.

“Ha! I thought not,” said the voice happily. “Have you ever heard an ant wearing fur slippers walk across a thick wool carpet?” And, before they could answer, he went on in his strange croaking way: “Well, don’t just stand there in the cold; come in, come in. It’s lucky you happened by; none of you looks well.”

The faint glow of a ceiling lamp dimly illuminated the wagon as they cautiously stepped inside—Tock first, eager to defend against all dangers; Milo next, frightened but curious; and the Humbug last, ready at any moment to run for his life.



“That’s right; now let’s have a look at you,” he said. “T-T-T-T-T. Very bad, very bad; a serious case.”

The dusty wagon was lined with shelves full of curious boxes and jars of a kind found in old apothecary shops. It looked as though it hadn’t been swept out in years. Bits and pieces of equipment lay strewn all over the floor, and at the rear was a heavy wooden table covered with books, bottles, and bric-a-brac.

“Have you ever heard a blindfolded octopus unwrap a cellophane-covered bathtub?” he inquired again as the air was filled with a loud, crinkling, snapping sound.

Sitting at the table, busily mixing and measuring, was the man who had invited them in. He was wearing a long white coat with a stethoscope around his neck and a small round mirror attached to his forehead, and the only really noticeable things about him were his tiny mustache and his enormous ears, each of which was fully as large as his head.

“Are you a doctor?” asked Milo, trying to feel as well as possible.

“I am **KAKOFONOUS A. DISCHORD**, DOCTOR OF **DISSONANCE**,” roared the man, and, as he spoke, several small explosions and a grinding crash were heard.

“What does the ‘A’ stand for?” stammered the nervous bug, too frightened to move.



“AS LOUD AS POSSIBLE,”

bellowed the doctor, and two screeches and a bump accompanied his response. “Now, step a little closer and stick out your tongues.”

“Just as I suspected,” he continued, opening a large

dusty book and thumbing through the pages. “You’re suffering from a severe lack of noise.”

He began to jump around the wagon, snatching bottles from the shelves until he had a large assortment in various colors and sizes collected at one end of the table. All were neatly labeled: Loud Cries, Soft Cries, Bangs, Bongs, Smashes, Crashes, Swishes, Swooshes, Snaps and Crackles, Whistles and Gongs, Squeaks, Squawks, and Miscellaneous Uproar. After pouring a little of each into a large glass beaker, he stirred the mixture thoroughly with a wooden spoon, watching intently as it smoked and steamed and boiled and bubbled.

“Be ready in just a moment,” he explained, rubbing his hands.

Milo had never seen such unpleasant-looking medicine and wasn’t at all anxious to try any. “Just what kind of a doctor are you?” he asked suspiciously.

“Well, you might say I’m a specialist,” said the doctor. “I specialize in noise—all kinds—from the loudest to the softest, and from the slightly annoying to the terribly unpleasant. For instance, have you ever heard a square-wheeled steam roller ride over a street full of hard-boiled eggs?” he asked, and, as he did, all that could be heard were loud crunching sounds.

“But who would want all those terrible noises?” asked Milo, holding his ears.

“Everybody does,” said the surprised doctor; “they’re very popular today. Why, I’m kept so busy I can hardly fill the orders for noise pills, racket lotion, clamor salve, and hubbub tonic. That’s all people seem to want these days.”

He stirred the beaker of liquid a few more times and then, as the steam cleared, continued:

“Business wasn’t always so good. Years ago, everyone wanted pleasant sounds and, except for a few orders during wars and earthquakes, things were very bad. But then the big cities were built and there was a great need for honking horns, screeching trains, clanging bells, deafening shouts, piercing shrieks, gurgling drains, and all the rest of those wonderfully unpleasant sounds we use so much of today. Without them people would be very unhappy, so I make sure that they get as much as they want. Why, if you take a little of my medicine every day, you’ll never have to hear a beautiful sound again. Here, try some.”

“If it’s all the same to you, I’d rather not,” said the Humbug, backing away to the far corner of the wagon.

“I don’t want to be cured of beautiful sounds,” insisted Milo.

“Besides,” growled Tock, who decided that he didn’t much like Dr. Dischord, “there is no such illness as lack of noise.”

