



THE
AMAZING
ADVENTURES
OF THE
GATIES



ANDREW JOHN
AGUILAR

The Amazing Adventures Of The Gaties

By

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To all my loved ones, and especially to Mari Carmen, for always being there at my side and my dear brother Mark, whose invaluable help and expertise made this book possible.

Part One

The Gaties

Once upon a time, in the depths of someone's memory in a world of human invention, something was happening, and happening fast, very fast, as things often do in a world created for amusement.

Through intricate electronic passages and minute components we find ourselves in a place which could be a fairy tale, or even the beginning of what is to be in a future still distant, but somehow already present.

A small electro creature whose name was Robie arrived at lightning speed at Gatieville. 'Wake up, wake up, Gaties!' he cried.

The Gaties began stirring as the panic-stricken voice of their friend became louder and more insistent. Soon, the sleeping electro creatures were milling around excitedly as the whole electro metropolis became a bustle of hustling Gaties.

'What's up?' asked the Jefie, whose name was Andie. 'Calm down, Gatie,' said Andie, as he held him with long strong arms, trying to reassure the hysterical Robie.

'They're coming, they're coming,' Robie said, gasping for breath.

'Who's coming?' asked Andie, impatiently.

'The Viries. I've seen them; they're coming, they're trying to enter the outer boundary at Terminal End,' replied Robie, shaking.

'Horrid, horrid, they're horrid!' cried Robie. 'They destroy the Memory. I know. I know because I saw what

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happened when they entered Paradise Isle. They simply absorbed the beauty. As the Viries entered, things had begun to change, and what was a paradise of electro green palms, and froned yellowish cacti, with its minute multicoloured flowers covering the green rolling hills which reached the shores of the electro blue sea, bathed with the rays from the electro sun, suddenly began strangely to fade into a complete nothingness.’ Robie had to pause.

‘It was truly weird. Everything became distant and then, almost instantly, the nothingness turned to utter desolation,’ Robie said, sounding truly terrified.

‘I saw it all,’ panted Robie. ‘One minute I was enjoying the view of our subtropical electro Paradise Isle and its calm blue electro water (sea) and the next minute I had to rub my eyes, because it had all gone, gone.’

‘The Viries stopped. It was like a mass of pure energy which changed in a spectrum of dull colours; their hunger seemed satisfied.’ Robie’s eyes were full of clear electrotears as he told his story of desolation. Robie paused a while and all the Gaties who had been listening were speechless, their terrified faces distorted with fear.

Robie broke the silence at last. ‘As I left Terminal End to warn you all, the Viries had already begun to move on Gatieville,’ he said, the words sticking in his throat.

‘Jefie,’ Robie said, looking at Andie, ‘they devour everything in creation, the peace and beauty... and, they’ll devour us, the Gaties. Even Gatieville will cease to exist.’

Andie was just as terrified as the other Gaties, but he dared not show it. His status as Jefie, the chief of all the Gaties of Gatieville, meant he could not show his fear. This would be unthinkable.

Taking control of the situation as was his duty, he informed the Eldies, who were much older and wiser Gaties.

‘There will have to be Megatalkie at Gatiehall in three clockspans,’ he said in a deep, authoritative voice that reassured the terrified and bewildered Gaties.

In just a few moments that had seemed like an eternity, life in Gatieville had changed. No longer did the Gaties go about their business of processing pure thoughts of Memory that they had captured from the data lines which fed the memory bank. Instead, they gathered in small or large groups and just jabbered about what the night's events had brought. They jabbered on and on and speculated about what would come out of the Megatalkie that would take place that very night. They talked about the Viries and whether they were really as horrid as Robie had said.



The clockspans seemed to drag on, but eventually, as things do, the moment arrived, and as the electro-sun slid behind the horizon, the zero hour approached and the Megatalkie would soon begin.

The main gallery in Gatiehall was a mass of coloured light which shone from the multitude of different-sized Gaties that were gathered there.

The noise, a kind of electronic buzz, was quite deafening as all the Gaties endeavoured to communicate at the same time.

In the centre of all this was the old electro oval table, around which were seated the Eldies, who did not bear this name by pure chance.

