

# How Herbert Got His Nose

By

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And

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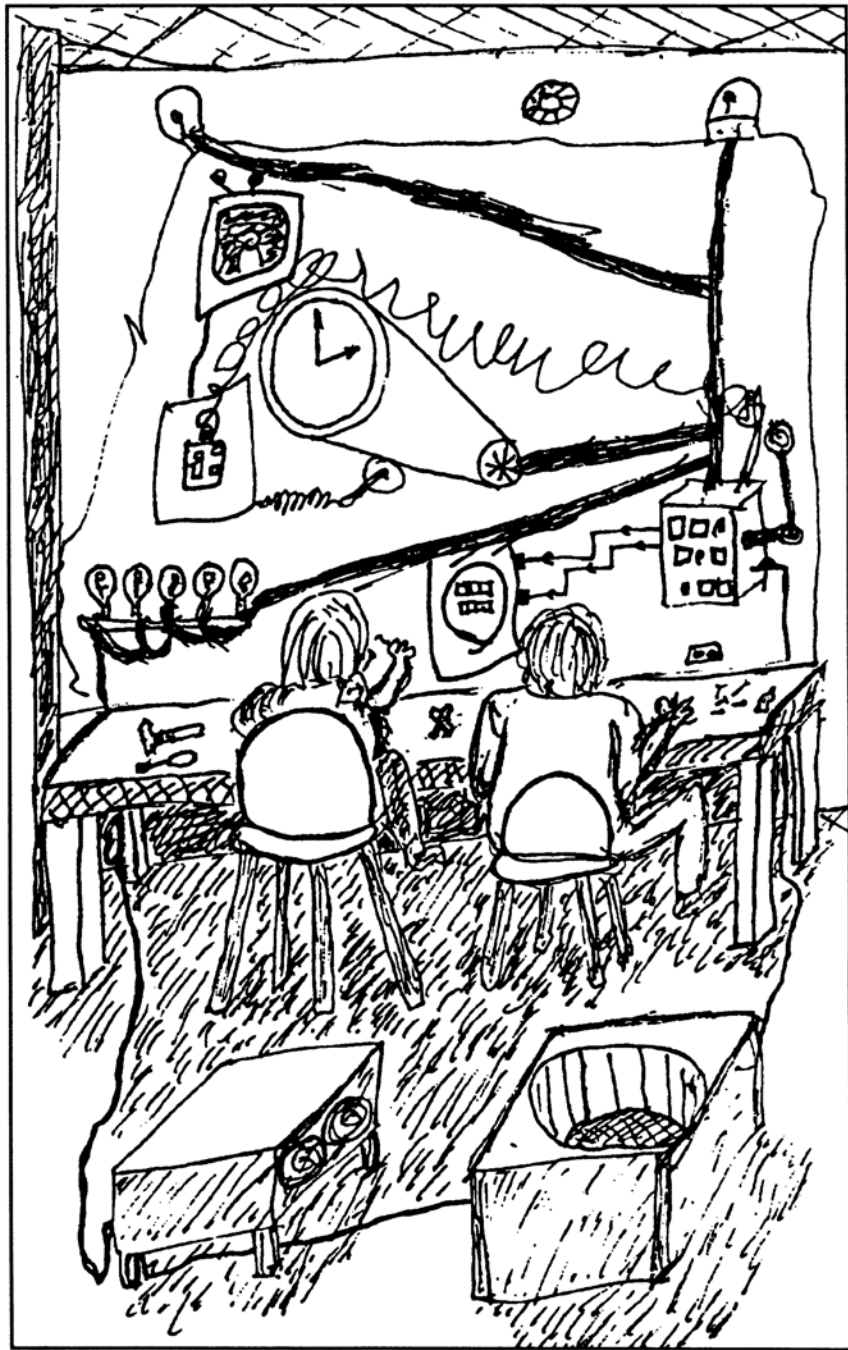
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## Chapter 1

# In Search of Pirate Treasure

Our adventure with Herbert the Herumph started the night that we watched *The Time Machine* on TV. When the movie ended Pete asked, "Dad, if we built a time machine could we really go back in time?"

"Well, in stories, people do go back in time," I said, "but I have never heard of a real time machine. Maybe someday someone will make one though."

"Yeah! Maybe we could build a time machine. Then we could go see where pirates buried their treasure, right?"

"We would really only need to look back in time and watch the pirates," I said. "Maybe a machine like that would be easier to build."

"OK, let's do it. Let's build a Time Looker. It could be sort of like a TV, but different!"

"Well, Pete, I've never heard of a machine like that, but we could try to build one. I have a broken TV set and an old computer and lots of wire and wood. I even have an old broken clock! Maybe if we stick those things together it might work. Even if it doesn't we'll have fun." I was thinking that this would be a good way to teach Pete how machines work and how to use some tools.

"OK!" said Pete, bubbling with enthusiasm, "I'll draw a picture of the Time Looker, and then we can build it! Right?"

"You can draw your plan now," I said, "and then tomorrow, after you get home from kindergarten, we'll start to build it."

"OK! Hey, Mom, tomorrow Dad and I are going to build a Time Looker and get some pirate treasure!"

I looked over at Pam and she smiled. Evenings at home can be great.

The next day we gathered together a pile of junk that I had collected over the years. The main bits were a sick TV, a vacuum cleaner motor, an old and small but still functioning computer, and

the pieces of a clock I bought accidentally at auction many years ago. That night we started taking these things apart and combining the pieces to make our invention.

For weeks we worked on the Time Viewer down in the basement. One night we hooked up the motor to the clock with an old pulley from a washing machine, and the hands of the clock went around in a blur. The following Sunday I found what was wrong with the TV and we connected it to our contraption. We set the clock whirling, and then Pete pushed the On button for the TV.

The picture tube warmed up to show indistinct shapes. There was no sound, but there sure was something on the screen. I was amazed and Pete very excited when the picture cleared a little and we could just see that we were watching pirates bury their treasure. Could this be true? Had we created a Time Looker? Then a commercial came on. It turned out that the TV was still good enough to pick up a movie called *Pirates of the Caribbean* that was on Channel 53 that afternoon.

This was very disappointing, but by the next weekend our disappointment had faded, and we were ready to stick the next part onto our Time Looker. On that fateful Saturday morning we wired the XTV into the machine. XTV - that was the only label on the olive green box. The XTV had a very large handle on one side, and was packed with mirrors, lenses, gears, motors and batteries. I had bought it as government surplus at Edmond Scientific a long time ago, just because it was so packed full of mysterious bits and pieces. We connected the XTV and set the clock spinning. Slowly, a picture appeared on the TV screen showing the interior of a rocky cave with the entrance in the background, and after a minute I started to get excited. This was far too boring to be a movie.

"Look at that, Pete! It's some sort of a cave! See the entrance?"

"Yay!" cried Pete. "Where are the pirates?"

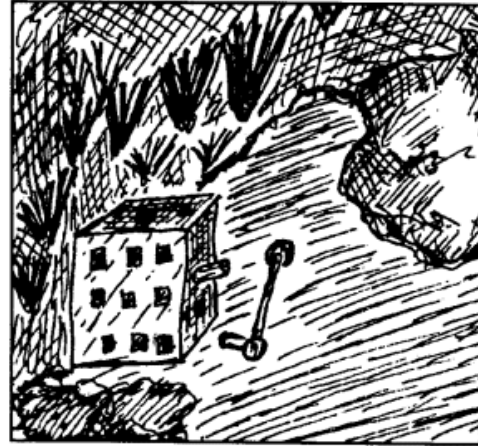
"I don't know. Maybe we'll have to figure out a way to move the picture around. Maybe the pirates will come to the cave later on! I wonder where that cave is? Why don't you pull on the XTV handle and we'll see what happens?"

Pete scrambled up onto the workbench, and while I watched the screen he pulled on the handle. "I can't move it. Dad. Come and help me," he said.

I went over and together we pulled down as hard as we could. All of a sudden three things happened. The handle came down with a bang, we fell to the floor and the room went dark. It took me a moment to realize that we weren't in a room at all. We were sitting on the floor of a cave. The same cave we had seen on the TV!

"Wow, where are we?" asked Pete.

"I don't know, but our machine brought us here. I think we had better try to get it to take us back home. Maybe if we throw the handle the other way...." I reached around the box and found the handle, but it had broken in the fall now useless!



"Pete," I said, "We are going to be late for lunch."

"Is everything going to be OK?"

"I hope so. Nothing too bad has happened yet. I think that if we can just mend this handle we can get home again. Or, maybe we are someplace close to home already and we can just walk. Let's have a look outside."