“Of course not,” replied the doctor, pouring himself a small glass of the liquid; “that’s what makes it so difficult to cure. I only treat illnesses that don’t exist: that way, if I can’t cure them, there’s no harm done—just one of the precautions of the trade,” he concluded, and, seeing that no one was about to take his medicine, he again reached toward the shelf, removed a dark-amber bottle, dusted it carefully, and placed it on the table in front of him.

“Very well, if you want to go all through life suffering from a noise deficiency, I’ll give it all to the DYNNE for his lunch,” he said, and he uncorked the bottle with a hollow-sounding pop.

For a moment everything was quiet as Milo, Tock, and the Humbug looked intently at the bottle, wondering what Dr. Dischord would do next. Then, very faintly at first, they heard a low rumbling that sounded miles away. It grew louder and louder and louder and closer and closer and closer until it became a deafening, ear-splitting roar that seemed to be coming from inside the tiny bottle. Then, from the bottle, a thick bluish smog spiraled to the ceiling, spread out, and gradually

assumed the shape of a thick bluish smog with hands, feet, bright-yellow eyes, and a large frowning mouth. As soon as the smog had gotten completely out of the bottle it grasped the beaker of liquid, tilted back what would have been its head, if it really had one, and drank it all in three gulps.

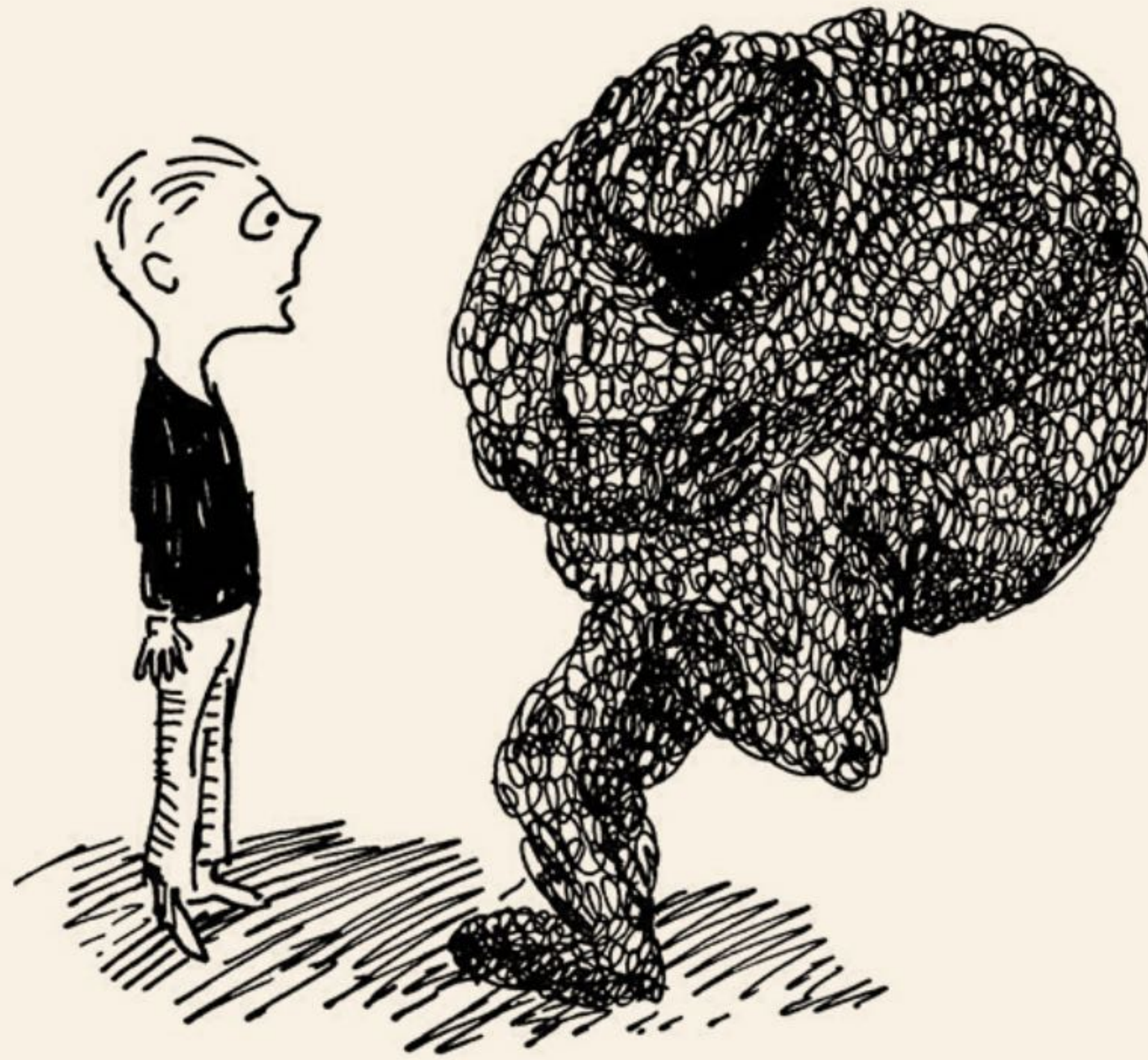
“A-H-H-H, THAT WAS GOOD, MASTER,” he belated, shaking the whole wagon. “I thought you’d never let me out. Terribly cramped in there.”