Andie, the Jefie, rose from where he was seated at the oval table, and as he did so the hall immediately became silent as the atmosphere became even more tense than it had been before.

Where, seconds earlier, one could not hear oneself think because of the intense hum of thousands of Gaties speaking, one could now have heard a pixel drop.

Andie made his reverence to the aged Eldies and, clearing his throat, he began to speak.

'Gaties, as you all know, I'm not prone to pessimism, or even to panic, but I fear that our end could be near.' He paused as the silence became even more intense. 'Unless, of course, we can find a means of stopping the dreaded Viries.'

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‘Since Robie brought his terrible news, I have spent some time talking with the Eldies to see if, in their infinite wisdom, they know the answer, but even they have never been confronted with such a dire situation.

‘It seems that there is nothing that we can do. Unless, of course, anyone here knows the answer, or can think of a way out,’ he said, as his eyes scanned the hall.

The silence got even longer and more drawn out.

At first not a sound was heard, but as the seconds passed a small young voice sounded meekly from amid the silent, terrified Gaties.

‘I think I know the answer,’ said the timid young voice, whose owner at first remained invisible.

All the Gaties turned to the spot where the voice had come from. And as they did so, a young Gatie slowly moved forward and said, ‘I think I know the answer.’

The Gaties who were closest to her laughed and thought how cheeky she was to think that she knew more than all the Eldies put together.

When she finally reached the front the laughter had become generalised, which made the shy young Gatie even more timid than before. It was very hard to believe that anyone so young and inexperienced could possibly know more than the wise Eldies.

Andie, who also had a wide grin on his face, silenced the mass of Gaties, whose laughter now filled the hall.

The hall became silent almost immediately as the laughing Gaties were quick to show their respect for their Jefie.

‘What’s your name?’ Andie asked gently, not wishing to make it still worse for the young creature – as if he didn’t know. Andie loved a chance to show off.

This question was all she needed, feeling that perhaps when the rest of the Gaties heard who her father was it would silence their ignorant laughter.

The young Gatie raised her head, as all around her the excitement grew, the bright colours of the Gaties growing still brighter in anticipation.

‘I’m Tanie, daughter of Markie, the explorer.’

Tanie lost her initial shyness as she spoke these words, and looked defiantly at Andie and all that were close to him. She almost dared them to laugh now that they knew who her Papie was.

The Gaties who had been close enough to hear Tanie’s words were all quite impressed, knowing that Markie’s reputation was not something to be trifled with.

The silent mumble grew quite quickly as almost all the Gaties began to jabber at once. Everyone knew what a formidable explorer Markie was, and any daughter of his must surely know more about their exterior world than the average Gatie.

Tanie looked all around her and saw what a tremendous fuss she had caused, and to some extent it quite amused her.

Andie quickly waved his hands and silenced the flickering Gaties, returning Tanie’s glare kindly but firmly, making it clear that he would not let his leadership be undermined.

‘What makes you think that you know the answer to our terrible problem?’ Andie asked, as he played somewhat to his audience.

There was a brief pause and Tanie spoke. ‘As you all know, my Papie Markie has, on countless occasions, ventured into Memoryless, and when he returned from these dangerous journeys he would tell me all about them with every detail. But just before going on this last journey into Memoryless, he made me promise that if ever Gatieville was in danger I should follow his tracks into Memoryless, and from there go in search of Goggleyes,’ Tanie said, pausing, as everyone gasped on hearing the name of Goggleyes mentioned.

‘You speak of Memoryless very light-heartedly, almost as if you knew the place,’ Andie said, provoking Tanie somewhat.

‘I can assure you all that after having listened to my Papie for all these years I know it far better than anyone here,’ she said, very sure of herself. ‘So you see, Andie, I do know what Memoryless is like, and for two reasons: one, because my Papie has told me about it on many occasions, and the other

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because I only have to look around me, and then simply imagine the exact opposite. These two factors give me a more than clear picture of what Memoryless is like and that whatever awaits any Gatie who goes there is going to be far from fun,' Tanie said, quite satisfied with the way she had expressed herself.

There was a brief space of time when nobody said anything, and then Andie spoke, looking closely at the bright young Gatie he had before him. Perhaps he had judged her only by her size and youth, not seeing that behind this was someone of great stature and foresight.

