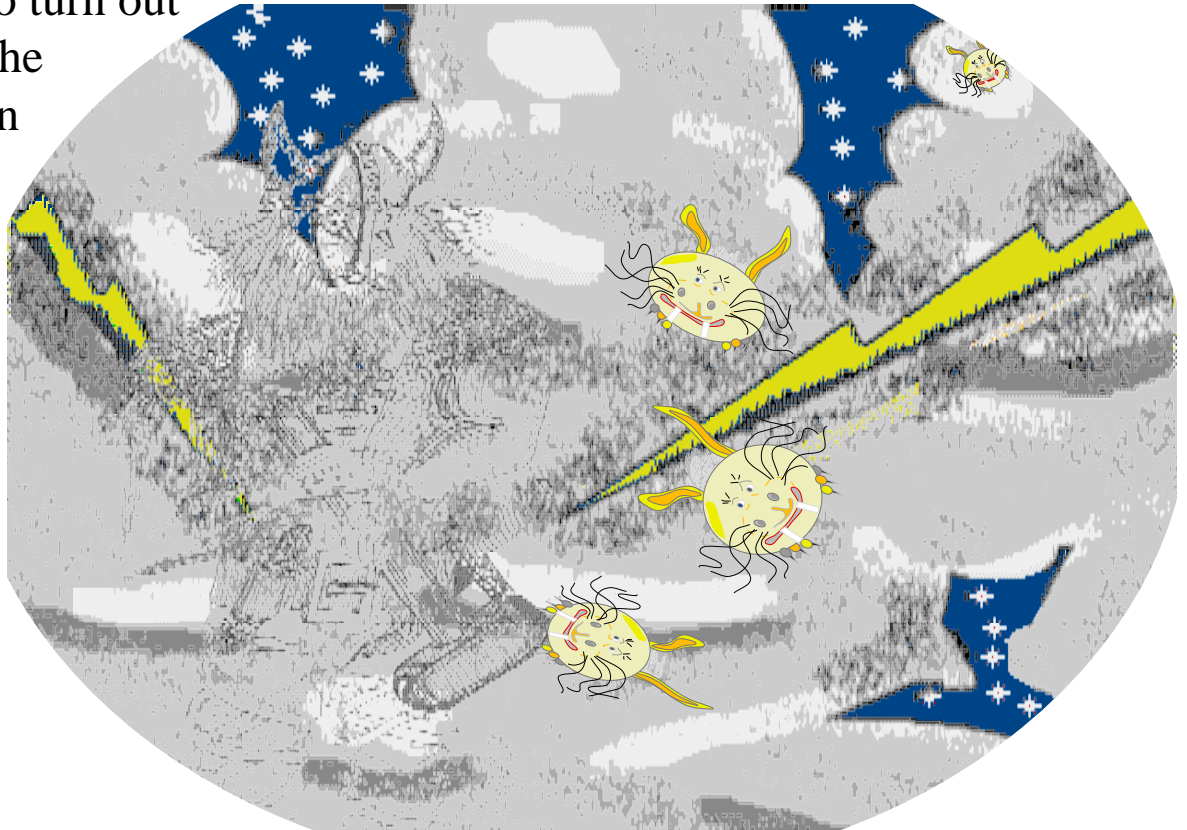


What we really need now, is some kind of supernatural help, Eustace commented, as the company were wafted towards a large ghostly apparition which looked very likely to turn out to be Thor, the Scandinavian God of thunder and general hard-case.



'VHÂT the Niffelheim is going on here? ': The spectre sounded a bit peeved....

Âin't it bad enough having to play a game of thunderbolt stretch with the boss, and having to lose diplomatically, without having a load of anthropomorphic rabbits underfoot with no visible means of support?

"Hey You"! he growled at Eustace, what gives?

"Us! — Anything to get down! — this was a unanimous shout from all of them.

Thor considered for a moment, then drew out a little book and consulted it briefly. They were a little surprised at the title, which was visible through the wraith fingers of the god. It was a tatty copy of the News Chronicle (well out of date) 'I Spy' series. I Spy lighter-than-air mammals. "Sixty points!" He murmured, "not bad, not bad at all!" Then

abruptly, “sorry, Gods are capricious, and unconcerned with the ways of mortals”.