“This is my assistant, the awful DYNNE,” said Dr. Dischord. “You must forgive his appearance, for he really doesn’t have any. You see, he is an orphan whom I raised myself without benefit of governess or any other assistance for——”

“No nurse is good nurse,” interrupted the DYNNE, doubling up with laughter (if you can imagine a thick bluish smog doubling up with laughter).

“For I found him,” continued the doctor, ignoring this outburst, “living alone and unwanted in an abandoned soda bottle—without family or relatives——”

“No niece is good niece,” roared the DYNNE again, with a laugh that sounded like several sirens going off at once, and he slapped at where his knee should have been.



“And brought him here,” continued the **exasperated** Dischord, “where, despite his lack of shape or features, I trained——”

“No nose is good nose,” thundered the DYNNE once again as he collapsed in another fit of hysterics and clutched his sides.

“I trained him as my assistant in the business of concocting and dispensing noise,” finished the doctor, mopping his brow with a handkerchief.

“No noise is good noise,” exclaimed the Humbug happily, trying to catch the spirit of things.

“THAT’S NOT FUNNY AT ALL,” sobbed the DYNNE, who went to a corner and sulked.

“What is a DYNNE?” asked Milo when he had recovered from the shock of seeing him appear.

“You mean you’ve never met the awful DYNNE before?” said Dr. Dischord in a surprised tone. “Why, I thought everyone had. When you’re playing in your room and making a great amount of noise, what do they tell you to stop?”

“That awful din,” admitted Milo.

“When the neighbors are playing their radio too loud, late at night, what do you wish they’d turn down?”

“That awful din,” answered Tock.

“When the street on your block is being repaired and the pneumatic drills are working all day, what does everyone complain of?”

“The dreadful row,” volunteered the Humbug brightly.

“The dreadful RAUW,” cried the anguished DYNNE, “was my grandfather. He perished in the great silence epidemic of 1712.”

Milo felt so sorry for the unhappy DYNNE that he

gave him his handkerchief, which was immediately covered in bluish smoggy tears.

“Thank you,” groaned the DYNNE; “that’s very kind. But I certainly can’t understand why you don’t like noise,” he said. “Why, I heard an explosion last week that was so lovely I cried for two days.”

The very thought of it upset him so much that he began to sob all over again in a way that sounded almost exactly like a handful of fingernails being scratched across a mile-long blackboard. He buried his head in the doctor’s lap.

“He’s very sensitive, isn’t he?” asked Milo, trying to comfort the emotional DYNNE.

“It’s true,” agreed Dr. Dischord. “But he’s right, you know, for noise is the most valuable thing in the world.”

“King Azaz says words are,” said Milo.

“NONSENSE,” the doctor roared. “Why, when a baby wants food, how does he ask?”

“He screams!” answered the DYNNE, looking up happily.

“And when an automobile wants gas?”

“It chokes!” he shouted again, jumping for joy.

“When a river wants water, what does it do?”

“It creaks!” bellowed the DYNNE as he collapsed

into a fit of uncontrolled laughter.

“And what happens when a new day begins?”

“It breaks!” he gasped joyfully from the floor, a look of utter bliss covering his face.

“You see how simple it is,” the doctor said to Milo, who didn’t see at all. And then, turning to the tear-stained, smiling DYNNE, he remarked, “Isn’t it time for you to go?”

