

DORT - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTERS. Copyright Paul Audcent 1997- 2005

The village of Dort lies at the southern base of a high Plateaux in the country of Tasmanica. It has a river called the Dort River running through the south of the village. There are several roads which lead to and from Dort connecting it to other parts of the country. The chapters cover mainly the adventures of two friends called Lemoss and Flitter and Lemoss's enchanted goat Nimblefax, but sometimes a chapter is written around other characters who live in or near the village.

I have drawn a rough map out for my own use which is not part of this book to help me locate people and places that have been referred to as I progressed with my writing. Most of the immediate area around Dort is explored by the boys, however the far eastern area past Uncle Todd's farm has been left vacant, partly because I need some suggestions from the family of readers as to what may exist in that Eastern and South Eastern part.

Mr.Dingle lives in the North East, and part of that land is high craggy hills with dense forests which surround his home and garden.

The characters themselves are not based upon anyone in particular unless a dedication exists in the chapter heading, giving credit to a person whose name and identity I've used. Rather the characters have their own persona's and both their identity and personality are left to your imagination. Sometimes I will try to mirror human peculiarity and activity that exist in our real world, but basically this is a tale for youthful people whatever their age! The tales introduce special Tasmanica words, for instance the seasons of the year are called Sprung, Sum, Ort, Chill. I realise it makes the reading a little more difficult however all countries use different names and mine is no exception! Other names I've chosen are more descriptive to the reader. Some parts of the tales require a certain level of knowledge, perhaps of people or machinery, or indeed the meaning of some words. I believe the Tasmanica words in the main are self explanatory!

So I hope you will use your imagination, and enjoy the people of Dort which was originally written for my children, when I was away working in another town, and for you whom I write for now. Copyright Paul Audcent. 1997- 2005

TALES OF DORT (IN THE SHIRE OF KNOAL)

CHAPTER 1: TIMES OF WATER WELLS AND POSTIES.

It was Sprung, Lemoss had diligently crossed off the days from Woebetyde on his yearly colander by marking a hole every morning after solar rise.. .whether it rose or was hidden by thick grey clouds was beside the point. Today he had reached the forty third hole after scratching off a piece of old lettuce, he triumphantly circled the spot with a bright red wax crayon. At this precise minute in time he and Flitter were leaning over Mrs.Clothiers well wall.

"Wonder how deep it is", Flitter picked up a pebble and dropped it in.

"One-three-two-seven-four, four foot. .. that's pretty deep is four feet".

"More like forty, besides your counting is somewhat out of sequence, didn't old Tables teach you proper mathemetrics last year?"

"Cum second I did" scowled Flitter as he picked up a larger pebble the size of quarter brick.

"Second top - you amaze me."

"No opposite to top." Flitter held out his arm over the opening and let the rock fall.

As Lemoss was about to say 'Botto...', a loud screech came up from the well's depths which Mr.Clothier had been inspecting with the help of a candle and a large bottle of fiery liquid. Liquor had never been allowed in the Clothier household so Mr.Clothier kept his stashed in the muddy well bottom safely covered by three foot of green slime and water. Both watched the bucket rope tighten and ran, just in time as a whoosh of fiery vapour zoomed out of the inky depths.

"Must have been the bottle." cried Lemoss as he jumped into his Billy-cart, slapping Nimblefax on the rump.

Multi-hued curses filled the air as Nimblefax crunched contentedly on the stiletto bush, one eye glaring at Lemoss who was struggling to again control of the goats reins with Flitter's arms and legs getting in the way.

"Get in Flitter.. .come on Nimblefax fish.. fish" yelled Lemoss.

Other goats respond to 'mush. mush' but ever since the day Nimblefax had swallowed one the wrong way round, the fish that is, he would gallop at the speed of greased solar-light at the very mention of the word. One 'fish' would have been quite sufficient but Lemoss was anxious to move fast. Thus encouraged, the goat took off with a mighty leap and headed down the twists and turns of Dort valley road with the lads hanging onto the vibrating cart as it lurched and jumped over the potholes.

At the cross roads they skidded to a halt and Nimblefax trotted over to a

pincushion tree where he avidly munched into the lower boughs as the lads hoisted themselves out of the box seat and sank slowly into the soft green grass under the signpost.

"Wonder why the grass is always so lush by this post?" asked Flitter half to himself.

Lemoss flicked away a piece of dog manure and lay back into the green sward.