"OK, I won't be scared 'cause you are here," said a worried looking Pete.

After tucking the XTV box and the broken handle under a big rock at the back of the cave, we walked out into the sunlight. The country was full of mountains, and some of them had spiral ramps leading up to their tops. The trees and flowers looked like none I had ever seen, and floating high in the sky I could make out clumps of large balloons. I had never seen anything like this before and knew that we were far, far from home. We had better find a way to fix that handle. Maybe we could make some sort of glue...

"Dad, what is that!"



The cave seemed to be on the side of a mountain, and a hard white road lead right to it. Just at the entrance the road took a sharp turn, and Pete had looked around the corner. Now I did too. I grabbed him and pulled him back.

"Don't let it see you," I whispered.

"What is it? It looks sort of funny."

"You're right," I said. "Also there is no such thing!"

Coming down the road toward the cave was an absurd creature. It had a lumpy sort of a body with yellow stripes and six chubby legs. Its nose was just plain silly, and somehow I could not be scared. Looking around I saw that there was no place to hide, and so I took Pete's hand and we walked boldly out of the cave and toward the creature. When it saw us it stopped, and its nose started to shake back and forth. We started to laugh - we just couldn't help it. After a minute the creature approached us, and seemed very interested in Pete.

"Hello," I said.

The creature made a low sound that could have been speech, but which meant nothing to me.

"We are lost and need help," I said.

Again came the low sound, and now the creature's nose seemed to stretch out toward us.

"You want to shake noses?" I said. "Pete, let's touch his nose with our hands. That's probably how these creatures say hello."

Timidly we reached out and touched the monster's strange nose. It felt like an under-inflated rubber ball, and the second our hands touched it I heard a deep voice in my head.

"I am Herbert Herumph. What kind of animals are you?"

"I am a man," I said aloud, "and this is my son, Pete. We made a machine that somehow brought us to this cave. We want to get back to our home, but the handle of the machine has broken. Do you have some kind of very strong glue?"

"You are funny looking," said the voice in our heads. "You look a little like the rock monsters that scare our little ones, but a lot sillier. What is that stuff attached to your head, some kind of fur?"

"That's our hair. It keeps our heads warm."

"Oh, I see! And I guess the cloth on your bodies keeps them warm. How strange. Tell me, isn't your son very young to have a nose?"

"Even our babies have noses," I said. "Do you know of some sort of glue that can mend metal?"

"Perhaps. Fire worm slime takes some time to set but when it is dried in sunlight it turns very, very hard."

"That sounds like it might work. If you would help us, it would be very kind of you. Perhaps we can talk while the worm glue is drying."

"That is a good plan. I am very curious about how your young ones can prove themselves if they are born with noses. Let's do the mending and then you can tell me of men, and I will tell you of herumphs."

What a reasonable creature! After all the years of creepy aliens in movies, I was very surprised that something so odd to look at could be so reasonable. Herbert led us to the back of the cave and rolled a large rock aside. Behind the rock was a perfectly smooth tunnel whose walls were covered with a glowing yellow ooze. At Herbert's urging, we gathered some of the sticky stuff, coated the broken ends of the handle heavily with it, and pushed the two pieces back together. Then we then took the XTV box out into the sunlight. We had to use rocks to hold the parts in place because the fire worm goo was so slippery, but Herbert assured us that in a few hours the slime would turn rock hard.

While we waited for the slime to set, Pete and I sat touching Herbert's nose and we talked. Herbert was very interested in our day-to-day life, and not at all interested in machines or presidents or countries. He could not seem to understand that we were born with noses and did not have to earn them, but except for this one subject he was very good at asking questions and understanding our answers. After talking for an hour or so about our world, we checked the glue. Sure enough, it was becoming tacky. As we reseated ourselves and resumed our talk, I said, "This is certainly a strange world to us. As silly as we look to you, that's how silly you look to us. But it seems we can still be friends."



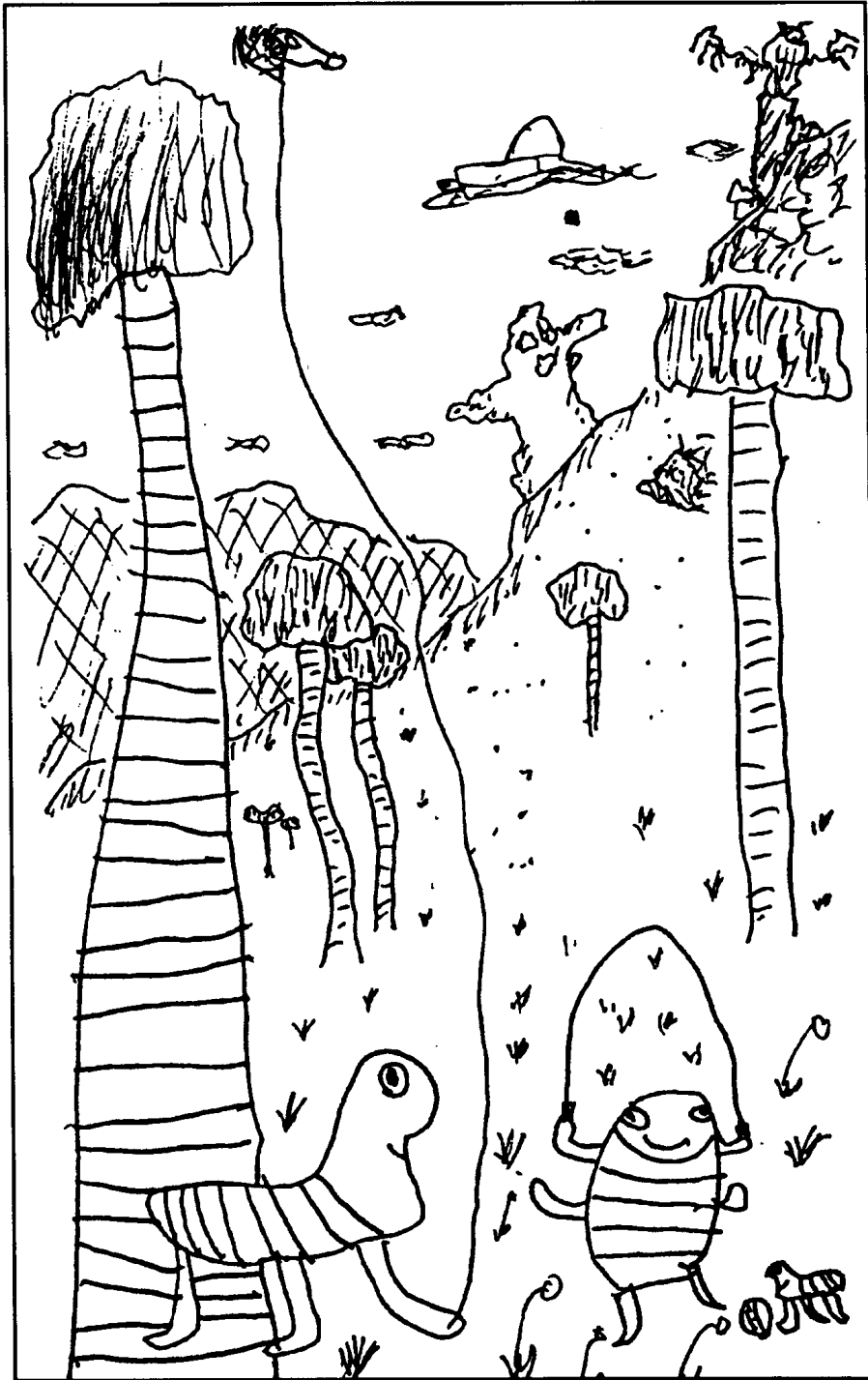
'Yes," said Herbert, "but then herumphs with noses know the value of cooperation. Be glad that you didn't meet any munchies! They are a troublesome lot."

"I don't understand yet about herumph noses," I said. "You mean that you are not born with noses?"

"Of course not," said Herbert. "We have to earn our noses."

"Tell us how you earned your nose," said Pete.

The perfect suggestion! Until then, getting information out of Herbert had been difficult. He had wanted so much to understand how men grew up and lived that he had not told us much about himself. Now we could feel the pride coming through his nose into our minds. Here is the story that he told us.



## *Chapter 2*

# Herbert's Story

When I was small, I was just like all of the other little herumphs. We went to school to learn how to use our bodies and to learn good manners, and in the summer and on vacations we would often play in the park at the base of Monster Mountain. We small ones called it that because there was a rock at the top that looked like a huge terrifying monster stretching its arms out to catch us. We knew it was just a rock, but feared that it might come to life one night. You men look a lot more like the rock monster than you do any other creature I have ever met, and I wonder now if it might not be some kind of statue. There are a number of these rock monsters here in the mountains. Still, they look rough and angry, whereas you men just look strange and not a little silly.