“Where to?” asked Milo. “Perhaps we’re going the same way.”

“I think not,” the DYNNE replied, picking up an armful of empty sacks from the table, “for I’m going on my noise collection rounds. You see, once a day I travel throughout the kingdom and collect all the wonderfully horrible and beautifully unpleasant noises that have been made, pack them into my sacks, and bring them back here for the doctor to make his medicines from.”

“And a good job he does,” said Dr. Dischord, pounding his fist on the table.

“So, wherever the noise is, that’s where you’ll find me,” said the DYNNE with an appreciative smile; “and I must hurry along, for I understand that today there’s to be a screech, several loud crashes, and a bit of pandemonium.”

“And in which direction are you going?” asked the

doctor, mixing another brew.

“To Digitopolis,” replied Milo.

“How unfortunate,” he said as the DYNNE shuffled toward the door; “how very unfortunate, for then you must pass through the Valley of Sound.”

“Is that bad?” asked the perpetually worried Humbug.

The DYNNE paused in the doorway with a look of extreme horror on his almost featureless face, and the doctor shuddered in a way that sounded very much like a fast-moving freight train being derailed into a mountain of custard.

“Well you might ask, for you will find out soon enough” was all he would say as he sadly bade them farewell and the DYNNE galloped off on his rounds.

12. The Silent Valley

“How agreeable and pleasant this valley is,” thought Milo as once again they bounced along the highway, with the Humbug humming snatches of old songs, to his own vast amusement, and Tock sniffing contentedly at the wind.

“I really can’t see what Dr. Dischord was so concerned about; there certainly couldn’t be anything unpleasant along this road.” And just as the thought crossed his mind they passed through a heavy stone gateway and everything was very different.

At first it was difficult to tell just what had changed—it all looked the same and it all smelled the same—but, for some reason, nothing sounded the same.

“I wonder what’s happened?” said Milo. At least that’s what he tried to say, for, although his lips moved, not a sound came from his mouth.

And suddenly he realized what it was, for Tock was no longer ticking and the Humbug, although happily singing, was doing so in complete silence. The wind no longer rustled the leaves, the car no longer squeaked, and the insects no longer buzzed in the fields. Not the slightest thing could be heard, and it felt as if, in some mysterious way, a switch had been thrown and all the sound in the world had been turned off at the same instant.

The Humbug, suddenly realizing what had happened, leaped to his feet in terror, and Tock worriedly checked to see if he was still keeping time. It was certainly a strange feeling to know that no matter how loudly or softly you chatted or rattled or bumped, it all came out the same way—as nothing.

“How dreadful,” thought Milo as he slowed down the car.

The three of them began to talk and shout at once with absolutely no result until, hardly noticing where they were going, they had driven into the midst of a large crowd of people marching along the road. Some of them were singing at the tops of their nonexistent voices and the others were carrying large signs which proclaimed:

“DOWN WITH SILENCE”

“ALL QUIET IS NO DIET”

“IT’S LAUDABLE TO BE AUDIBLE”

“MORE SOUND FOR ALL”

And one enormous banner stated simply:

“HEAR HERE”

Except for these, and the big brass cannon being pulled along behind, they all looked very much like the residents of any other small valley to which you’ve never been.

When the car had stopped, one of them held up a placard which said: “WELCOME TO THE VALLEY OF SOUND.” And the others cheered as loudly as possible, which was not very loud at all.

“HAVE YOU COME TO HELP US?” asked another, stepping forward with his question.

“PLEASE!” added a third.

Milo tried desperately to say who he was and where he was going, but to no avail. As he did, four more

placards announced:

“~~LISTEN~~ LOOK CAREFULLY”

“AND WE”

“WILL TELL YOU”

“OF OUR TERRIBLE MISFORTUNE”



And while two of them held up a large blackboard, a third, writing as fast as he could, explained why there was nothing but quiet in the Valley of Sound.

“At a place in the valley not far from here,” he began, “where the echoes used to gather and the winds came to rest, there is a great stone fortress, and in it lives the

Soundkeeper, who rules this land. When the old king of Wisdom drove the demons into the distant mountains, he appointed her guardian of all sounds and noises, past, present, and future.

