

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.

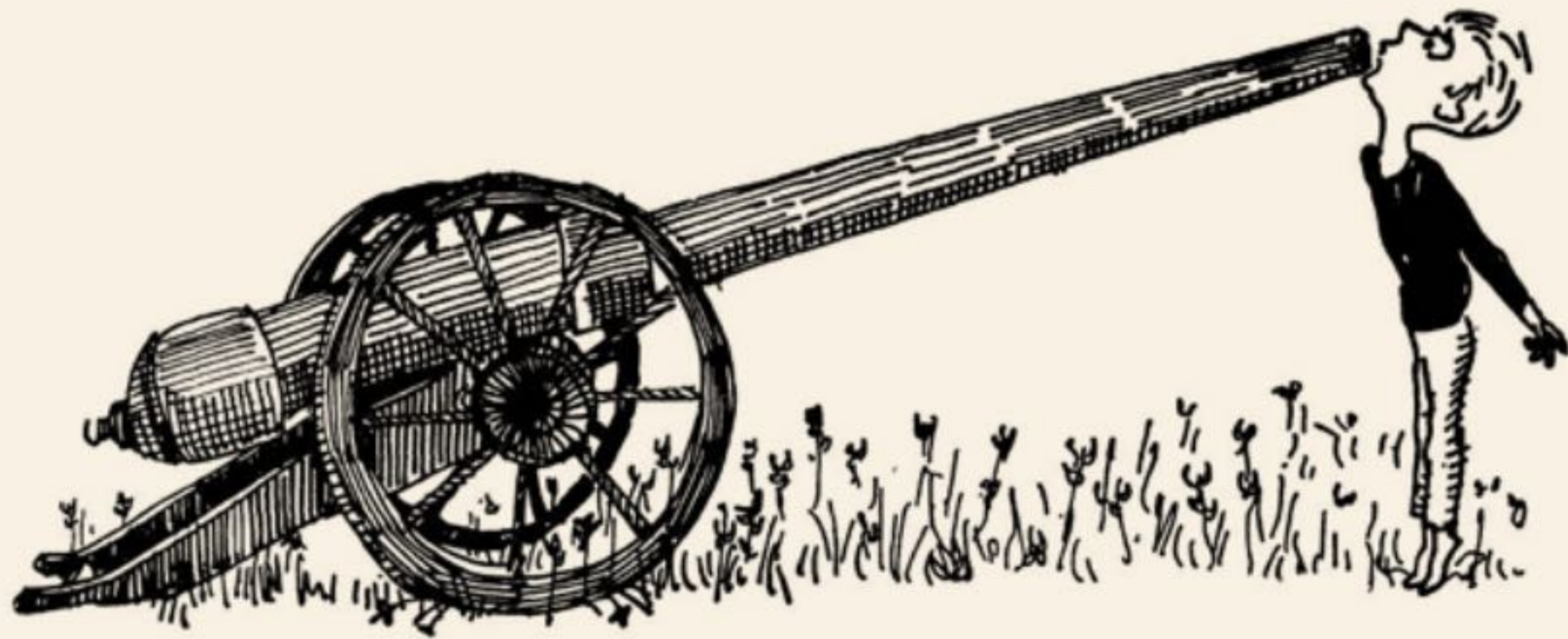
Milo caught his breath, picked up the chalk, and explained simply, “It’s **on the tip of my tongue.**”

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



aimed it directly at the thickest part of the fortress wall and packed it full of gunpowder.

Milo stood on tiptoe, leaned over into the cannon's mouth, and parted his lips. The small sound dropped silently to the bottom and everything was ready. In another moment the fuse was lit and sputtering.



“I hope no one gets hurt,” thought Milo, and, before he had time to think again, an immense cloud of gray and white smoke leaped from the gun and, along with it, so softly that it was hardly heard, came the sound of —

BUT

It flew toward the wall for several seconds in a high, lazy arc and then struck ever so lightly just to the right of the big door. For an instant there was an **ominous** stillness, quieter and more silent than ever before, as if

even the air was holding its breath.

And then, almost immediately, there was a blasting, roaring, thundering smash, followed by a crushing, shattering, bursting crash, as every stone in the fortress came toppling to the ground and the vaults burst open, spilling the sounds of history into the wind.