"Darn it..another one!", he rose up and felt behind him but instead of another unwelcome object he found a small leather bag with something hard inside. Flitter with a hungry gleam in his eye tried to snatch it away only to find Lemoss warding him off and undoing the leather thong carefully.

"Gold?", said Flitter expectantly, Lemoss shook his head.

"Well silver ...copper at least?" cried Flitter hopefully.

Lemoss held the bag upside down and a cherry red globular stone rolled into his palm.

"I've read about those " Flitter shouted out in joy, but Lemoss shook his finger in mock admonishment.

"All right Lemoss, I've heard about them then...Betty Alpha promised to teach me about jewels if I took her berry plucking and gave her some basic mathemetrics. . .she's good at readwrite."

"How do you know that?"

"Dovetail told me he had to polish up on his biology so they took off for the river bank to do some studying last Satday. 'Parently she's good at reading Fizzicist's notes and his own, so he said".

Lemoss was, in his mind at least, far away as he tossed the small globe from hand to hand.

"Its not a diamint if that's what you meant Flitter. Diamints are see through, sort of translucent with sharp edges and rainbows trapped inside. Its more like a gobble-sucker that Grandpa told me about, lots of different layers all colours. My Grandpa made one last two years by sucking it at days end only." Lemoss popped it in his mouth and his jaw went immediately into automatic mode, so he spat it out.

"That wasn't me chewing, it was it chewing me!" He studied it carefully and dried the stone with his sleeve, and the stone responded by glowing brightly. Flitter had meanwhile been ferreting inside the pouch and withdrew a piece of parchment with squiggles drawn in a neat and tidy hand.

"squiggles is all that's on it Lemoss" as he handed it over.

"Those are words. writing words... just let me see now. ah. .they say 'REWARD 20 ducits if returned to sender!'"

"What sender?"

"Its on the other side... see here's the address 'Tom Foolery,

Enchantments Incorporated".

'Funny address that.'

"Wait a minute there's more along the edge... 'Oaktree Cottage, Lower Swivel, Cantbe'."

"Can't what be?"

"No it says 'Cantbe' ."

"Could be one of those sucking sweet things Lemoss I'll find two rocks and well see if we can crack it open." Flitter walked down the road edge, crossed over to the meadow wall and returned with two likely granite stones clasped to his chest. He lay the flat one down and taking the cherry coloured stone from Lemoss, gently placed it on the rock. Summoning every ounce of strength he brought the other rock down hard shattering it into grey shards. Lemoss retrieved the red stone whilst Flitter cupped his painful hand under his armpit.

"Best go and ask Mr.Grimes the postie where Cantbe can be found, bound to be hereabouts somewhere." He called Nimblefax over and they both climbed into the cart. One soft 'fish' was enough to get them jogging down into Dort village in search of Mr.Grimes.

The Post Office was locked as usual with a large notice hanging in the window 'CLOSED FOR FURTHER REPAIRS...Grand opening soon'.

"That's not a bit of good to anyone." said Lemoss to the poster.

'Stocktaking in progress...sale this Satday coming.'

"Its Satday today, how fortunate, we won't have long to wait."

'Today is Satday GOING, next Satday is Satday COMING.' wrote the poster.

"Post Offices don't have sales anyway", Lemoss was getting cross.

The notice hesitated a fraction 'Closed all week and every week until the holidays.'

"But you are never open on the holidays."

'no holidays then this year....been a poor one for profits.'

"I'm not the least surprised.. .but that means you won't be open at all!"

'Correct...have a happy day, thank you, bye bye.'

"It's like talking to a fancy parrot....Please may I ask where Mr.Grimes may be found?"

"In the Inn..or..'

"Thank you very much."

'..or in the stable or...in the grocers....or maybe the fishmongers...or.' the notice got no further as Nimblefax had kicked his hooves up, being a self taught reader, and was galloping down through he village at thirty foot per second with the lads chasing behind.

As chance would have it the notice had been right the first time, and Mr.Grimes was just weaving his way out of the Inn doorway when

Nimblefax and the cart ran him down. Being a jovial sort he climbed to his feet and patted the goat on the head, only to be knocked down again by two breathless lads as they charged round the Inn corner. They helped him up apologizing profusely.

"That notice of yours wrote a fish word in front of Nimblefax Mr.Grimes," said Lemoss in lieu of compensation to a begrimed postie.

"Exelpress chappie, the independent carriers, he gave me that for last Woebetyde, said his company weren't giving out anymore colanders as people was using them to shake veggie's in and anyhow he reckoned that there notice would be more beneficial.. .a good marketing tool he called it. Been very useful to me, a real boon I must say, as I've had more days off than I don't know when and the Mrs is so pleased I can get more odd jobs done 'an all like."