In my early days I paid no attention to anyone but myself. If I tried to get along with the other children it was just because that was the best way to have playmates. Except for a dorg that lived down the street and that I would sometimes tease, I ignored the other animals that I occasionally saw. From what you have told me of your home, I think that dorgs must be like what you call dogs. They have six legs and stripes, you can pat them on their toes, and they like to chase rocks, right?

Other than teasing the dorg, I paid little attention to other animals until the day I decided to catch a basgag. I don't think you have anything like a basgag. These animals float high in the sky and feed on the air lilies that grow on the mountainsides. I now know that they are noble and intelligent animals and that the air lilies they eat give them the gas they need to stay afloat and to maneuver. But, when I was young, basgags were so many distant bags of wind, until the day I got an idea for catching one. I climbed up Monster Mountain and picked a large air lily. When I got it back down to the park, I put pieces of sticky tape all over it, and tied it to my kite. Then I sent my "kite trap" soaring way up into the sky, and tugged and jerked on the line until a basgag came to see this strange long-

stemmed air lily. By wiggling the line, I managed to get the basgag stuck to the kite, and then I started reeling him in.

I was very excited and happy, and a little afraid as he neared the ground. I could tell he was not happy at all by the way that he thrashed about, but I did not care, for I was young and noseless. As he touched the ground, my father, who had seen what was happening, rushed over to me. He also was not happy. He grabbed the kite and quickly freed the basgag, which went sailing back up into the sky. Turning to me, my father gave me a stern lecture on respect for other creatures, and then took me home where I spent many days inside. I didn't understand then why I should be nice to others, but I shortly understood that bad things would happen to me if I was not.

After that I stopped throwing rocks at the water sprites at Swimming Falls, and no longer shouted at the dorgs and jakes that I saw on the streets of Herumphville. As for basgags, they left me alone and, believe me, I left them alone. I had learned a lesson. Don't hurt other creatures or Dad will get mad. That was not the right lesson, but what would you expect from a noseless herumph?

As I neared my thirteenth year, I became more and more aware that I was different from my parents. They had noses and I did not. One morning I said to my father, "Wise one, why is it that you have a nose and I have none?"

"You are yet too young to be told of such things, my small noseless one."

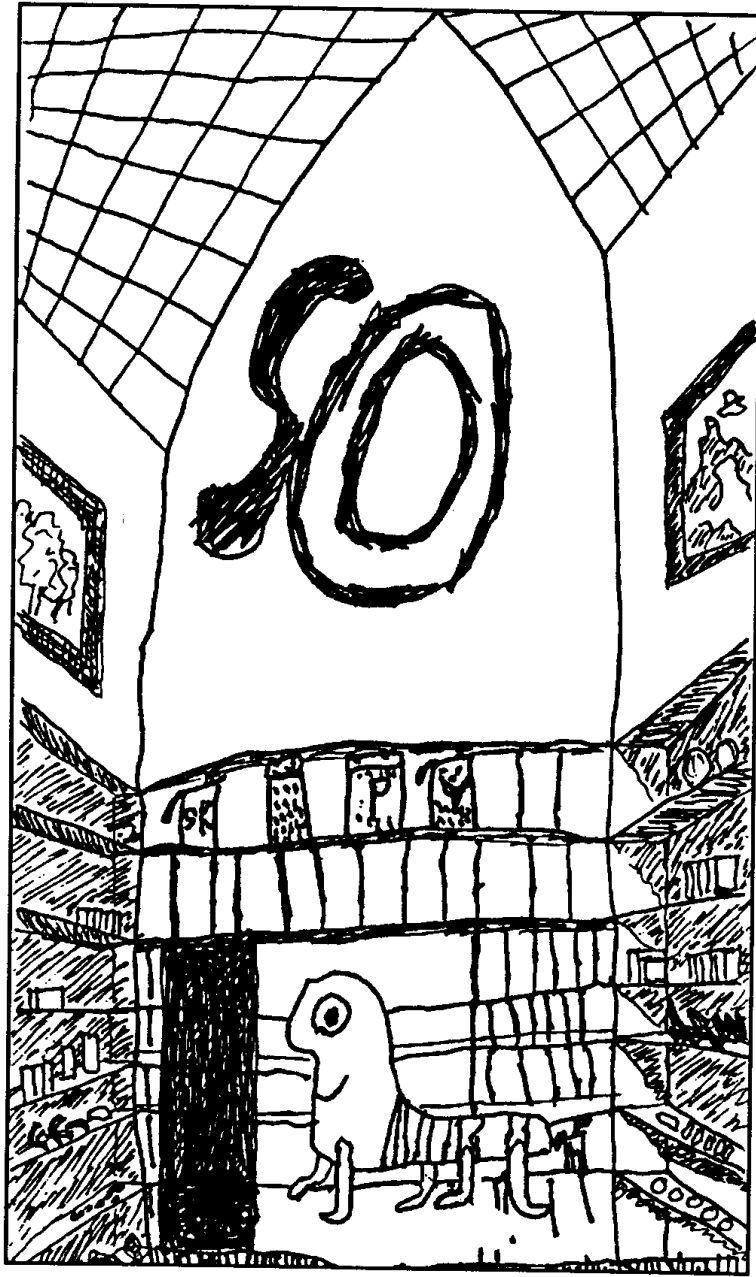
"What is the purpose of a nose, other than for its beauty?" I asked.

"You will discover that if you get your own nose one day."

"How did you get your nose, my father?"

"Go away, my son. I do not wish to talk of this with one so young," he said kindly-like.

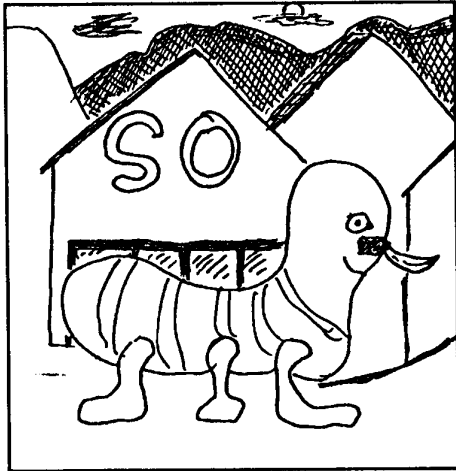
Well of course that ended the conversation, but as I walked through the town thinking about noses, I decided that perhaps I could get one for myself. It seemed certain to me that noses had to come from somewhere, as they are attached to the face rather than really being a part of it. I thought that perhaps noses came from a store (remember, I was young and noseless) and decided that perhaps I could just buy one for myself.



I shuffled down to the Slimester and Ongongong store and started looking for noses. Right away I noticed that nabanas look very much like the noses of some adult herumphs, except that nabanas are bright orange, not white, and they have green speckles, whereas noses have none. I decided that perhaps if I attached a nabana to my

face it would start to grow and change color. I bought a nice large nabana and some sticky tape and went outside to fix my nose in place. The tape was awkward and the vegetable did not really want to stay in place, but finally I was able to attach the nabana to my face. When I was done I said with pride, "Now I have a nose just like Dad!" Still, it felt an awful lot like I just had a nabana stuck to my face.

I started walking back to my home to show Mom my new nose, and everyone I passed let me know what, they thought of it. The

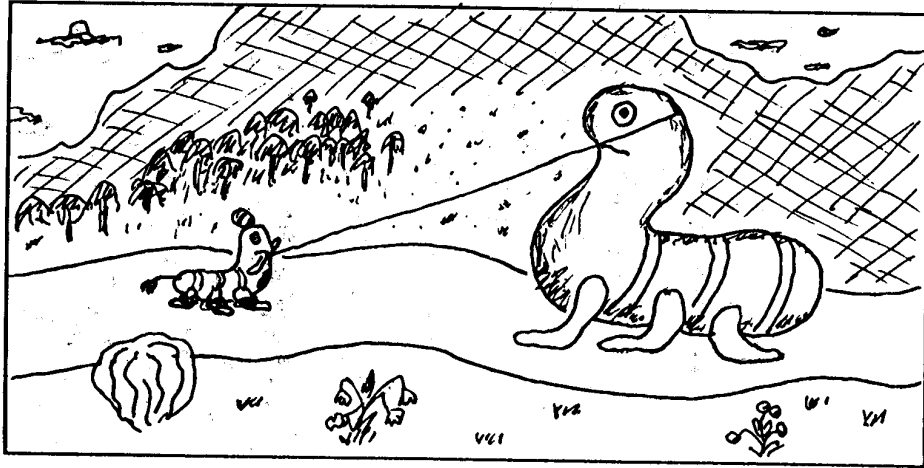


young herumphs started following me and making mean remarks - "Hey Herbert, did you try to eat that nabana and miss your mouth?" and "Herbert, maybe you would like to tape air lilies to your ears too, then you will look even sillier than you do now!"