Every sound that had ever been uttered or made, from way back to when there were none, to way up when there were too many, came hurtling out of the debris in a way that sounded as though everyone in the world was laughing, whistling, shouting, crying, singing, whispering, humming, screaming, coughing, and sneezing, all at the same time. There were bits of old speeches floating about, as well as recited lessons, gunshots from old wars, babies’ cries, auto horns, waterfalls, electric fans, galloping horses, and a great deal of everything else.

For a while there was total and deafening confusion and then, almost as quickly as they’d come, all the old sounds disappeared over the hill in search of their new freedom, and things were normal again.

The people quickly went about their busy talkative business and, as the smoke and dust cleared, only Milo, Tock, and the Humbug noticed the Soundkeeper sitting **disconsolately** on a pile of rubble.





“I’m terribly sorry,” said Milo sympathetically as the three of them went to console her.

“But we had to do it,” added Tock, sniffing around the ruins.

“What a terrible mess,” observed the Humbug, with his **knack** for saying exactly the wrong thing.

The Soundkeeper looked around with an expression of unrelieved sadness on her unhappy face.

“It will take years to collect all those sounds again,” she sobbed, “and even longer to put them back in proper order. But it’s all my fault. For you can’t improve sound by having only silence. The problem is

to use each at the proper time.”

As she spoke, the familiar and unmistakable *squinch-squanch*, *squinch-squanch* of the DYNNE’s heavy footsteps could be heard plodding over the hill, and when he finally appeared he was dragging an incredibly large sack behind him.

“Can anyone use these sounds?” he puffed, mopping his forehead. “They all came over the hill at once and none of them are awful enough for me.”

The Soundkeeper peered into the sack, and there were all the sounds which had burst from the vaults.

“How nice of you to return them!” she cried happily. “You and the doctor must come by for an evening of beautiful music when my fortress is repaired.”

The thought of it so horrified the DYNNE that he excused himself immediately and dashed off down the road in a great panic.

“I hope I haven’t offended him,” she said with some concern.

“He only likes unpleasant sounds,” volunteered Tock.

“Ah yes,” she sighed; “I keep forgetting that many people do. But I suppose they are necessary, for you’d never really know how pleasant one was unless you knew how unpleasant it wasn’t.” She paused for a moment, then continued: “If only Rhyme and Reason



were here, I'm sure things would improve."

"That's why we're going to rescue them," said Milo proudly.