"What about all the letters and parcels in and out the village?" Flitter asked.

"Seen naught of 'em, but I 'spects Exelpress chappie got a kind heart and delivers 'em on his rounds like." Mr.Grimes gave the lads a jovial smile and started sauntering and weaving homeward.

"Mr.Grimes, can you tell us where Cantbe is please?" Lemoss took the parchment out of his pocket to show the postie the address.

"Can't be seeing to well without me lenses.. .but let me think a moment"

"It's Lower Swivel, Cantbe." Flitter interjected.

"Heard of Utter drivel. ..yes to be sure.. innkeepers would know 'cos he's always on about it. Utter drivel this and utter drivel that. perhaps there's a Lower drivel nearby."

"It definitely Lower Swivel." cried a perplexed Lemoss.

"Now you come to mention it Lemoss there is a little village over Meatpie hill way, past Granny Wellbeloved's place, called Upper Swivel, Maybe."

"Well Mr.Grimes it is or it isn't."

"No, no lad its 'Maybe' years ago some of the folks over there complained . .didn't get no letters you see.. postie's see the word 'Cantbe' at the bottom of the address and like as not get in a terrible tizzy. Gramps the postie before me had an address for number 3 Itsnothere, Cantbe and you've no idea the problem he had especially as the senders address was 'sogiveitanothertry', reckon that letter traveled back and forth a good many times ..eventually they sent it when the shire changed to 'Maybe', probably had a better chance to arrive tho' I have me doubts. Best ask Granny when you pass by, to be on the safe side...Utter Drivel...that's it over Meatpie hill way...Lower will be close by using my postie's nose so todeduction 'an all ... Bye lads, take care.. "

But the lads were already halfway up the road dragging Nimblefax

behind them as he devoured Mr.Grimes wide brimmed straw boater with the postie's blue ribbon flapping in the breeze.

"Thanks a lot Mr. Grimes" they shouted but the postie was busy negotiating the cobble stones at eye level since he kept tripping over each one. Nimblefax calculated it would take Mr.Grimes fourteen solardays to get back home, unless...

"Its the least we can do Nimblefax." said Lemoss as they trotted back down to the hapless postie and squeezed him into the cart.

CHAPTER 2. ROSEMEAD, DIAMENTS AND A PROMISED REWARD.

Granny Wellbeloved lived at Roses Mead south of Dort and had been there as far back as any of the villagers could remember. She had born four children who, each in turn, left the tranquillity of Roses Mead to travel and explore the globe. Once or twice a year they would return to visit their mother, bringing tales aplenty as they sipped raspberry vinegar under the shade of the Wellbeloved's spacious veranda. Sometimes they would walk down to Dort for an afternoon stroll to catch up on the Knoal news from all and sundry. Mid sum fair was a day all tried to attend as it was held in the meadow just below Roses Mead. Funny thing was, they never seemed to grow any older than twenty no matter how many years passed, but the villagers loved them as their own, for their visits painted the whole district in a light pink mist. Grandpa Wellbeloved rarely came back except at Mid sum, but Granny had once said that he was so busy poking his judicial nose into other continents affairs that he had little time left for his own shire.

Now would be a good time for some geography. Lemoss and Flitter had been in grade 41.25, when old Tables had invited Granny down to the school (which he did every year) to give the class its geography lesson. Granny would sit all the children about her, then unroll a large hand painted scroll which she would point at as she spoke.

"First we have Dort here in the shire called Knoal, and there are seven such shires in our island called Tasmanica. There are seven islands on our globe, one like Tasmanica is called Brit and is far away northwards. Others are much bigger.. huge in fact and they are called continents being so large and hard to contain, if you get my meaning. They are called... now give me a hand reading them children..."

"Merica. Frica. Chin. Tralia.. Rope Asa. ", the youngsters sang out.

"Yes, now here's this huge green blue bit which is called Ocean and covers everywhere else that hasn't got land poking up. Now it gets simple from here on 'cos everyone who lives on these continents has a different colour or near enough 'cos the maker ran out of real colours and had to mix a few up. We have yellow, black, white, purple, rainbow for Tralia and Merica which has the colour band going the opposite way. We in Tasmanica are pink and those Brits people are blue."

"Blue?", always some child would query the blue and Granny would always say...

"Some say its the cold and others say its the Wode paint.. Grandpa thinks its a combination of them both".