I ignored them. Older herumphs had a different reaction. True, they smiled, but they also seemed to nod approvingly, which made me think that maybe I was right about

nabanas growing into noses. Halfway home the nabana fell off my face, and my friends ran away with it. I pulled the tape off of my face (that hurt a lot), and I decided that though nabanas might not be noses, perhaps something else I could buy was.

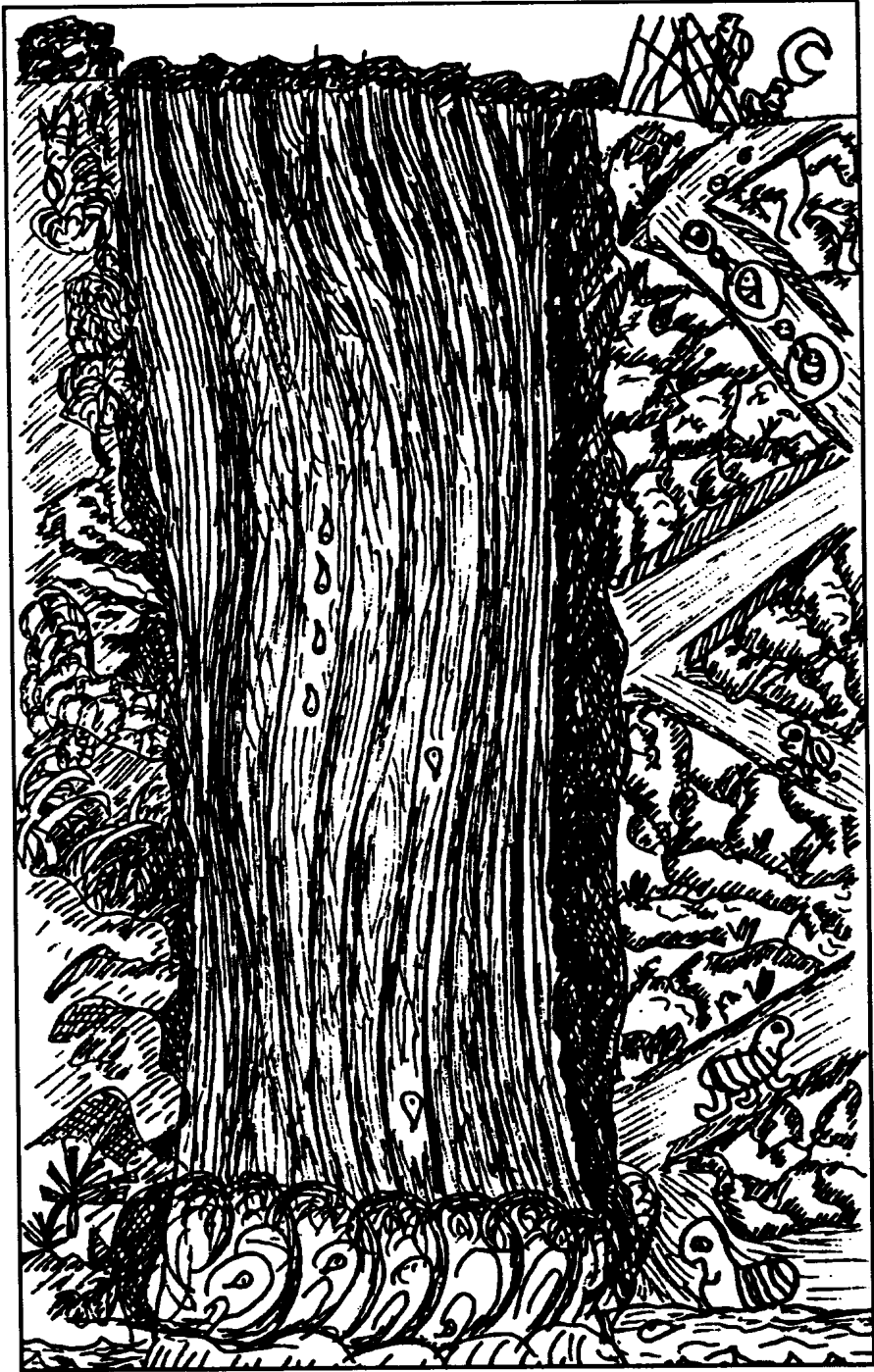
I went back to Slimester and Ongongong's and had another look around. In the meat department I spotted them. Of course! Nose sausages! They looked just like noses, were the right color, and why would they be called nose sausages if they weren't noses! Quickly I bought a nice-sized nose sausage, and then got some stretch string to tie it in place - the sticky tape had been too painful and troublesome. I shuffled outside and went behind the store. With haste, I tied the stretch string to the sausage and slipped a loop of the string around my head. This must be what it feels like to have a nose!



I wasn't going to take a chance on my friends teasing me again, so I went home by the back way to avoid them. Mom would be so pleased to see that I now had a nose!

As I neared my home, the dorg from down the street jumped out of the bushes. Usually he ran away from me, but this time he grabbed my nose first and THEN started to run away. The stretch string started to stretch, and I backed up, trying to pull the nose sausage from his mouth. The string stretched out longer and longer and longer. Suddenly the nose sausage broke in half, and the dorg made joyous noises and ran away up the street with his half. The stretch string brought my half rocketing back into place on my face. It was like being hit with half of a nose sausage fired from a catapult. I fell onto my stomach and was lying there hurt and confused when my father came to the door and saw me.

Dad smiled and said, "Now that you have done more than just ask about noses, now that you have shown that you really want a nose, it's time for you to begin your "nose quest." Sleep well tonight for tomorrow you set forth."