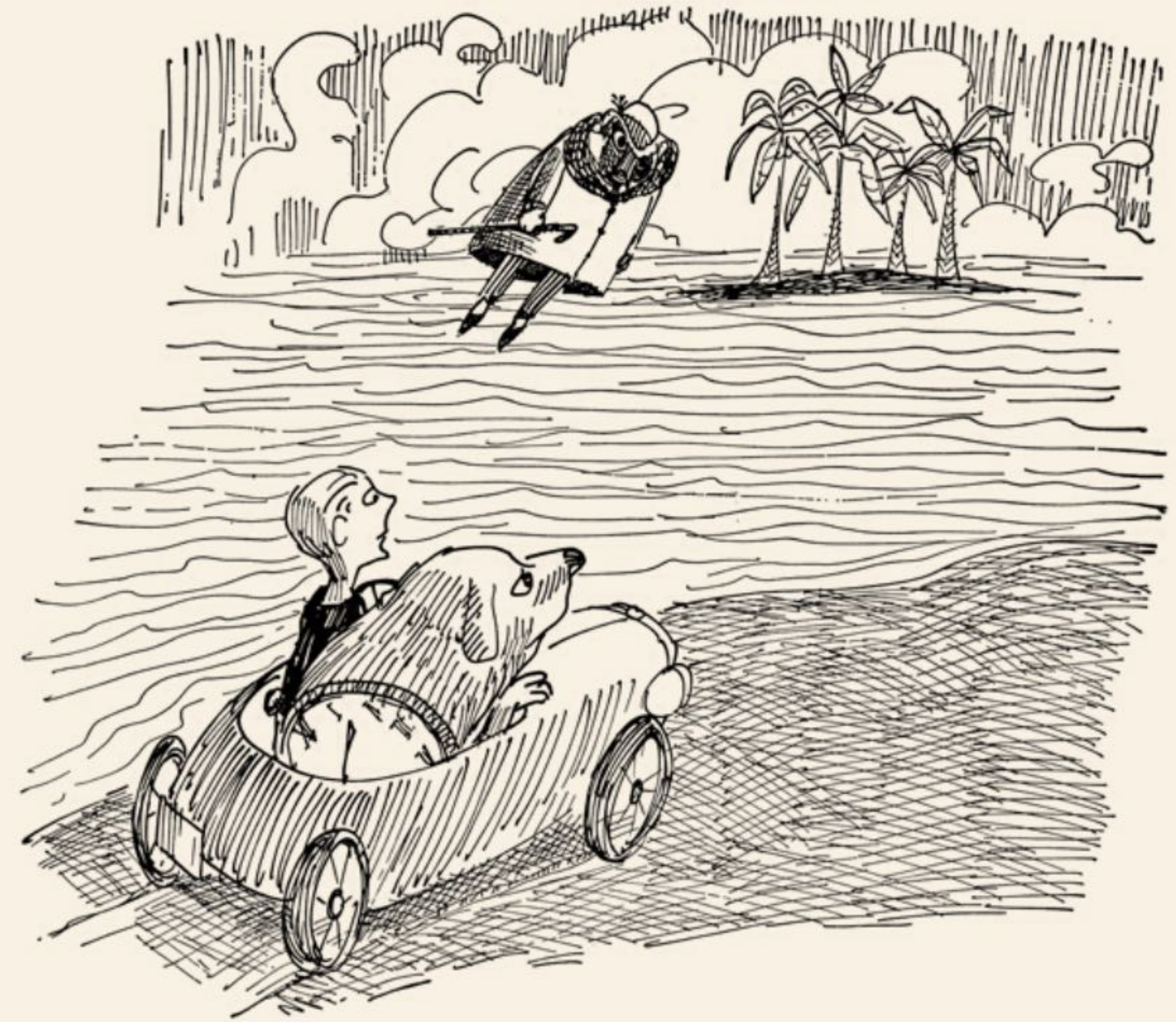
"What a long, hard journey that will be! You'll need some nourishment," she cried, handing Milo a small brown package, neatly wrapped and tied with string. "Now remember: they're not for eating, but for listening, because you'll often be hungry for sounds as well as food. Here are street noises at night, train whistles a long way off, dry leaves burning, busy department stores, crunching toast, creaking bedsprings, and, of course, all kinds of laughter. There's a little of each, and in far-off lonely places I think you'll be glad to have them."

"I'm sure we will," replied Milo gratefully.

"Just take this road to the sea and turn left," she told them. "You'll soon be in Digitopolis."

And almost before she had finished, they had said good-bye and left the valley behind them.

The shore line was peaceful and flat, and the calm sea bumped it playfully along the sandy beach. In the distance a beautiful island covered with palm trees and flowers beckoned invitingly from the sparkling water.



"Nothing can possibly go wrong now," cried the Humbug happily and as soon as he'd said it he leaped from the car, as if stuck by a pin, and sailed all the way to the little island.

"And we'll have plenty of time," answered Tock, who hadn't noticed that the bug was missing—and he, too, suddenly leaped into the air and disappeared.

"It certainly couldn't be a nicer day," agreed Milo, who was too busy looking at the road to see that the



others had gone. And in a split second he was gone also.

He landed next to Tock and the terrified Humbug on the tiny island, which now looked completely different. Instead of palms and flowers, there were only rocks and the twisted stumps of long-dead trees. It certainly didn't seem like the same place they had seen from the road.

"Pardon me," said Milo to the first man who happened by; "can you tell me where I am?"

"Pardon me," replied the man; "can you tell me *who* I am?"

The man was dressed in a shaggy tweed jacket and knickers with long woolen stockings and a cap that had a peak both front and back, and he seemed as confused as he could be.

"You must know who you are," said Milo impatiently.

"You must know where you are," he replied with equal annoyance.

"Oh dear, this is going to be difficult," Milo whispered to Tock. "I wonder if we can help him."

They conferred for a few minutes and finally the bug looked up and said, "Can you describe yourself?"

"Yes, indeed," the man replied happily. "I'm as tall as

can be"—and he grew straight up until all that could be seen of him were his shoes and stockings—"and I'm as short as can be"—and he shrank down to the size of a pebble. "I'm as generous as can be," he said, handing each of them a large red apple, "and I'm as selfish as can be," he snarled, grabbing them back again.

"I'm as strong as can be," he roared, lifting an enormous boulder over his head, "and I'm as weak as can be," he gasped, staggering under the weight of his hat. "I'm as smart as can be," he remarked in twelve different languages, "and I'm as stupid as can be," he admitted, putting both feet in one shoe.