When all was clear and no more questions were asked, stupid or otherwise, Granny would unroll another scroll.

"We have one moon each month, that's when your piggies go daft, and two moons at Woebetyde which is a festive season for all the globe and the piggies have a holiday (she meant that every farmer with any sense locked them up securely). Then we have our solar which heats up all the globe.. well most of it except top and bottom. But it gives us the seasons and you can find those on your colanders if you've a mind to".

Tables would then ask for questions again but invariably most of the class were snuffling and snoring so Granny would depart on tiptoe to Tables little office to enjoy a small glass of slurry with Tables, Fizzicist, Miss Pringle and Matron. The children would be left to sleep it off, but strangely remember every road, river and mountain that Granny had shown, (alas not villages or towns).

Miss Pringle would stagger out and ring the 'going-home' bell and Granny would walk back to Roses Mead with a gaggle of children carrying her scrolls and basket.

Tables and Fizzicist, always the last to leave, invariably landed up in village inn to quench their thirst after an invigorating day. The day after Granny's visit was always called "The hair of the dog holiday".

None of this was on Lemoss's mind as he and Flitter made their way along the twisting lane towards Roses Mead. Nimblefax was moving at a healthy trot, for they were going to Granny's where he had been born and reared, what 's more he could whiff the lovely musty pink mist that wafted over the fields and meadows. Mr. Grimes straw boater had put some zip into his hooves as he fair belted up the last slope to the pink cottage. Granny herself was leaning over the garden gate ready to greet them.

Lemoss and Flitter alighted from the cart and led Nimblefax through the gate, untying the traces and reins so that he could gallop and prance up

through the garden and down to the meadow to join his cousins in play. Granny beckoned the boys into the garden where a table laden with apple cakes, fruit and beakers of crystal clear water stood.

"Sit you both down now, lovely of you to visit me and so kind to bring dear Nimblefax to see his family, so thoughtful of you both".

"Well..eh...Granny to be truthful we came for information...but..but its really nice of you to....well, prepare some lunch...and..we did enjoy the cart ride", spluttered Lemoss.

"You are here and that's the main thing" smiled Granny, "Now have some cakes and fruit".

"How come you have fruit already in Sprung?" asked an amazed Flitter.

"Sprung always comes early in Roses Mead Flitter, now do tuck in, we are so lucky here in our little valley all seasons on the same day but never to long to stay. Now eat up as I see you have a journey to make." Lemoss and Flitter looked at one another quickly.. How much should we tell her their glance said.

"The lot" said Granny as she settled in a large wicker chair that seemed to enfold her, gently like a veil.

"We found this stone... its red" Lemoss laid it on the tablecloth.

"Is it valuable? Worth a lot?. ..and this is what came with it", Flitter handed Granny the small parchment.

Her eyes briefly scanned the sides and edges in one sweep and then she looked thoughtfully at the stone, it seemed to the lads that a slight pulse came from the stone as she leaned forward.

"Well I never" she exclaimed "Fancy that to be sure. Found it by the cross roads near Clothiers you say."

"But I didn't say Granny" exclaimed Lemoss.

"No dear quite right too, but what a funny little creation this is, quite to be sure. indeed."

"Is it a diami...", Flitter saw Granny shake her head slowly.

"No dear, not a diamint, not a real thing at all.. by looks and touch.." the stone moved slightly away from Granny's extended finger. " I'd say it was a synthetic..."

"Something that pretends to be something its not." Granny turned her attention to the parchment.... "Bit out of date 'cos they changed Cantbe to Maybe some years ago.. caused havoc so people said."

"Do you know where Lower Swivel is exactly Granny please, we intend taking the stone back to its owner today if possible." Lemoss lent forward and picked up a large honey cake.

"Just over Meatpie hill and a little way along Hill creek, you can't miss it as its next after Upper Swivel. It would take two solar hours...best pick it up now Lemoss and put it in the pouch, seems a little nervous with all the attention its getting."

Lemoss rolled it into his hand and gently dropped it in the pouch. "Seems to be vibrating...sort of humming to itself," he said. Granny called Nimblefax up from the meadow and selecting the largest apple cake (there were only two left out of ten), she popped it into his mouth. Fondling his snow white beard she gave him the last cake. "Now mind you take Nimblefax wherever you go Lemoss... leave your cart here as the path is too steep for it. Now here's a bag of scones and some dew water for you all." "Sometimes I think Nimblefax can read my mind you know" Lemoss looked up at Granny's hazel eyes. Granny only smiled. "Now be off you three and have a lovely afternoon...be careful with Hill creek and don't fall in." She waved to them as they marched up the lane. "You know," said Flitter when they were out of earshot, "I'm sure it was sunny at Granny's, now look up at those storm clouds up there." They both turned their faces toward the cottage now a speck in the valley, bathed in a brilliant sunny pink mist. "I think its raining in Dort" was all Lemoss said as he patted Nimblefax on his rump, and continued up the path to Meatpie hill.