On yer bikes”!

“Well sod you then” came another unanimous shout, all but drowned out by the arrival of two more thunderbolts in quick succession, together with a quite unreasonably strong blast of wind, which drove them all around the back of another cloud and out of sight of Thor who was clearly trying to decide if His unconcern for mortals would go so far as not mashing them one with the massive toffee hammer that He jut happened to be carrying.

¶ “Some big help Him !” Wilfred † shouted across to the others. “What now? You realise We’ve missed ‘Yeast Enders’ ‡ on the telly don’t You?” Shuttup twerp! came back the reply, can’t you see that we’re thinking!

It seems to Me, Eustace started, after another few moments, that We find ourselves in a situation that is, apart from being incredibly dangerous, also almost totally irrational. That being so, is the solution may well be just as illogical.

For example:

We know about various historical groups like the Sealed Knot and the Napoleonic societies, D’you suppose there is such a thing as the

¶ You may have been sort of wondering how it is that with the storm, and the general cussedness of nature, thst these rabbits have stayed together in a group. This is probably due to surface tension, which is an effect similar to pre-minstrel tension that band members sometimes get before a big show. Any further explanation is (as they say) beyond the scope of this text...

† Wilfred. He hasn’t been mentioned before has He? Wilfred is the rabbit who is either small or always located in the middle distance. Apart from this uncertainty in at least one of His spatial co-ordinates He is of little interest, and may possibly not even be specifically mentioned again.

‡ This is a reference to a series about people who have problems that (again) are beyond the scope of the text, and also a bit socially tabu, and nothing much to do with the story anyway.

Benjamin Franklin re-enactment society? If so, we might be able to climb down a kite-string and out of this mess.

A prosaic solution like suddenly bursting and falling out of the sky in tatters, or zooming all over the shop like a deflating party balloon seems a bit inelegant or uncool don't Y'e think? — Cedric, do you think you

could concentrate on the matter in hand for a moment instead of

playing silly buggers with that

St.Elmo's fire on

Yer ears and

whiskers?