### *Chapter 3*

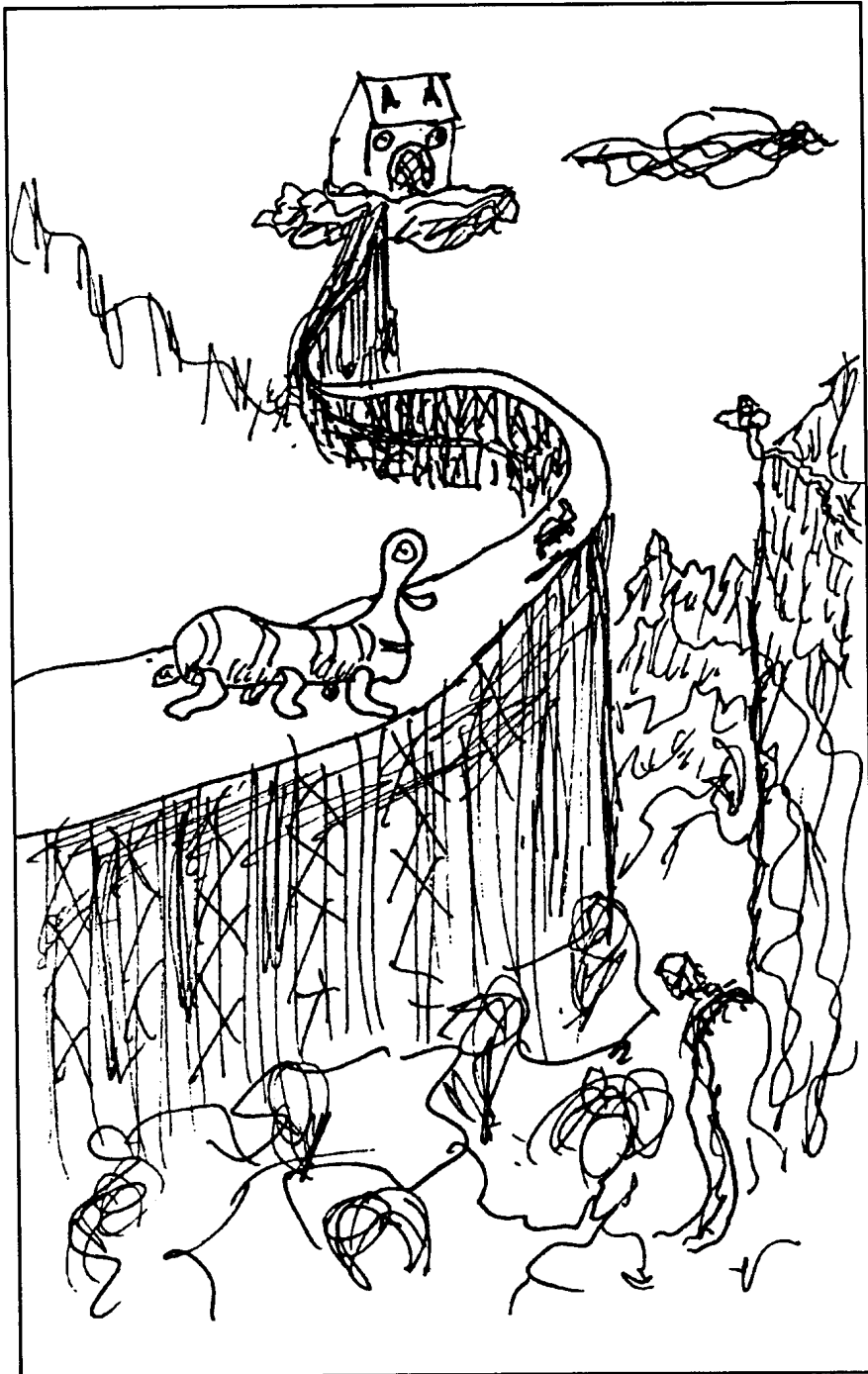
## To the Cloud House

When I told my parents what I had done, they were pleased with my search for a nose. They also seemed to think it pretty funny. My father rocked back and forth with laughter when I told of the incident with the dorg. They would still tell me nothing of noses or how I could get one. They just said that I would start on my "nose quest" in the morning. I did not sleep well that night.

As the sun came up the following morning I was bidding farewell to my parents. They had lots of advice about being patient, observant and kind, but would tell me nothing of how to conduct my nose quest. I was told to follow the path above Swimming Falls until I met Henry Herumph, the Guardian of the Quest.

It was with a feeling of loneliness that I climbed the ramp at the falls and saw the young herumphs playing with each other and the water sprites. I remembered how I had often played there in my youth, letting the fun-loving sprites drag me around and enjoying the company of my friends. As I shuffled up the path behind the falls, I was soon further into the mountains than I had ever before dared go. How was I to get food? I had none. Where was I to sleep? What of the munchies? Would they eat me as all young herumphs believed? How could I get a nose???

The country was wild, with only the road to show me the way. On all sides were the strange cone-shaped mountains where the jakes were said to live, and more than once I saw a stone monster perched high on a ridge with its arms stretching toward me. I was very quiet, and not a little afraid, but always the road led me forward on my quest. By lunchtime I had company. First one Munchie, then a second and then a third had started following me. They seemed to gain courage with numbers, and when three more joined the parade behind me I grew concerned. They were making terrible noises and then laughing uproariously. I decided to scare them away, and picked up a bunch of small stones and threw them in their direction.



Instead of running away, the munchies danced around the stones I had thrown, and then started throwing them back at me. I was hit once or twice and was just beginning to be frightened when down the road came the largest herumph that I had ever seen. He looked at the munchies intently, his nose seemed to quiver, and my tormentors disappeared into the bushes beside the road. Then he turned to me.

"Were you not told to be patient, observant and kind?" he asked.

"Yes, that was the last thing my parents told me. Are you Henry Herumph?"

"Would you say that throwing rocks at munchies is a kind thing to do? Did you not observe that they were not hurting you? Do you not have the patience to withstand a little loud laughter? I am Henry Herumph, Guardian of the Quest, and you have gotten off to a bad start. Unless you learn to be patient, observant and kind, you will spend many years in these mountains. Come with me."

Although I was much relieved to have found Henry Herumph, the Guardian of the Quest, I was also very saddened by his speech. I had not meant to hurt the munchies, but had only thrown the rocks because I was frightened. Henry would accept no explanation, and hardly spoke to me for almost an hour. We moved up the road further into the mountains, and gradually he did begin to say more. First he pointed out various plants that were good to eat, and then he told me how I might sleep in the caves dotted through the mountains. He also explained, in acid terms, that the munchies were the only thing to fear in the mountains, and that though they might make a lot of noise, they would not hurt me if I did not hurt them first. Henry said that the munchies spent most of their time being mean to jakes and trying to catch basgags.

As the sun started to go behind the mountains, we came to an enormous bridge that jutted up into the sky. At the end of the bridge, seemingly floating on a cloud, was a large house. We started shuffling up the bridge toward this strange house. "That is my cloud house," said Henry Herumph with obvious pride. "It is from here that I will supervise your nose quest. Perhaps I judged you too hastily earlier, so listen well to what I now tell you."

"You will have to discover for yourself where noses come from and how one is to be obtained. I will tell you only this --- make friends with a basgag."

"How am I to do that?" I asked.

"That I will not say," said Henry. "There are many ways, but you will have to discover one for yourself. You must gain the friendship of a basgag to get a nose. I will tell you no more."

We were now close to the end of the bridge into the sky, and the cloud on which Henry's house rested was ahead. Henry turned and seemed about to say something, when I had an idea!

"When I was young I trapped a basgag with a kite and an air lily. Perhaps I could catch one again!" I said.

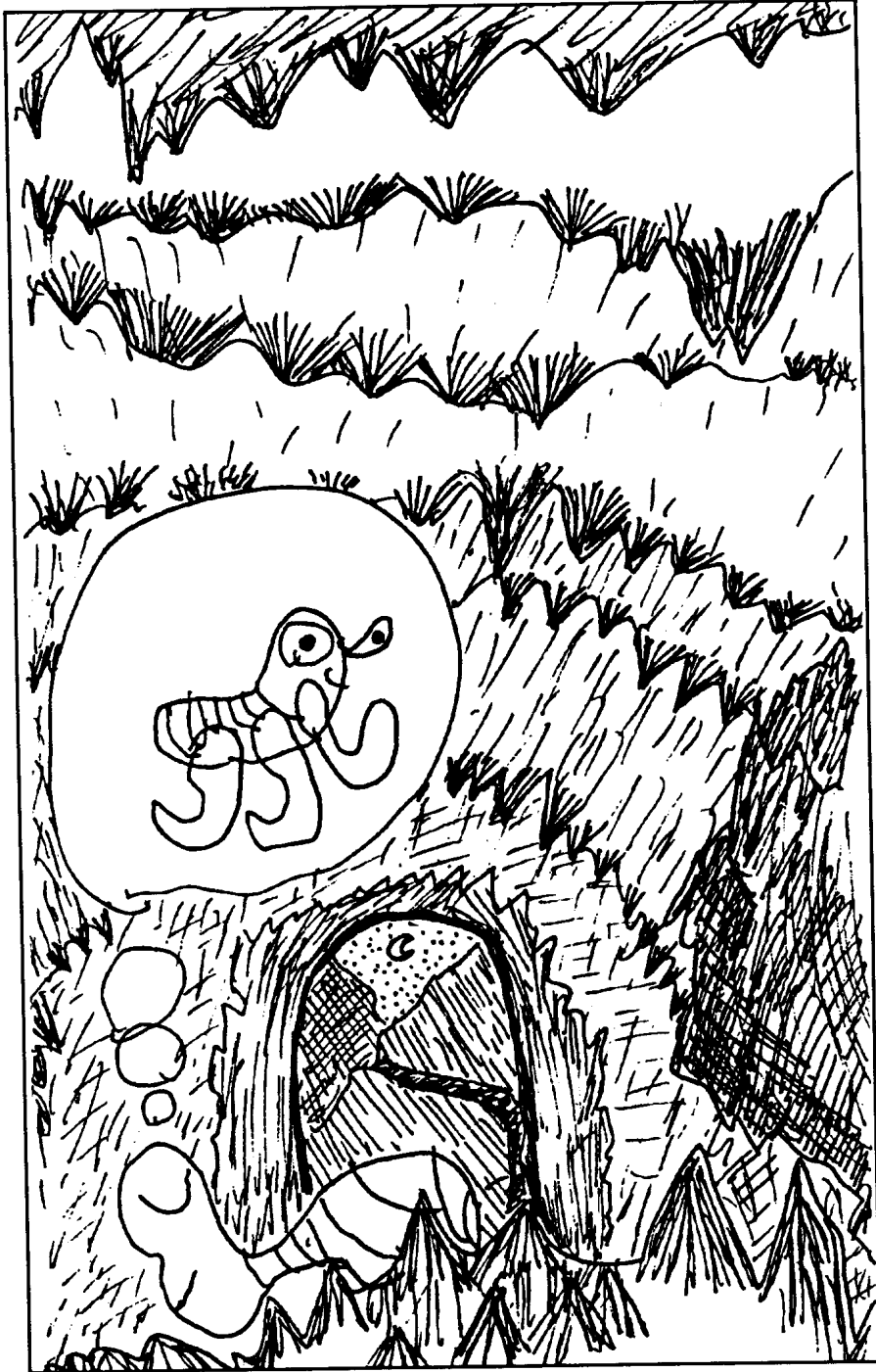
Henry glared at me. "So you are the one! Not only are you cruel, but that basgag has never been the same since you caught him. He does not flock with the others of his kind and is well past the age when he should have changed. His name is Boris and you have damaged his life."