Being teenagers and nearly full grown the two lads covered the distance to Meatpie hill in rapid strides, they skirted the lower slopes and eventually came to a small stone bridge spanning a turbulent river. In the middle of the bridge was a line etched in granite with pebbled lettering on either side.. 'Knoal' on one side. 'Maybe' could just be made out over the word 'Perhaps' whilst the worn bright pebbles below definitely read 'Cantbe'. The narrow lane into Maybe followed the flowing water but its cleanliness was fast diminishing. By the time they had reached the hamlet of Upper Swivel the river had slowed to a turbid slush. "Hate to think what its like further down" said Lemoss shaking his head at the foaming brown bubbles. "More than likely safe for skating on 'spose" answered Flitter as he marched on down the lane.

They crossed over towards the first cottage and spotted a man sitting astride what looked like a whirling dervish throwing up clods and stones alike, to the roar of a whirlwind full of thunder and spite. The man careered around and glancing in their direction lifted up a gloved hand which was his first and last mistake as the machine bucked him around and off, then quietly shut itself down. "Great things these ride-on mowers" shouted the man still with his ear muffs on, "only had it a week and its already cultivated me veggies patch, dug the tato's up, pruned four of me rose bushes and chopped up winter

wood."

"Thought a mower was for mowing. I reckon a cows less trouble and more productive" Lemoss glared at the hissing mechanical mower, cracking and wheezing as it cooled. "You lads from Knoal?"

"Yes."

"Thought so as soon as you started chattering."

"We are looking for Oak Tree Cottage please," said Flitter.

"Down the lane a mite more, just Where the river solidifies....big cottage though...made out of tin...large black hooter on the front gate. ..bye now.." The man clambered on board the mower turned a key and roared away skidding and weaving across the ever diminishing lawn as each swipe thumped another sod into the air.

'Blades set to low' thought Nimblefax and continued tormenting a prickly bush by his side.

They continued down the twisty lane until their nose told them either a piggery was close by or the river was in a frigid state. Nimblefax went a distinct shade of lime green. -

"Reckon we are here" Lemoss glanced at Nimblefax then at the solitary hooter listlessly hanging from a gate post. .They walked slowly up the muddy drive and in front of them stood a huge steel hanger type building with a double swing door and a neat swinging sign 'OAK TREE COTTAGE. No bills or posters to be affixed or otherwise stuck on this here sign.'

Lemoss knocked on the door. A sudden howl came out of a rusty horn perched just above their heads..it sounded like 'whaddiyeeewont'.

"What?" asked Flitter.

"WHATDOEEWANT."

"A Mr. Foolery please" Lemoss whispered on tiptoe into the horn.

"Whadideesay...speak in the macraphonic not me ear."

A large elliptical cylinder swung down to the height of their noses.

"We have something to return to Mr. Foolery please." Lemoss yelled.

There was a deathly silence followed by a bull like roar sounding a little similar to a painful experience.

"I'm notdeaf don't shout you. ...ooh me earrrrs." The door swung open a crack.

"I 'm Tom Foolery. .whatdotheewant, makeitsnappy, quick."

"We found this", Lemoss reached into his pocket and produced the pouch.

"Said something about a reward too." Flitter offered.

The man opened the pouch and gently rolled the ruby stone in his palm. It began to hum immediately, glowing in pleasure to be with its owner as Tom Foolery rolled it across his fingers.

"You don't come from round here then" he glanced at them both, "Looks more like Knoal lads to me...I come from Rope year two back...set up business like ...not much competition here...best place to make a kill...a fair profit I reckon...but trouble here is nobody makes a decision in Tasmanlca...can't sell things I make without people making decisions like.. bad for business.. funny names round here play havoc with me sales orders and..."

"Maybe, well perhaps...names of this shire are confusing..." Lemoss stopped as the man gave him a frosty glare.

"Its close to knocking off time you two.. and besides which yon goat is chewing up me hooter cable any second now he'll get a tickle in the tummy. Come back next Satday mid morn and I'll give 'e a choice of me imports as a reward".