“For years she ruled as a wise and beloved monarch, each morning at sunrise releasing the day’s new sounds, to be borne by the winds throughout the kingdom, and each night at moonset gathering in the old sounds, to be catalogued and filed in the vast storage vaults below.”

The writer paused for a moment to mop his brow and then, since the blackboard was full, erased it completely and continued anew from the top.

“She was generous to a fault and provided us with all the sound we could possibly use: for singing as we worked, for bubbling pots of stew, for the chop of an ax and the crash of a tree, for the creak of a hinge and the hoot of an owl, for the squish of a shoe in the mud and the friendly tapping of rain on the roof, and for the sweet music of pipes and the sharp snap of winter ice cracking on the ground.”

He paused again as a tear of longing rolled from cheek to lip with the sweet-salty taste of an old memory.

“And all these sounds, when once used, would be

carefully placed in alphabetical order and neatly kept for future reference. Everyone lived in peace, and the valley flourished as the happy home of sound. But then things began to change.

“Slowly at first, and then in a rush, more people came to settle here and brought with them new ways and new sounds, some very beautiful and some less so. But everyone was so busy with the things that had to be done that they scarcely had time to listen at all. And, as you know, a sound which is not heard disappears forever and is not to be found again.

“People laughed less and grumbled more, sang less and shouted more, and the sounds they made grew louder and uglier. It became difficult to hear even the birds or the breeze, and soon everyone stopped listening for them.”

He again cleared the blackboard, as the Humbug choked back a sob, and continued writing.

“The Soundkeeper grew worried and disconsolate. Each day there were fewer sounds to be collected, and most of those were hardly worth keeping. Many people thought it was the weather, and others blamed the moon, but the general consensus of opinion held that the trouble began at the time that Rhyme and Reason were banished. But, no matter what the cause, no one

knew what to do.

“Then one day Dr. Dischord appeared in the valley with his wagon of medicines and the bluish smoggy DYNNE. He made a thorough examination and promised to cure everyone of everything; and the Soundkeeper let him try.

“He gave several bad-tasting spoonfuls of medicine to every adult and child, and it worked—but not really as expected. For he cured everybody of everything *but* noise. The Soundkeeper became furious. She chased him from the valley forever and then issued the following decree:

“‘FROM THIS DAY FORWARD THE VALLEY OF SOUND SHALL BE SILENT. SINCE SOUND IS NO LONGER APPRECIATED, I HEREBY ABOLISH IT. PLEASE RETURN ALL UNUSED AMOUNTS TO THE FORTRESS IMMEDIATELY.’

“And that’s the way it has been ever since,” he concluded sadly. “There is nothing we can do to change it, and each day new hardships are reported.”

A small man, with his arms full of letters and messages, pushed through the crowd and offered them to Milo. Milo took one which read:

Dear Soundkeeper,

We had a thunderstorm last week and the thunder still hasn't arrived. How long should we wait?

Yours truly,
A friend

Then he took a telegram which stated:

"BAND CONCERT GREAT SUCCESS STOP WHEN
MAY WE EXPECT THE MUSIC STOP"

"Now you see," continued the writer, "why you must help us attack the fortress and free sound."

"What can I do?" wrote Milo.

"You must visit the Soundkeeper and bring from the fortress one sound, no matter how small, with which to load our cannon. For, if we can reach the walls with the slightest noise, they will collapse and free the rest. It won't be easy, for she is hard to **deceive**, but you must try."

Milo thought for just a moment and then, with a resolute "I shall," volunteered to go.

Within a few minutes he stood bravely at the fortress door. "Knock, knock," he wrote neatly on a piece of paper, which he pushed under the crack. In a moment the great portal swung open, and, as it closed behind

him, a gentle voice sang out:

"Right this way; I'm in the parlor."

"Can I talk now?" cried Milo happily, hearing his voice once again.

"Yes, but only in here," she replied softly. "Now do come into the parlor."

Milo walked slowly down the long hallway and into the little room where the Soundkeeper sat listening **intently** to an enormous radio set, whose switches, dials, knobs, meters, and speaker covered one whole wall, and which at the moment was playing nothing.



“Isn’t that lovely?” she sighed. “It’s my favorite program—fifteen minutes of silence—and after that there’s a half hour of quiet and then an interlude of lull. Why, did you know that there are almost as many kinds of stillness as there are sounds? But, sadly enough, no one pays any attention to them these days.