"I'm as graceful as can be," he hummed, balancing on one toe, "and I'm as clumsy as can be," he cried, sticking his thumb in his eye. "I'm as fast as can be," he announced, running around the island twice in no time at all, "and I'm as slow as can be," he complained, waving good-by to a snail. "Is that any help to you?"

Once again they conferred in busy whispers until all three agreed.

"It's really very simple," said the Humbug, twirling his cane.

"If everything you say is true," added Tock.

"Then, without a doubt," Milo concluded brightly, "you must be Canby."





“Of course, yes, of course,” the man shouted. “Why didn’t I think of that? I’m as happy as can be.” Then he quickly sat down, put his head in his hands, and sighed. “But I’m also as sad as can be.”

“Now will you tell me where we are?” asked Tock as he looked around the desolate island.

“To be sure,” said Canby; “you’re on the **Island of Conclusions**. Make yourself at home. You’re apt to be here for some time.”

“But how did we get here?” asked Milo, who was still a bit puzzled by being there at all.

“You jumped, of course,” explained Canby. “That’s the way most everyone gets here. It’s really quite simple: every time you decide something without having a

good reason, you **jump to Conclusions** whether you like it or not. It’s such an easy trip to make that I’ve been here hundreds of times.”

“But this is such an unpleasant-looking place,” Milo remarked.

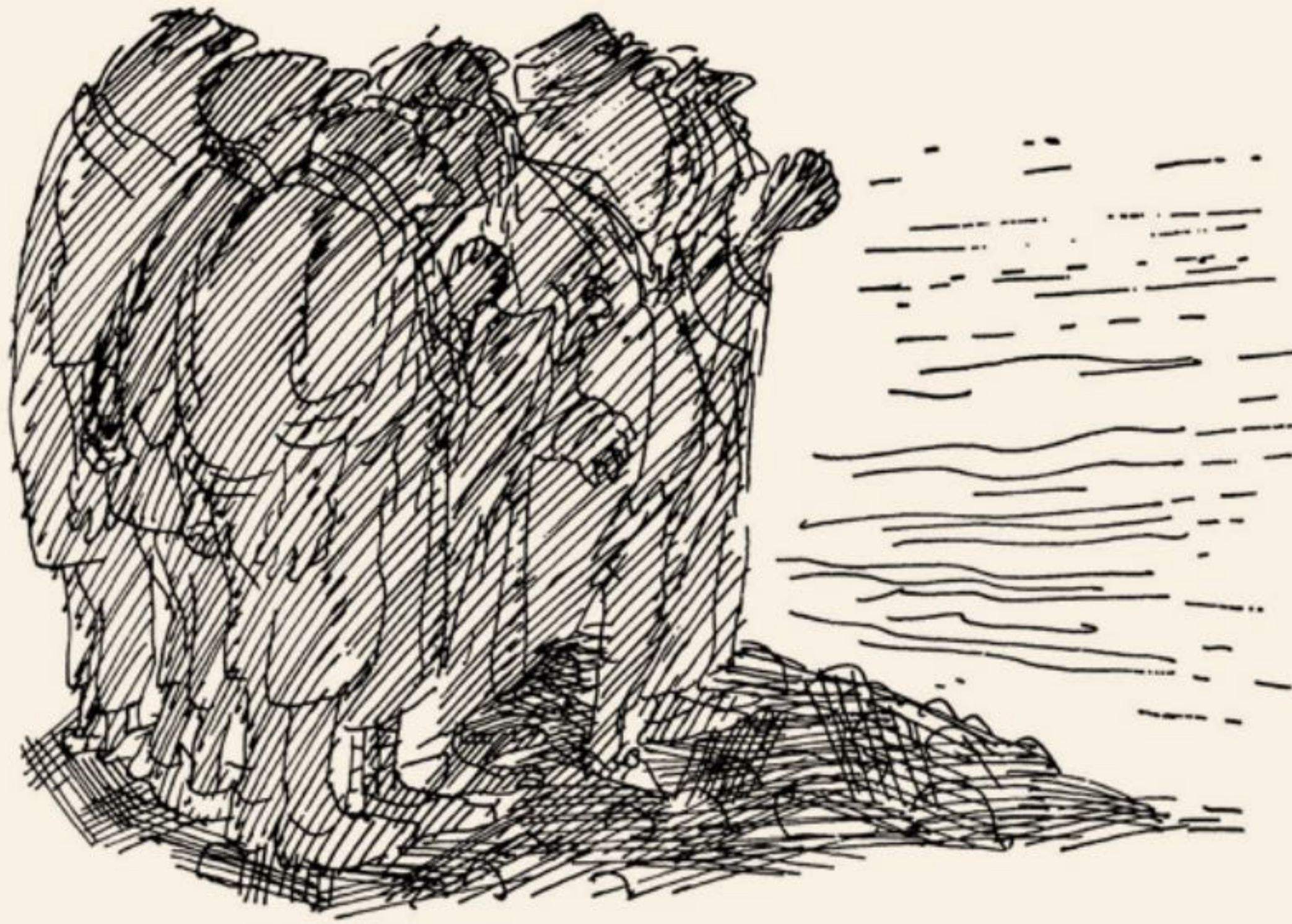
“Yes, that’s true,” admitted Canby; “it does look much better from a distance.”