"What might the stone be Mr. Foolery" asked Flitter with the twinkle of Diamints in his eyes.

"It's a Compute it is, latest leading edge techknowhow from Merica.. purrs like a kitty it does".

"Not very clever is it though" Flitter replied.

"Neither be you if'n you don't know how to get it to hum.. 'spose to do mancalmetrics 'an all. Now off you go I'm closing the factory now..can't 'ave people on time and a bit....cost a fortune they do...and come Satday, mind you keep the goat in the cart park.. .don't eat steel mesh do 'e?"

"No" replied Lemoss

"Good.. 'cos its there to keep peoples carts in whilst they do their job like." Tom Foolery waved them away from the door and they trudged back down the drive. As they came toward the hooter a load banshee wail filled the air and both turned their heads toward the steel building. Loud clangs and banging of doors could be heard followed by a huge cloud of dust arising over the cart park then all was still. Suddenly a soft creaky whinny noise forced their attention back to the building which was lowering its sides on top of one another, stacking and flattening then disappearing slowly into the ground. A swishing grinding sound signaled the unrolling of a huge green carpet as it surged across the factory site.

The lads retreated up the lane, poked their noses through the gateway of the first cottage only to see the proud ride-on owner scrambling out of the garden pond.

"Best leave him be Lemoss. Was that an environmental type factory that Tables told us in class?"

Lemoss shrugged his shoulders, he was thinking on how a cow would be much more useful to the man on the mower.

Nimblefax wondered how disgruntled customers returned shoddy goods back to an environmental factory.

CHAPTER 3. A REWARD COLLECTED AND SHARED.

A week passed and the drizzle drifted down in swirling grey shrouds as Lemoss and Flitter galloped down, or rather through, the muddy factory driveway. They had left Nimblefax at Granny's for safe keeping whilst they came to pick up their reward. They reached the double doors and shouted a big 'HELLO' at the horn.

"Ello", it squeaked back.

"Is Tom Fooling there please?"

"Whaatesayy" whispered the horn.

"Said we was to come next Satday midmorn" shouted Flitter.

"That's next week", stuttered the horn.

"He told us last week so today's the day so to speak" said Lemoss helpfully.

"Who spoke?"

"Its just a saying."

"Whose saying?"

"Anybody's I suppose, now stop fooling around and please deliver the message."

'Its FOOLERY not fooling" squeaked the horn passionately.

"What's wrong with your voice then "Flitter asked patiently.

"Transvestors gone phut, awaiting spare parts.. .last solar year it was a capacitor.. gave me 'ickups and a stt..stutter".

"Please MAY WE SEE Mr.Foolery?" Lemoss rapped at the door.

"'Spose if the cottage was made of glass you might ...there again depends on whether its frosted or patterned, then you wouldn't...."

"Doe 's Tom Foolery sell notices.. .talking type ones?" asked Flitter innocently. "Tons and Kilos of 'em, our best seller so I hear.. mark you I don't get to hear to much these days being stuck out here awaiting on customer's and the like." Just then the doors opened and Tom's nose appeared furtively around.

"Oh, it's only you two again, hoped it was a customer I did... wait a tick I need to do 'some adjusting on this here horn." Tom pulled out a broom handle from behind the door and gave the horn an almighty whack.

"AAAGH", cried the horn.

"Better", said Tom. "Now just follow me and keep your hands in your pocket's." They followed Tom as he strode into the factory assembly area. Over on one side sat a huge stack of assorted bag's and boxes, stack would have been a kindly description to the cluttered heaps.

"Said I'd give a reward and won't break me word.. seeing as you aren't paying customer's like.. now I did have 'something just come in... a prototype.. first one made they 'said... not one 'sold yet.. been having a copy of it since winter.. what you call Snodin in Knoal. Come from Merica, very clever tronics. mines better, improved version, bit larger".

Tom handed Lemoss the a small box from a dusty shelf and then pointed to a huge box standing center stage on the factory floor.

"Your tronics seem much larger", said Lemoss grimacing.

"Course tis, got more in it than that little runt you've been given."

"They both do the same thing?" asked Flitter politely.

"Course, but people pay more for a larger tronic, that's the way it is these days.. people wants more for their money.. so I gave 'em more.

"Does it come with instructions?" Lemoss tucked the small box under his arm, it felt quite light.

"Up here 'tis, so find out like I did, do you good to have a brain tizzle".

"Teaser" Lemoss ventured.

"And no gara. .garantee 'cos its a free gift. so don't come back if you have problems", Tom surveyed the factory walls. There were little dent marks all over the metal walls plus a few whoppers.