"If you have thoughts of trying another trick like that, forget them! I am the Guardian of the Quest, and it is not you whom I guard! Be gone!"

With that Henry stamped through the cloud, entered his house and slammed the door. I was stunned. I started to follow so that I could explain myself, but when I stepped onto the cloud, which seemed strong enough to hold both Henry and a house, I fell right through it. I grabbed hold of the end of the bridge just in time to save myself from a fall. Scrambling up onto the bridge again, I stood glaring at the cloud, Henry's house, and a flock of basgags high overhead who seemed to have become interested in me.

It was getting dark and I had no place to sleep. I felt very alone, and was now sure that getting a nose would be no easy thing to do. I felt very sad as I slowly started down the cloud house bridge in search of a place to rest for the night.





## *Chapter 4*

# The Night in the Cave

As I shuffled off of the bridge and onto the road, I thought about my terrible day. I had left home for the first time, had had a fight with the terrible munchies, and had angered Henry Herumph. It seemed that everything had gone wrong. As I wandered down different roads looking for a cave to sleep in, it came to me that I had brought most of my problems upon myself. True, I had left home, but if I had only been patient, observant and kind none of rest would have happened. As I walked, my mood slowly changed. I decided that I would indeed be patient in my search for a nose, observant of my surroundings, and most of all, kind to all the creatures I met.

I was feeling a lot better by the time I found a cave. Crawling to the back, I cuddled down to go to sleep. With my back against a large rock, I felt safe and was almost asleep when I noticed my foot was glowing. I hopped up and the glow went away. I stood looking and listening, waiting for something to happen. All was quiet. Stepping close to the rock against which I had been sleeping, and scrunching down, I could see that the glow came from under the rock. How peculiar! Pushing against the rock, I managed to roll it a little to the right and saw a strange sight. There was a smooth tunnel running right through the mountain! Its sides and roof were coated with a goo that glowed yellow in the darkness. The floor of the tunnel was hard and smooth and black. Here was a discovery that I wouldn't have made had I not been observant! I did not know then that this was a fire worm tunnel, or that this very tunnel would help me to get my nose, but I was happy just to have discovered something new.

Rolling the rock back into place, I again snuggled down and went to sleep. My dreams were good ones of being kind, being patient and most of all of getting a nose. When morning came I was up early, all set to really begin my nose quest. My plan was to watch basgags

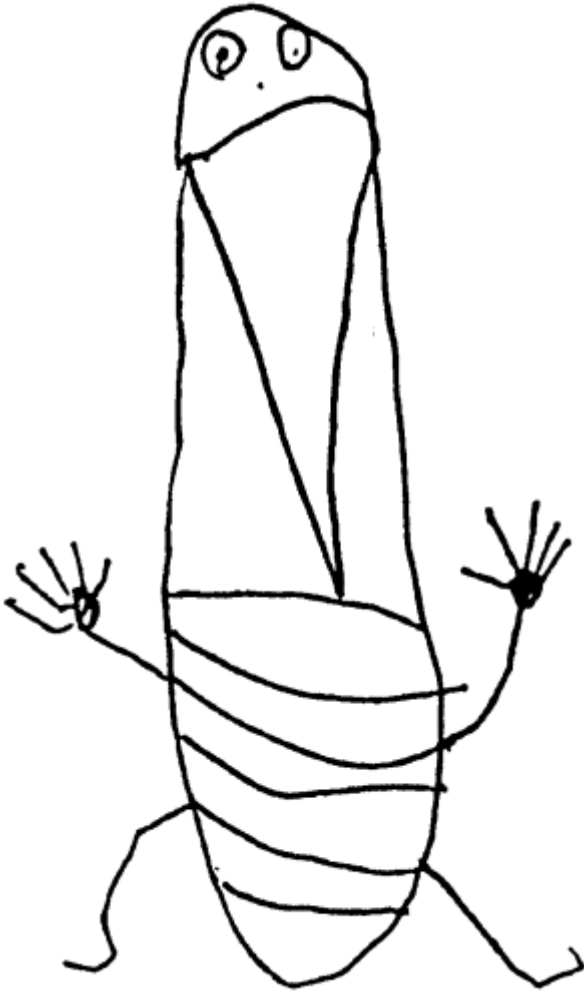
until I knew where they lived, what they ate and what made them happy. I shuffled along the mountain roads, past large waterfalls and through deep valleys. I saw flocks of basgags high in the air from time to time, but had great difficulty following them because the roads of the air are not the same as the roads of the ground.

Toward the end of the morning I decided to eat lunch from a patch of nabanas alongside the road and to quietly observe my surroundings. I was at one end of a bridge that passed close to a huge waterfall. Looking out from the bridge I could see for a great distance. Far down the valley, I could just see the cave where I had slept the night before. Close by there was a mountainside covered with air lilies. Hmm. Maybe if I was quiet and patient a flock of basgags might come to feed on the air lilies.

I sat for hours in the sun, waiting for something to happen and thinking of plans for making friends with a basgag. About mid-afternoon I noticed that some munchies had occupied a large rock that jutted out from the mountain's face. They too seemed to be very still, almost as though they were waiting for something. Suddenly I heard a faint whoosh high above my head. Looking up I saw a blue basgag coasting down toward the air lilies. It took me an instant to see what was going to happen, and then I started shouting at it, but by then I was too late. As the basgag had drifted under the rock on which the munchies stood, these troublesome animals had started throwing stones shaped like stars at him. The basgag ducked and dodged, but finally was hit by one of the star stones. It made a big tear in his skin, and the gas which kept him in the air began to escape. He started to drift lower and lower, and as he slowly fell toward the earth the munchies, howling with glee, came bouncing down the mountainside. Obviously they wanted to catch him. I saw that the basgag was in trouble, and shouted and waved so that he might know that I wanted to help him. He must have seen me because instead of just falling, he steered himself in my direction. He almost made it to the bridge on which I stood. Reaching out I was just able to grab one of his wings and drag him onto the bridge with me. He was very much larger than me but very light. The munchies, were far below where the basgag should have landed, screamed their outrage. They split up into two groups, and started climbing back up the mountain toward the ends of the bridge. We would be trapped if



we did not move soon. When I had touched the basgag's wing I was immediately aware of his pain and fear. I also heard a deep, deep voice in my head say, "Thank you. I am Boris the Basgag. Please help me to escape from the Munchies."



"Yes, of course," I said. "How can I help you? Why are the Munchies after you?"

"As to the second question, they either want to capture me so that they can ride through the air, or if they are hungry, they may want to nibble my wings. You cannot fix the tear on my body, but if you would gather a pile of air lilies for me, perhaps we can still escape."

I rushed to the end of the bridge and hurriedly started picking air lilies. Returning with my arms full, I stacked them before his mouth. He did not eat them, but instead said "More lilies, please."