As he spoke, at least eight or nine more people sailed onto the island from every direction possible.

“Well, I’m going to jump right back,” announced the Humbug, who took two or three practice bends, leaped as far as he could, and landed in a heap two feet away.

“That won’t do at all,” scolded Canby, helping him to his feet. “You can never jump away from Conclusions. Getting back is not so easy. That’s why we’re so terribly crowded here.”





That was certainly the truth, for all along the bleak shore and clustered on the rocks for as far as anyone could see were enormous crowds of people, all sadly looking out to sea.

“Isn’t there even a boat?” asked Milo, anxious to get on with his trip.

“Oh no,” replied Canby, shaking his head. “The only way back is to swim, and that’s a very long and a very hard way.”

“I don’t like to get wet,” moaned the unhappy bug, and he shuddered at the thought.

“Neither do they,” said Canby sadly. “That’s what

keeps them here. But I wouldn’t worry too much about it, for you can swim all day in the Sea of Knowledge and still come out completely dry. Most people do. But you must excuse me now. I have to greet the new arrivals. As you know, I’m as friendly as can be.”

Over the Humbug’s **strenuous** objections, Milo and Tock decided to swim, and, protesting loudly, the bug was dragged along with them toward the sea.

Canby hurried off to answer more questions, and the last thing he was heard to say was “Pardon me, can you tell me who I am?”

They swam and swam and swam for what seemed like hours, and only Tock’s firm encouragement kept Milo struggling through the icy water. At last they reached the shore, thoroughly exhausted and, except for the bug, completely soaked.

“That wasn’t bad at all,” the Humbug said, straightening his tie and brushing himself off. “I must visit there again.”

“I’m sure you will,” gasped Milo. “But from now on I’m going to have a very good reason before I make up my mind about anything. You can lose too much time jumping to Conclusions.”

The car was just where they’d left it, and in a moment they were on their way again as the road



turned away from the sea and began its long climb into the mountains. The warm sun and billowy breezes dried them as they went.

“I hope we reach Digitopolis soon,” said Milo, thinking of the breakfast they hadn’t eaten. “I wonder how far it is.”

## 14. The Dodecahedron Leads the Way

Up ahead, the road divided into three and, as if in reply to Milo’s question, an enormous road sign, pointing in all three directions, stated clearly:

*DIGITOPOLIS*  
5 Miles  
1,600 Rods  
8,800 Yards  
26,400 Feet  
316,800 Inches  
633,600 Half inches  
AND THEN SOME

“Let’s travel by miles,” advised the Humbug; “it’s shorter.”

“Let’s travel by half inches,” suggested Milo; “it’s quicker.”



“But which road should we take?” asked Tock. “It must make a difference.”

As they argued, a most peculiar little figure stepped nimbly from behind the sign and approached them, talking all the while. “Yes, indeed; indeed it does; certainly; my, yes; it does make a difference; undoubtedly.”

He was constructed (for that’s really the only way to describe him) of a large assortment of lines and angles connected together into one solid many-sided shape—somewhat like a cube that’s had all its corners cut off and then had all its corners cut off again. Each of the edges was neatly labeled with a small letter, and each of the angles with a large one. He wore a handsome **beret** on top, and peering intently from one of his several surfaces was a very serious face. Perhaps if you look at the picture you’ll know what I mean.