“Have you ever heard the wonderful silence just before the dawn?” she inquired. “Or the quiet and calm

just as a storm ends? Or perhaps you know the silence when you haven’t the answer to a question you’ve been asked, or the hush of a country road at night, or the expectant pause in a roomful of people when someone is just about to speak, or, most beautiful of all, the moment after the door closes and you’re all alone in the whole house? Each one is different, you know, and all very beautiful, if you listen carefully.”

As she spoke, the thousands of little bells and chimes which covered her from head to toe tinkled softly and, as if in reply, the telephone began to ring, too.

“For someone who loves silence, she certainly talks a great deal,” thought Milo.

“At one time I was able to listen to any sound made any place at any time,” the Soundkeeper remarked, pointing toward the radio wall, “but now I merely——”

“Pardon me,” interrupted Milo as the phone continued to ring, “but aren’t you going to answer it?”

“Oh no, not in the middle of the program,” she replied, and turned the silence up a little louder.

“But it may be important,” insisted Milo.

“Not at all,” she assured him; “it’s only me. It gets so lonely around here, with no sounds to distribute or collect, that I call myself seven or eight times a day just to see how I am.”

“How are you?” he asked politely.

“Not very well, I’m afraid. I seem to have a touch of static,” she complained. “But what brings you here? Of course—you’ve come to tour the vaults. Well, they’re usually open to the public only on Mondays from two to four, but since you’ve traveled so far, we’ll have to make an exception. Follow me, please.”

She quickly bounced to her feet with a chorus of jingles and chimes and started down the hallway.

“Don’t you just love jingles and chimes? I do,” she answered quickly. “Besides, they’re very convenient, for I’m always getting lost in this big fortress, and all I have to do is listen for them and then I know exactly where I am.

They entered a tiny cagelike elevator and traveled down for fully three quarters of a minute, stopping finally in an immense vault, whose long lines of file drawers and storage bins stretched in all directions from where here began to where there ended, and from floor to ceiling.

“Every sound that’s ever been made in history is kept here,” said the Soundkeeper, skipping down one of the corridors with Milo in hand. “For instance, look here.” She opened one of the drawers and pulled out a small brown envelope. “This is the exact tune George Wash-

ington whistled when he crossed the Delaware on that icy night in 1777.”

Milo peered into the envelope and, sure enough, that’s exactly what was in it. “But why do you collect them all?” he asked as she closed the drawer.

“If we didn’t collect them,” said the Soundkeeper as they continued to stroll through the vault, “the air would be full of old sounds and noises bouncing around and bumping into things. It would be terribly confusing, because you’d never know whether you were listening to an old one or a new one. Besides, I do like to collect things, and there are more sounds than almost anything else. Why, I have everything here from the buzz of a mosquito a million years ago to what your mother said to you this morning, and if you come back here in two days, I’ll tell you what she said tomorrow. It’s really very simple; let me show you. Say a word—any word.”

“Hello,” said Milo, for that was all he could think of.

“Now where do you think it went?” she asked with a smile.

“I don’t know,” said Milo, shrugging his shoulders. “I always thought that——”

“Most people do.” She hummed, peering down one of the corridors. “Now, let me see: first we find the cab-

inet with today's sounds. Ah, here it is. Then we look under G for greetings, then under M for Milo, and here it is already in its envelope. So you see, the whole system is quite automatic. It's a shame we hardly use it any more."

"That's wonderful," gasped Milo. "May I have one little sound as a souvenir?"

"Certainly," she said with pride, and then, immediately thinking better of it, added, "not. And don't try to take one, because it's strictly against the rules."

Milo was crestfallen. He had no idea how to steal a sound, even the smallest one, for the Soundkeeper always had at least one eye carefully focused on him.

"Now for a look at the workshops," she cried, whisking him through another door and into a large abandoned laboratory full of old pieces of equipment, all untended and rusting.

"This is where we used to invent the sounds," she said wistfully.

"Do they have to be invented?" asked Milo, who seemed surprised at almost everything she told him. "I thought they just *were*."

"No one realizes how much trouble we go through to make them," she complained. "Why, at one time this shop was crowded and busy from morning to night."

"But how do you invent a sound?" Milo inquired.