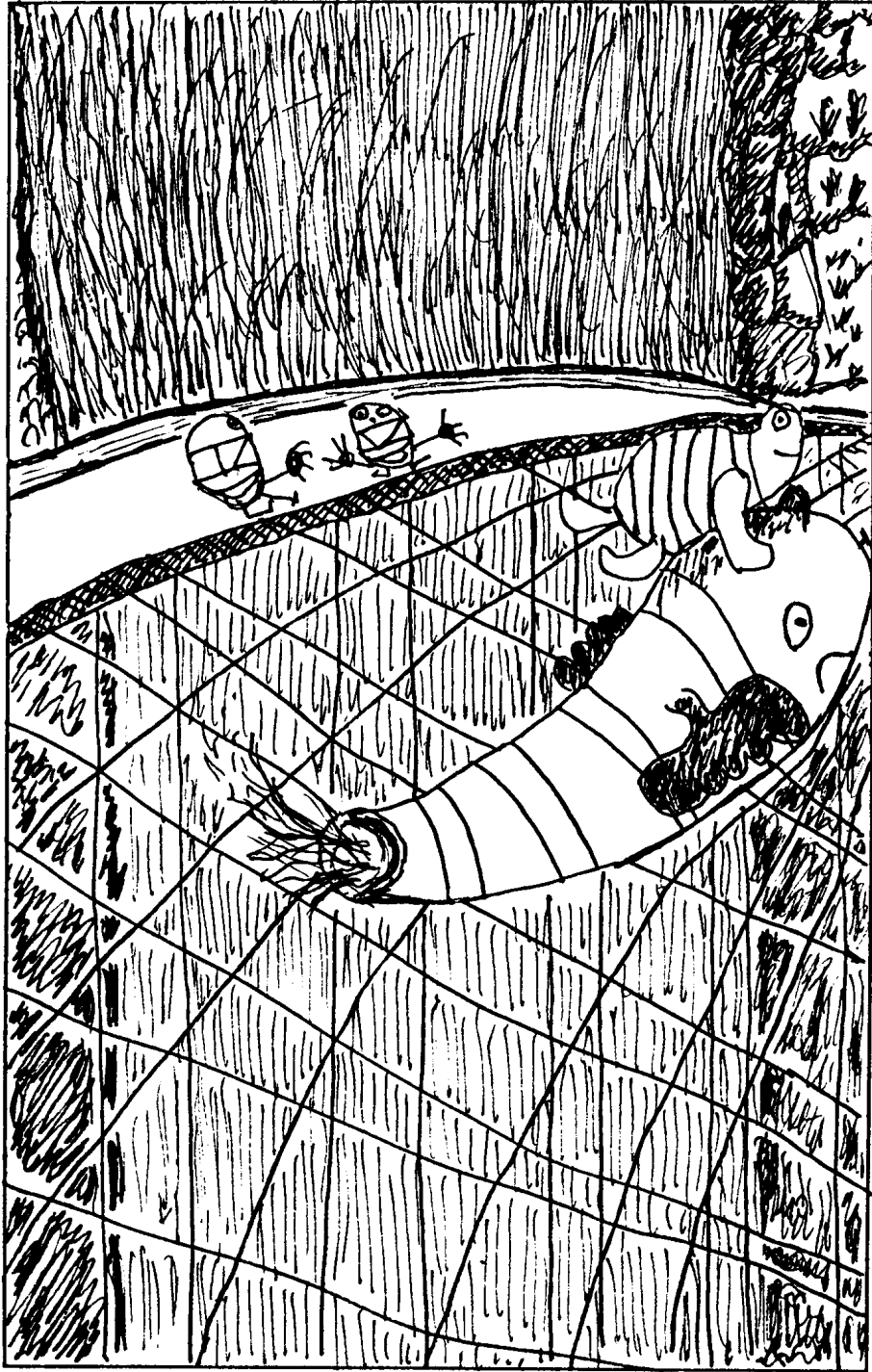
Back I went for more lilies, and now the Munchies were getting close. I rushed back to the basgag with a second armload of lilies, and the basgag again said "More lilies, please."

"I would willingly get you all of the lilies in the world," I said, "but the munchies are nearly on us. Let's get away from this place and land again to complete our repairs."

"All right," said the basgag. "Climb over the hole in my skin."

I leaned against the basgag so as to plug the hole, and he took an enormous mouthful of air lilies. I heard the pop, pop, pop of them breaking inside his body, and suddenly he was a lot bigger and a lot

lighter. The munchies had gotten to the ends of the bridge and came screaming toward us. With a shove and a leap I pushed Boris over the side of the bridge and clamped my body against the tear in his skin. As soon as we were free of the bridge, the basgag started to fall slowly toward the ground far below. I could see that we could coast for some distance but that surely we would have to land again - and soon. The munchies saw this too and renewed their chase, screaming and cheering as we drifted toward the ground.



## *Chapter 5*

# Through the Worm Hole

All of a sudden I knew what we should do! "Boris, steer toward that cave on the mountainside. I slept there last night and know a secret which may help us."

Boris did not reply, but started moving his wings and shaping his course toward the cave entrance far down the valley. Now that he had a goal in mind, he seemed determined to reach it. As the minutes passed, it seemed to me that we would crash some distance below the cave's mouth, and roll to the bottom of the mountain. When I told Boris of my fears he replied, "You are not a creature of the air and do not know of the winds which blow up the sides of the mountains at this time of day. As we get closer to the mountain, we will be pushed upward and will, I think, land just at the cave's mouth."

I heard his words, but still it seemed to me that we would land too low on the mountain, and I started flapping my rear legs in the hope that this would help in some way. The munchies evidently felt as I did for they made not for the cave, but for the base of the mountain far below. Suddenly as we neared the mountain, a strong wind pushed us upward and, much to my relief, we landed just at the cave's mouth. The munchies reversed course yet again and made for the road that led out to where we were perched on the mountainside.

I explained to Boris what I planned to do, and he seemed happy for the first time. My plan was not one that a creature of the air would have devised, but he seemed to trust me. Quickly I hopped down from my seat on his back and shuffled to the back of the cave.

Pushing with all of my strength I was able to move the rock that blocked the entrance to the fire worm tunnel. I returned to find that Boris was slowly deflating, and seeing that this would take a few

more minutes, I made preparations to receive the munchies. Pulling up some air lilies near the cave's entrance, I went inside the tunnel and coated them with the glowing fire worm goo. The road came down a steep hill just before it got to the cave, and returning outside, I ran to the top of this slope and started painting. Making trip after trip, I covered much of the road with the slippery fire worm slime.

Finally Boris was empty of the gas that made him so large, and I quickly rolled him up into a ball and pushed and carried him into the tunnel. As I rolled the rock back in place to hide the entrance, I could hear the Munchies come rushing down the hill and step onto the slippery slope I had prepared for them. I heard their shouts of dismay as they slipped down the road and fell from the cliffs edge near the cave's mouth. I knew that they would not be hurt by the fall, but felt sure that it would be some time before they could figure out a way around the sliding board I had made for them. If they did not find the tunnel or, better yet, if the tunnel had another opening, we would be safe!

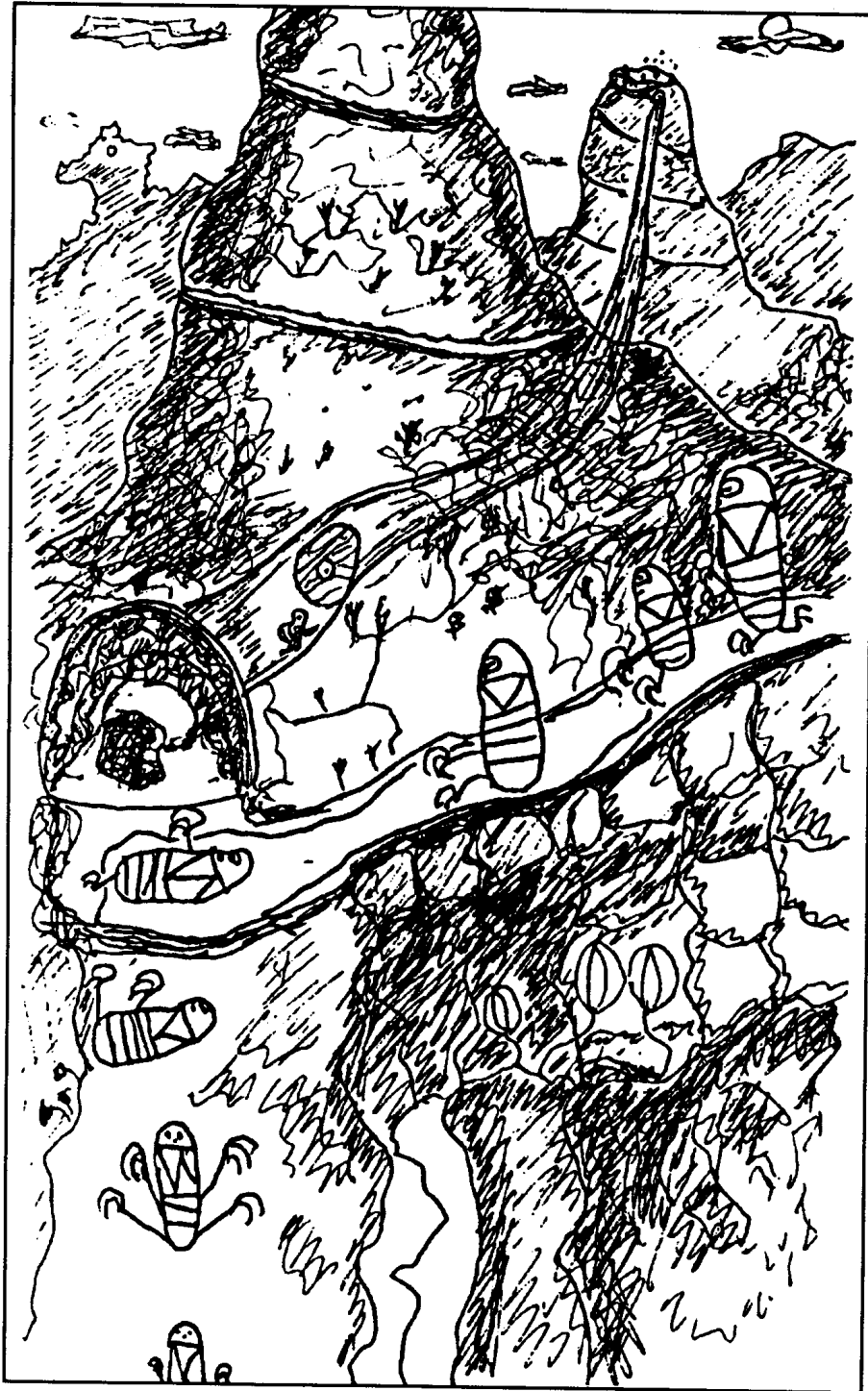
Because its floor was very smooth, I found it easy to push Boris along the tunnel at first. As we moved along, almost blinded by the yellow glow of the tunnel walls, it seemed that we were heading upward, and we both wondered where the tunnel would lead. Near the end, our journey through the tunnel became a long, hard uphill push, and so I had to rest occasionally. During one of these pauses I gathered my courage and blurted out, "Boris, it is I who have ruined your life!"