When he reached the car, the figure **doffed** his cap and recited in a loud clear voice:



“My angles are many.  
My sides are not few.  
I’m the **Dodecahedron**.  
Who are you?”

“What’s a Dodecahedron?” inquired Milo, who was barely able to pronounce the strange word.

“See for yourself,” he said, turning around slowly. “A Dodecahedron is a mathematical shape with twelve faces.”

Just as he said it, eleven other faces appeared, one on each surface, and each one wore a different expression.



“I usually use one at a time,” he confided, as all but the smiling one disappeared again. “It saves wear and tear. What are you called?”

“Milo,” said Milo.

“That is an odd name,” he said, changing his smiling face for a frowning one. “And you only have one face.”

“Is that bad?” asked Milo, making sure it was still there.

“You’ll soon wear it out using it for everything,” replied the Dodecahedron. “Now I have one for smiling, one for laughing, one for crying, one for frowning, one for thinking, one for pouting, and six more besides. Is everyone with one face called a Milo?”

“Oh no,” Milo replied; “some are called Henry or George or Robert or John or lots of other things.”

“How terribly confusing,” he cried. “Everything here is called exactly what it is. The triangles are called triangles, the circles are called circles, and even the same numbers have the same name. Why, can you imagine what would happen if we named all the twos Henry or George or Robert or John or lots of other things? You’d have to say Robert plus John equals four, and if the four’s name were Albert, things would be hopeless.”

“I never thought of it that way,” Milo admitted.

“Then I suggest you begin at once,” admonished the

Dodecahedron from his admonishing face, “for here in Digitopolis everything is quite precise.”

“Then perhaps you can help us decide which road to take,” said Milo.

“By all means,” he replied happily. “There’s nothing to it. If a small car carrying three people at thirty miles an hour for ten minutes along a road five miles long at 11:35 in the morning starts at the same time as three people who have been traveling in a little automobile at twenty miles an hour for fifteen minutes on another road exactly twice as long as one half the distance of the other, while a dog, a bug, and a boy travel an equal distance in the same time or the same distance in an equal time along a third road in mid-October, then which one arrives first and which is the best way to go?”

“Seventeen!” shouted the Humbug, scribbling furiously on a piece of paper.

“Well, I’m not sure, but——” Milo stammered after several minutes of frantic figuring.

“You’ll have to do better than that,” scolded the Dodecahedron, “or you’ll never know how far you’ve gone or whether or not you’ve ever gotten there.”

“I’m not very good at problems,” admitted Milo.

“What a shame,” sighed the Dodecahedron. “They’re



so very useful. Why, did you know that if a beaver two feet long with a tail a foot and a half long can build a dam twelve feet high and six feet wide in two days, all you would need to build Boulder Dam is a beaver sixty-eight feet long with a fifty-one-foot tail?"

"Where would you find a beaver that big?" grumbled the Humbug as his pencil point snapped.

"I'm sure I don't know," he replied, "but if you did, you'd certainly know what to do with him."

"That's **absurd**," objected Milo, whose head was spinning from all the numbers and questions.

"That may be true," he acknowledged, "but it's completely accurate, and as long as the answer is right, who cares if the question is wrong? If you want sense, you'll have to make it yourself."

"All three roads arrive at the same place at the same time," interrupted Tock, who had patiently been doing the first problem.

"Correct!" shouted the Dodecahedron. "And I'll take you there myself. Now you can see how important problems are. If you hadn't done this one properly, you might have gone the wrong way."

"I can't see where I made my mistake," said the Humbug, frantically rechecking his figures.

"But if all the roads arrive at the same place at the

same time, then aren't they all the right way?" asked Milo.

"Certainly not!" he shouted, glaring from his most upset face. "They're all the *wrong* way. Just because you have a choice, it doesn't mean that any of them *has* to be right."

He walked to the sign and quickly spun it around three times. As he did, the three roads vanished and a new one suddenly appeared, heading in the direction that the sign now pointed.

"Is every road five miles from Digitopolis?" asked Milo.

"I'm afraid it has to be," the Dodecahedron replied, leaping onto the back of the car. "It's the only sign we've got."

The new road was quite bumpy and full of stones, and each time they hit one, the Dodecahedron bounced into the air and landed on one of his faces, with a sulk or a smile or a laugh or a frown, depending upon which one it was.