Lemoss thought what had done that, if only Nimblefax was there.

They were then bundled back out through the double doors and Lemoss only had a second or so to thank Tom Foolery before the doors slammed shut.

"Goodbye" squeaked the horn as the lads retreated down the drive. There was a loud crack behind them.

"GoodByeie", shouted the horn followed by a door slamming shut.

"What is it?" Flitter gazed expectantly at the box.

"We'll open it under that tree out of the rain."

Which they did.

"Gosh, does not look much for something that's tronic, what are all those little buttons for?"

"No instructions either Flitter....expect we'll have to work it out...perhaps Granny might know."

Granny Wellbeloved already had 'scones and juice on the table when both lads dripped into her cottage.

"My, Lemoss what have you bought back from Mr.Foolery's factory."
"A present.. its our reward. Problem is Granny we've no idea what it is, Tom, 'said there were no instructions on it but on the inside flap it reads

'Press any button and wait'. Lemoss's handed the box to Granny who eyed it suspiciously.

"Have you pressed any buttons yet?"

"Couldn't decide which one 'cos there's a fair few Granny".

"Sit down lad's.. now let me 'see.. I'll press this one.. .mmmh yes I believe this one might do us".

Nothing happened.

"Perhaps try another?" Flitters patience was wearing thin.

"Give it time, help yourselves to scone's and jam". All three munched away watching the thing do nothing in particular. There was a rap on the door and they all turned to see Nimblefax's head peer into the room.

"Come in Nimblefax" said Granny.

"It's gone," said Flitter and all eye's swept the table top.

"Flitter are you teasing Granny." Granny gave him a long cool look.

"No Granny it's vanished... by itself. "

Yes dear, quite right I can 'see it hiding behind the cream bowl. ..for one minute I thought my eye's were deceiving me".

"Where Granny?" Lemoss moved the cream bowl aside but he couldn't see the object. "A little forward... .to your right. .there by your hand".

Lemoss moved his hand and picked up the invisible reward.

"Press another button now," Granny leant forward, "the one by your middle finger." The object at once appeared in Lemoss's hand and with it came a pleasant jingle noise.

"A radinoise" shouted Flitter in glee.

"Prap's a taperecorder" Lemoss exclaimed.

"An object of great mystery and adventure", Granny laughed, remembering there were 'still one hundred and ninety eight button's still to be explored!

"Best mark these buttons with a scraper, from number one onwards then make a list in the box once you've pressed each one". Granny reached into her sideboard drawer and produced a fine scraper pen.

Lemoss picked the object and pen up and put them both carefully in the box. "Is it safe do you think?"

"Benign yes, safe no", 'said Granny with a twinkle. "But a word of warning, knowing Tom Foolery, there will probably be a button that says 'return to factory at all possible speed', so you would be well advised to press the button's in a closed and shuttered room. Well goodbye lads, hurry home the clouds are gathering for another downpour".

They both thanked Granny for her help and with Nimblefax in tow scooted down the road. "I'll call it Hedgehog", Lemoss shouted as they ran for Dort.

"Which one are you Lemoss?" yelled Flitter as they crossed the bridge over Dort river, "and shouldn't we take back Nimblefax's friend who's the

spitting image of Nimblefax?"

Lemoss stopped and looked about.

"Darn it, must have pressed itself whilst we were running.. I'll press the music one again". The twins of Lemoss and Nimblefax disappeared. Nimblefax looked distraught, he had been ogling his mirror image all the way down, checking the way his hooves moved, shaking his horns sideways and generally showing off.

"How do we 'stop the jingle?"

"I'll make it invisible then, least it will be 'safe from prying eye's." Lemoss pressed another button and with the first large raindrop's commencing their descent, the lads headed home.

CHAPTER 4. OF PRESSING LOTS OF BUTTONS AND SURPRISES.

Two Saturdays passed pleasantly enough, and quite a few evenings as well. All spent locked up in the close confines of Flitter's dad's work shed. Lemoss's mother had given him a small blue notebook which he wrote in each time they pressed a button. Granny Wellbeloved had been a third right so far, in fact numbers fifteen, thirty three, and sixty five had all produced a determined attempt by the hedgehog to veer up and seek a gap to escape. Three times Flitter had to use his grandfathers butterfly net to snatch the tronic robot to the safety of Lemoss's hands and a quick push for the jingle.