"Oh, that's very easy," she said. "First you must decide exactly what the sound looks like, for each sound has its own exact shape and size. Then you make some of them here in the shop, and grind each one three times into an invisible powder, and throw a little of each into the air every time you need it."

"But I've never seen a sound," Milo insisted.

"You never see them out there," she said, waving her arm in the general direction of everywhere, "except every once in a while on a very cold morning when they freeze. But in here we see them all the time. Here, let me show you."

She picked up a padded stick and struck a nearby bass drum six times. Six large woolly, fluffy cotton balls, each about two feet across, rolled silently out onto the floor.

"You see," she said, putting some of them into a large grinder. "Now listen." And she took a pinch of the invisible powder and threw it into the air with a "BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM."

"Do you know what a handclap looks like?"

Milo shook his head.

"Try it," she commanded.

He clapped his hands once and a single sheet of clean

white paper fluttered to the floor. He tried it three more times and three more sheets of paper did the very same thing. And then he applauded as fast as he could and a great cascade of papers filled the air.



“Isn’t that simple? And it’s the same for all sounds. If you think about it, you’ll soon know what each one looks like. Take laughter, for instance,” she said, laughing brightly, and a thousand tiny brightly colored bubbles flew into the air and popped noiselessly. “Or speech,” she continued. “Some of it is light and airy, some sharp and pointed, but most of it, I’m afraid, is just heavy and dull.”

“How about music?” asked Milo excitedly.

“Right over here—we weave it on our looms. Symphonies are the large beautiful carpets with all the rhythms and melodies woven in. Concertos are these tapestries, and all the other bolts of cloth are serenades, waltzes, overtures, and rhapsodies. And we also have some of the songs that you often sing,” she cried, holding up a handful of brightly colored handkerchiefs.

She stopped for a moment and said sadly, “We even had one section over there that did nothing but put the sound of the ocean into sea shells. This was once such a happy place.”

“Then why don’t you make sound for everyone now?” he shouted, so eagerly that the Soundkeeper leaped back in surprise.

“Don’t shout so, young man! If there’s one thing we need more of around here, it’s less noise. Now come

with me and I’ll tell you all about it—and put that down immediately!” Her last remark was directed toward Milo’s efforts to stuff one of the large drumbeats into his back pocket.

They returned quickly to the parlor, and when the Soundkeeper had settled herself in a chair and carefully tuned the radio to a special hour of hush, Milo asked his question once again, in a somewhat lower voice.

“It doesn’t make me happy to hold back the sounds,” she began softly, “for if we listen to them carefully they can sometimes tell us things far better than words.”

“But if that is so,” asked Milo—and he had no doubt that it was—“shouldn’t you release them?”

“NEVER!” she cried. “They just use them to make horrible noises which are ugly to see and worse to hear. I leave all that to Dr. Dischord and that awful, awful DYNNE.”

“But some noises are good sounds, aren’t they?” he insisted.

“That may be true,” she replied stubbornly, “but if they won’t make the sounds that I like, they won’t make any.”

“But——” he started to say, and it got no further than that. For while he was about to say that he didn’t think that that was quite fair (a thought to which the

obstinate Soundkeeper might not have taken kindly) he suddenly discovered the way he would carry his little sound from the fortress. In the instant between saying the word and before it sailed off into the air he had clamped his lips shut—and the “but” was trapped in his mouth, all made but not spoken.

“Well, I mustn’t keep you all day,” she said impatiently. “Now turn your pockets out so that I can see that you didn’t steal anything and you can be on your way.”

When he had satisfied the Soundkeeper, he nodded his farewell—for it would have been most impractical to say “Thank you” or “Good afternoon”—and raced out the door.

13. Unfortunate Conclusions

With his mouth shut tight, and his feet moving as fast as thoughts could make them, Milo ran all the way back to the car. There was great excitement when he arrived, as Tock raced happily down the road to greet him. The Humbug personally accepted all congratulations from the crowd.

“Where is the sound?” someone **hastily** scribbled on the blackboard, and they all waited anxiously for the reply.

Milo caught his breath, picked up the chalk, and explained simply, “It’s **on the tip of my tongue.**”

Several people excitedly threw their hats into the air, some shouted what would have been a loud hurrah, and the rest pushed the heavy cannon into place. They