"We'll soon be there," he announced happily, after one of his short flights. "Welcome to the land of numbers."

"It doesn't look very inviting," the bug remarked, for, as they climbed higher and higher, not a tree or a blade



of grass could be seen anywhere. Only the rocks remained.

“Is this the place where numbers are made?” asked Milo as the car lurched again, and this time the Dodecahedron sailed off down the mountainside, head over heels and grunt over grimace, until he landed sad side up at what looked like the entrance to a cave.

“They’re not made,” he replied, as if nothing had happened. “You have to dig for them. Don’t you know anything at all about numbers?”

“Well, I don’t think they’re very important,” snapped Milo, too embarrassed to admit the truth.

“NOT IMPORTANT!” roared the Dodecahedron, turning red with fury. “Could you have tea for two without the two—or three blind mice without the three? Would there be four corners of the earth if there weren’t a four? And how would you sail the seven seas without a seven?”

“All I meant was——” began Milo, but the Dodecahedron, overcome with emotion and shouting furiously, carried right on.

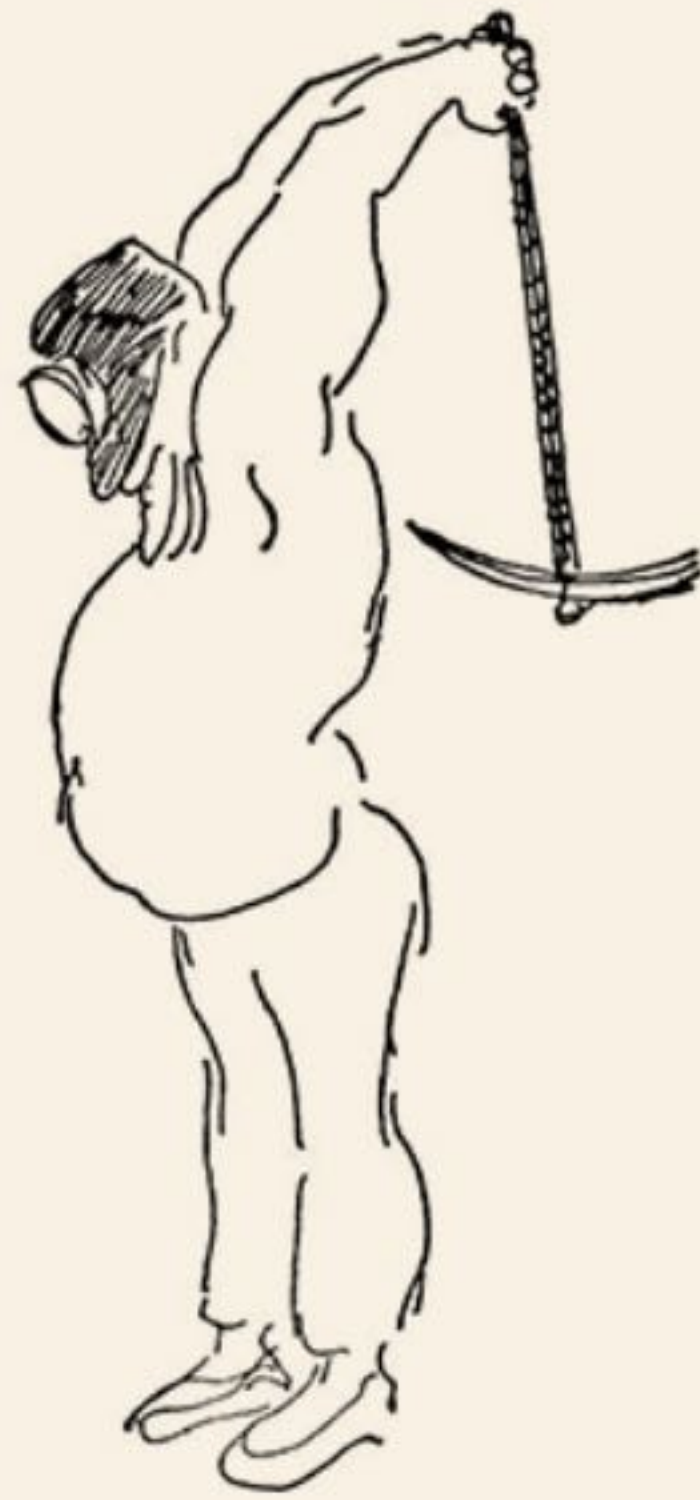
“If you had high hopes, how would you know how high they were? And did you know that narrow escapes come in all different widths? Would you travel the whole wide world without ever knowing how wide it

was? And how could you do anything at long last,” he concluded, waving his arms over his head, “without knowing how long the last was? Why, numbers are the most beautiful and valuable things in the world. Just follow me and I’ll show you.” He turned on his heel and stalked off into the cave.