Now,

where was I

? Before He

could begin

again, however,

Cedric interrupted him a

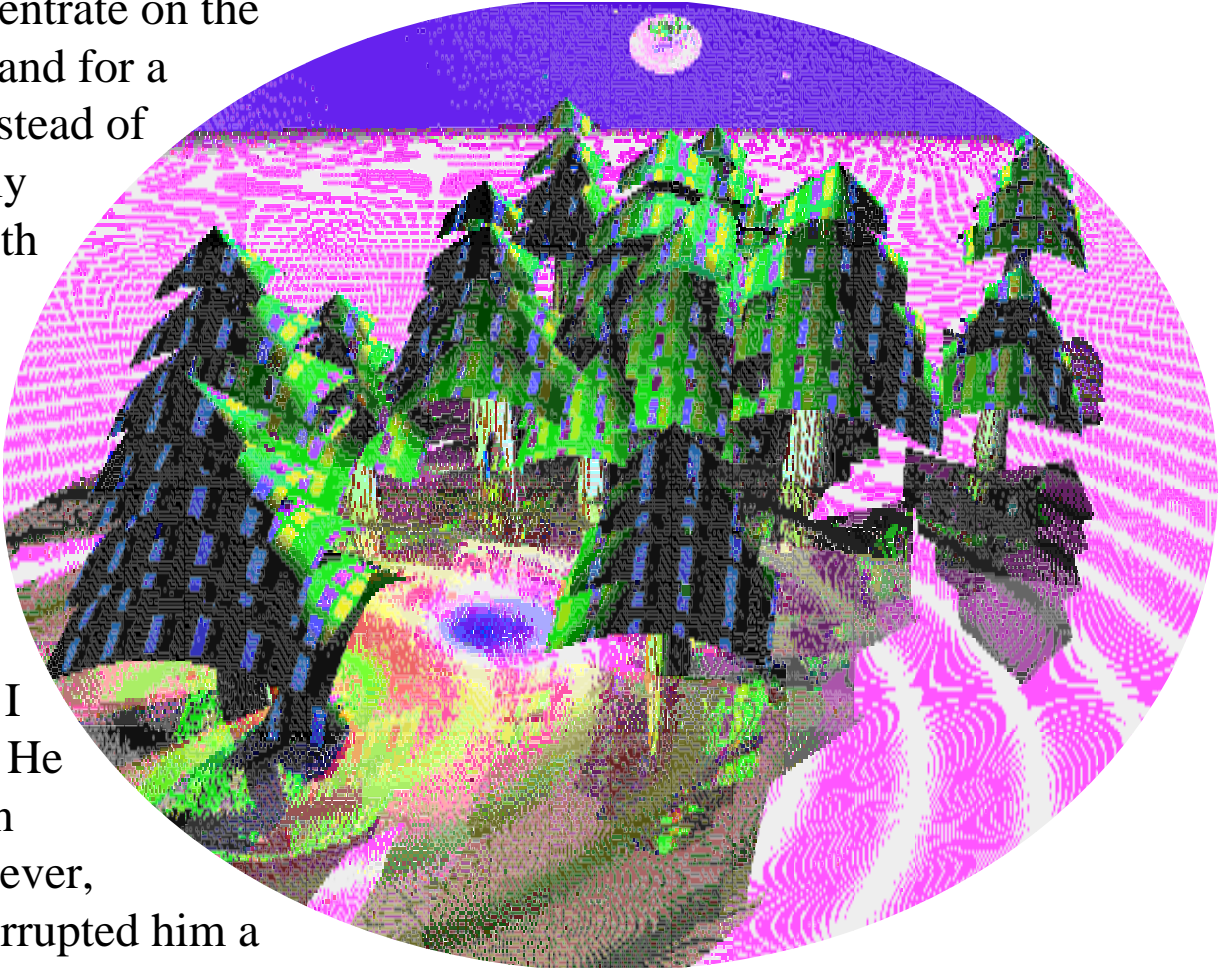
bit snappishly. (Being charged up

to Meg-Volts can have this effect on one, especially if unexpectedly earthed through a bit of copper wire fastened to a tap or similar).

“What with all this ice that's forming on us, we're probably going down too fast right now”. He was right, and a solution of sorts was in fact at hand. — Not a particularly good one, as will soon be seen, but one that did satisfy the initial requirement of getting to the ground in a moderate state of health.

You may already know from your reading here (or perhaps some other book; for example 'Glup Quest in Patagonia' (D. Atsaboggerer BBC Pubs.) That while Glups frequent canals and eat slugs, they do not have any better luck than anglers do at catching any fish.

Having an almost insatiable appetite for the things, desperation has led them to resort to air fishing, using nets strung between several fir or



pine trees; they don't mind which. This practice does not result in the catching of any great number of fish either, and so most of the time, they have to choke down their disappointment, together with the starlings, rooks, pigeons and occasional sea-gulls, which are not quite so bad, as they at least taste of fish a bit.

There it is then! Simon Digby-Smythe, complete with a big bump on his head (from the brick remember) sitting under a bush with a nice bottle of medicine on a very bad night for air-fishing.

To the North-East meanwhile, are our ice-loaded friends who are descending rapidly from an altitude of about 10000 feet (3300 Metres) and moving over the ground at about 60 miles per hour (about 100 K.P.H.) all this without any advice from Manchester approach traffic control, and with barely enough cash to pay the landing charges.

At 3000 feet, they still can't see either the flare- path or the stack burn-off from the B.P refinery at Carrington. This is not surprising, as they are nowhere near Manchester anyway, but it gives you an idea of how bad the seeing is tonight.

At the 300 foot level, they finally emerge from the cloud base, to a glimpse of a dark forest below, illuminated briefly by a stray shaft of moon-light, and then occasionally by the lightening flashes from the (now retreating) storm.

To a combined cry of Aaarrgh! Geronimo! and Fasten yer seat-belts, the group sweep — or are swept rather, down a forest clearing and