Boris was silent for a second and then replied, "No one has ruined my life. You have just saved me. How can you think that you have ruined my life?"

"It was I who caught you with a kite trap when I was young. Henry Herumph, the Guardian of the Quest, has told me that because of that your life was ruined, that you do not flock with others of your kind and that you have never changed --- whatever that means."

"Ha!" exclaimed Boris. "You call him Guardian of the Quest, I call him Guardian of the Cows. If it was you who caught me, then you have aided me not only to escape the munchies today, but also to escape from the herd and become my own animal."

"How can this be?" I said. "Did I not hurt you? Was your life not ruined by being caught?"



"Let me tell you a little of my life," said Boris. "Basgags flock together for protection and company, but because of this, they do not have to think very much. We are not really stupid, but it is more fun to flock together and flit from place to place than to learn anything of the world around us. Sure, we know where the best air lilies grow, and the best places for sky games, but beyond that most basgags care for little save themselves and their immediate pleasures."

"The Herumph you call Henry, living in his fine cloud house, cares for the flock as well as he can --- sees that the munchies are kept in check and makes sure that the air lilies grow. But, he is little more than a shepherd tending his flock and to call him 'Guardian of the Quest' gives him far too much importance."



"When I got caught in your kite trap I was scared and a little hurt, and for several days after that I could not join with the other basgags in play or even keep up with the flock. Do you think that they ever flew slower so that I could keep up? They did not! I was angry at you, but I was very, very angry at them. I decided that I would be my own basgag, that I would flock with no one, and that I would not change for the first herumph that gathered a pile of air lilies for me."

"The first few years that I was alone were very hard. I was lonely, and I had to learn how to do things for myself. At times I felt sorry for myself, but gradually I came to understand that the hardships I endured made me stronger and smarter than the basgags of the flocks. Now I feel sorry for them."

"For years I have known that I would have to change someday, but I thought that I would end as a water sprite because all the of herumphs I saw were soft, and little better than herd animals themselves. Now that is all changed. Herbert, how would you like to have a nose?"

I was very happy at the pride Boris took in his life and that I had somehow been of help to him in my youth. I answered in a second, "Boris, it is what I want most of all things. How can I get one? Do we have to catch a water sprite? What is the change that you keep speaking of?"

"All will be well and your questions will be answered if we can just escape from this tunnel, and I think that must be the end up ahead!"

Sure enough! By squinting my eyes I could just make out a small circle of daylight. I pushed Boris toward the hole. When we were right at the end of the tunnel, I slowly poked my head out to see where we were. I yanked it back in much more quickly.

"Boris!" I exclaimed. "We are on a mountain top covered with jakes, and they are coming this way."

Boris had a peek and then said, "No, no, Herbert. The jakes are not coming toward us, but rather are climbing to the top of the mountain so that they can fly to the south. I have seen this before, but from the air. Where these strange beasts fly to, and why, is a mystery to all, but they will not bother us if we stay out of their way.

"Herbert, do you see that waterfall far below us? If we can float down to it, all danger will be behind us."



Scrambling around on the side of the mountain, I was finally able to gather enough air lilies to puff Boris up almost to his normal size. I leaped onto his back and we went coasting down, down, down toward the waterfall far below. As we glided down close to the waterfall, I was suddenly aware of Henry Herumph standing near it and shouting up at me. "Herbert Herumph, this is no way to get a nose! Let go of the basgag you have caught! You are going home noseless, you young beast, and all Herumphville will know of your bad behavior."

I could not hang on and shout at the same time, and so remained silent. Henry took this as an admission of guilt, but I could feel Boris laughing and enjoying what was to come. We came gliding in just over the top of Henry's head, and landed with a splash in the pool below the waterfall. Boris' body immediately began to dissolve in the bubble filled water, and I was very worried at what was happening. Henry was shouting with rage for me to get out of the water. Suddenly what I had thought were Boris's two eyes seemed to join together and become the largest nose I had ever seen. I swam toward him and he toward me, and when we met we both became complete.

I won't tell you of how Henry came to accept my new nose, for he seemed very unhappy at my success. The fact that it was Boris who had become my nose just seemed to make him madder. I think that he had heard that Boris called him the Guardian of the Cows. Boris and I went back down the road to Herumphville, and that very evening, only a day after my departure, I returned to my parents' house. My father was almost proud enough to burst, and my mother talked of nothing but the, size and beauty of my new nose. That was a wonderful time for me, but no more wonderful than my life has been since I got my nose.

## Chapter 6

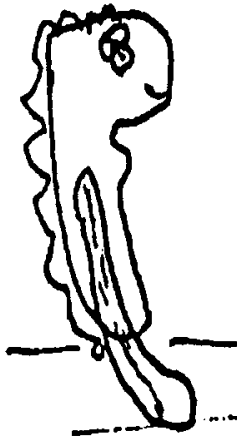
# We Bid Farewell to Herbert

Pete and I had been sitting listening intently to Herbert tell his story. Some of the physics of how this change could take place, and indeed how the basgags could fly were confusing to me, but Pete was not interested in any of that.

As we sat touching Herbert's nose, he asked, "So we are really touching Boris when we touch your nose, right?"

"You are touching us," said Herbert, "for we are two good friends in one good body. There are Herumphs without noses, and basgags that dissolve and become water sprites, but the combination of herumph and basgag is the best way to live. Surely you must know this already, as you too have a nose, though it seems very small and oddly shaped."

"Tell me more about the Jake Mountain," said Pete. "Where do the jakes go? Were you scared to be up on the mountain with so many of them?"



"I will tell you the story of how we followed the jake migration, and of our amazing and humorous adventures in the land where the trees wear hats," said Boris, "or perhaps you would like to hear how we discovered the secret of the fire worms? Or maybe you would like to know how we found out what makes the munchies so mean? You see we try to solve the mysteries of our world, and seek out adventure. Meeting you has been just the sort of adventure we enjoy most."

"I see," said I. "You are like our Indiana Jones, except you are Indiana Herumph!"

It was quite dark by then, and I was anxious to get home, and so I said that we really ought to be going. Pete wanted to hear another story, and

Herbert said that we were welcome to stay and learn more of the land of the herumphs, but I felt that it was time we tried to return home. I would feel more like visiting once I knew it was a visit, and not a permanent move to the land of the herumphs, where we were the only men (or so I thought then).

Getting up and feeling the handle of the XTV in the dark, I could tell that the fire worm goo was now hard, but was it hard enough? After bidding Herbert thanks and farewell, Pete and I reentered the cave and sat down on the floor right where we had first landed in the Land of the Herumphs. Together we pushed on the handle. Slowly we pushed harder and harder, hoping that the mended handle could take the strain. Just when it seemed we could push no harder, the handle moved. There was a flash and a whoosh, and we found ourselves once again in our basement, sitting on the floor, disoriented and confused. We looked at each other, and Pete asked, "Did that really happen?"

I did not know what to say, but then I saw the proof and silently pointed to the place where the XTV's handle had been mended. It had not been fixed with glue after all. The two part of the handle were now held together by the largest diamond I had ever seen.

The End