“Come along, come along,” he shouted from the dark hole. “I can’t wait for you all day.” And in a moment they’d followed him into the mountain.

It took several minutes for their eyes to become accustomed to the dim light, and during that time strange scratching, scraping, tapping, scuffling noises could be heard all around them.





“Put these on,” instructed the Dodecahedron, handing each of them a helmet with a flashlight attached to the top.

“Where are we going?” whispered Milo, for it seemed like the kind of place in which you whispered.

“We’re here,” he replied with a sweeping gesture. “This is the numbers mine.”

Milo squinted into the darkness and saw for the first time that they had entered a vast cavern lit only by a soft, eerie glow from the great stalactites which hung ominously from the ceiling. Passages and corridors honeycombed the walls and wound their way from

floor to ceiling, up and down the sides of the cave. And, everywhere he looked, Milo saw little men no bigger than himself busy digging and chopping, shoveling and scraping, pulling and tugging carts full of stone from one place to another.

“Right this way,” instructed the Dodecahedron, “and watch where you step.”

As he spoke, his voice echoed and re-echoed and re-echoed again, mixing its sound with the buzz of activity all around them. Tock trotted along next to Milo, and the Humbug, stepping daintily, followed behind.

“Whose mine is it?” asked Milo, stepping around two of the loaded wagons.

“BY THE FOUR MILLION EIGHT HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINE HAIRS ON MY HEAD, IT’S MINE, OF COURSE!” bellowed a voice from across the cavern. And striding toward them came a figure who could only have been the Mathemagician.

He was dressed in a long flowing robe covered entirely with complex mathematical equations and a tall pointed cap that made him look very wise. In his left hand he carried a long staff with a pencil point at one end and a large rubber eraser at the other.

“It’s a lovely mine,” apologized the Humbug, who



was always intimidated by loud noises.

“The biggest number mine in the kingdom,” said the Mathemagician proudly.

“Are there any precious stones in it?” asked Milo excitedly.

“PRECIOUS STONES!” he roared, even louder than before. And then he leaned over toward Milo and whispered softly, “By the eight million two hundred and forty-seven thousand three hundred and twelve threads in my robe, I’ll say there are. Look here.”

He reached into one of the carts and pulled out a small object, which he polished vigorously on his robe. When he held it up to the light, it sparkled brightly.

“But that’s a five,” objected Milo, for that was certainly what it was.

“Exactly,” agreed the Mathemagician; “as valuable a jewel as you’ll find anywhere. Look at some of the others.”

He scooped up a great handful of stones and poured them into Milo’s arms. They included all the numbers from one to nine, and even an assortment of zeros.

“We dig them and polish them right here,” volunteered the Dodecahedron, pointing to a group of workers busily employed at the buffing wheels; “and then we send them all over the world. Marvelous, aren’t

they?”

“They are exceptional,” said Tock, who had a special fondness for numbers.

“So that’s where they come from,” said Milo, looking in awe at the glittering collection of numbers. He returned them to the Dodecahedron as carefully as possible but, as he did, one dropped to the floor with a smash and broke in two. The Humbug winced and Milo looked terribly concerned.

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” said the Mathemagician as he scooped up the pieces. “We use the broken ones for fractions.”

“Haven’t you any diamonds or emeralds or rubies?” asked the bug irritably, for he was quite disappointed in what he’d seen so far.





“Yes, indeed,” the Mathemagician replied, leading

them to the rear of the cave; “right this way.”

There, piled into enormous mounds that reached almost to the ceiling, were not only diamonds and emeralds and rubies but also sapphires, amethysts, topazes, moonstones, and garnets. It was the most amazing mass of wealth that any of them had ever seen.

“They’re such a terrible nuisance,” sighed the Mathemagician, “and no one can think of what to do with them. So we just keep digging them up and throwing them out. Now,” he said, taking a silver whistle from his pocket and blowing it loudly, “let’s have some lunch.”

And for the first time in his life the astonished bug couldn’t think of a thing to say.