Other buttons have proved even more eventful, number forty two vanished a sandwich Flitter had been munching on, Number eighteen was a foghorn, number nine a grand symphony orchestra. Seventy one was the absolute pits, a recital of the twelve times tables in a singularly metallic voice.

The fifties range had so far boded well for the future. Fifty made whoever was holding the hedgehog invisible. Fifty one reversed the process. Fifty two made two gold coins appear and fifty three took them back again. There was hour's of experimentation with these two numbers as Flitter tried desperately to increase the gold hoard to more than two, alas no amount of hiding standing or enclosing them in a sealed tin would work. Sadly fifty two could only be pressed the once then fifty three had to reset it. Flitters dreams of the goose that laid the golden egg were

dashed.

Fifty four roared like a lion and had Nimblefax battering the door down to get in. Fifty five 'spoke out a poem about the 'great blue ocean', Lemoss quickly pushed another button as Nimblefax could be seen peering through the window with obvious distaste. Fifty six was a three dimensional view of the countryside around, they could see Mr.Potts cycling down Dort lane, and over by the Northern cross roads, Mr.Clothier was snooping around his well ready for a quick scramble down. The lads were entranced, the idea of spying on the whole village from above appealed to their curiosity and down right nosiness. They looked southward to Roses Mead but all was,...well it wasn't there, only a bright pink impenetrable mist.

Fifty seven came with the HD picture quality but with the added dimension of three dimensional sound... .Mr.Clothier's gurgling came through loud and clear... wherever they moved the hedgehog the sound enhancement followed, and by tipping it longways specific target's and sound could be zoomed in.

"Magic" cried Flitter.

'Inbuilt travelling macraphone, wonder how it does it, I mean how can it see from above when its down here all the time?" Lemoss puzzled as he watched Tables picking greenfly off his rose bushes.

'What's a macrophone Lemoss?"

"Thing that pick's up and throw's out music and voices".

"Who told you that?"

"Old Fizzicist at science and theories class."

"What'sFeary's?"

"Thing's that are maybe' s but on the other hand maybe not till proved. Something like that."

"Like what?"

"Just push another button Flitter, number fifty eight if you please".

Both lads found themselves hanging upside down close to the shed rafters, in a panic Flitter had dropped the hedgehog and by good fortune it had bounced twice on the table first giving an almighty fog horn hoot then a rendition of a popular marching tune. Lemoss fell heavily on Flitter who had landed safely on the straw bale's they had been sitting on.

Fifty nine proved to be a gentler means of descent. After 'several dangerous attempts the boy's discovered that by manipulating the hedgehog in a certain direction they could actually steer themselves .around the shed.

Sixty nine wouldn't work. they pushed hard, then softly, quickly and slowly but nothing appeared to happen.

"It's a dud" Flitter pronounced.

"All the other's have worked so far, this one may need time..perhaps

something has happened outside which we can't see". Lemoss found Flitter's Dad's enlarging glass and proceeded to study the button closely. "Help".

"What's wrong?" asked Flitter anxiously.

"It says HELP, that's all...give it a few more second's".

They waited contemplating the hedgehog.. Number sixty nine was pressed in again and a 'soft whine preceded a thin robotic voice.

"Ouch. don't keep shoving me IN and OUT" said the voice, "and what do you want?"

"Are you a genie with three wishes for us?" ventured Flitter.

"NO".

"I didn't know exactly what 'help' meant" Lemoss moved the hedgehog closer to them.

"You still don't".

"Do you know a certain horn at the factory by any chance?"

"Never met it, listened to a few notices on the shelf when I was bored though" said the Help button.

"What does 'help' mean then please?"

"Means what it says."

"Does it mean if I fell into a stinking muddy pool you'd help me out?"

"Button fifty eight does that."

"Well say I was chased by a hornets nest, would HELP help?"

"Nests don't fly, only the things in them do."

"Well, say we lost the billy cart would help find it?"

"Fifty 'six or fifty seven I'd say."

"Fine, 'so what does 'help' do then?"

"Helps."

"Help's what."

"Helps you."

"Helps us to know what the buttons do?"

"YES."

"You can tell us what each button can do... all of them?" Lemoss was wide eyed in concentration or shock

"All except one."

"Which one?"

"Sixty nine."

"But that's your number."

"Exactly.. can't help myself can I?" The lads thought for a moment.

"I marked all these button's with a scratch pen myself, how did you know what button number I had marked on them?"

"Stands to reason.. only one way 'sfar as I can see." Lemoss looked perplexed.

"Do you have an on/off close me down switch?" Flitter drummed his

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