'Tanie, I don't really know what to say, but if all you say is true, then perhaps our only way out is to follow your Papie's path into Memoryless and search for Goggleses.'

He paused, searching for the correct words, and then said, 'We don't really know if Goggleses truly exists but, if there is a chance that he does, then, my fellow Gaties, we have no alternative but to go for that chance, no matter what the consequence.'

The mass of Gaties cheered, agreeing with their leader, breaking the silence and jabbering about Tanie's words and the conclusions that their Jemie had made. The noise became as loud as the intensity of the light which the noisy Gaties made.

The Eldies, who were by far the oldest and wisest of all the Gaties, had shown very little or no change in their expressions, and their wrinkled, normally expressive faces didn't in any way show any opinion, although they had on various occasions looked at each other thoughtfully.

There didn't seem to be anything to suggest that they were in the least impressed by what Tanie had said.

But finally one of the Eldies got up, with great difficulty, but nevertheless he got up, bringing an almost simultaneous silence to the hall as all the Gaties showed their utmost respect for one so apparently old and wise. He seemed to be even older than the other Eldies who sat around the luminous oval table.

As he spoke, the Gaties forgot their excitement and listened with great intensity.

The Eldie trembled a little, due no doubt to his age, and after some shuffling of Gatie feet he began to speak.

‘I am the oldest of all the Gaties, and during my long life I have experienced many things, but I must admit that I never had the courage to venture into the depths of Memoryless. I always considered Markie very foolish, but at the same time admired his bravery.’ He paused.

‘It will no doubt be necessary for some of you to enter Memoryless in search of Goggleyes. I somehow know that not all of you will return. I do not, however, say this to dishearten any of you, but because I feel that you must know the true danger that will await you there.’ He stopped to catch his breath.

‘Having said this, I want you all to know that the other Eldies and I think that our only chance to survive the impending danger of the Viries is to seek the truth about Goggleyes and, if possible, his help.

‘We all give our unanimous support, putting aside our personal thoughts about how impossible the plan seems, however far-fetched it may or may not sound.’ As he said this he heaved a great sigh and sat down.

The other Eldies nodded their heads in approval and their faces became blank once more, as though they were on a higher plane and far from reality.

Andie turned quickly to the Eldies and thanked them for their support. Having done this, he turned to the jabbering Gaties and tried to convince some of them to volunteer for the expedition that had to be formed.

In the meantime, Tanie tried to speak once more, but found that her voice was only drowned by those of Andie and of the Gaties who endeavoured to find an excuse not to be included in the dangerous expedition.

Andie thought at first that he would not have any difficulty in raising a small party of brave Gaties to go into Memoryless. But this didn’t seem to be the case because, however hard he tried, it was proving almost impossible. Gaties, you see, are not really noted for their bravery.

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Tanie, who couldn't get Andie's attention, began to get very annoyed and her normal beautiful calm light began to flicker red as her anger and frustration began to become more apparent.

Finally, and after great effort, she managed to catch Andie's eye, who was giving one of his speeches that normally went on and on and on. He looked down at her and saw how her light was getting redder and redder, but he smiled, thinking that she still looked very beautiful.

Andie sounded a little annoyed, as though Tanie might have stolen the centre stage from him, because Tanie had explained what she thought Memoryless was like. This was not to Andie's entire approval, because he didn't have a clue and it made him seem a little foolish.

'You sound as if you know Memoryless very well, my dear little thing, almost as though you were strolling through Gatieville Park,' he had to say, mockingly.

This didn't deter Tanie and she simply replied, 'Well, as a matter of fact, I do know it very well, almost as though I had been there myself. My Papie gave me such detailed descriptions that it was like having taken part in his adventures,' she said, cheekily. 'Gatieville is our home; it's beautiful, it's luminous; everything is orderly, with its neat electro houses and their multicoloured lights, the clean electro blue paths that lead in all directions, but all finishing or beginning in Gatieville Square, with its tall mega green trees that are in constant blossom and help to enlighten our minds as the radiance of the sun makes our very existence a joyful, endless day of happiness.'

She had to stop after saying this mouthful, but continued almost at once.

'And there, in the middle of all this, Gatiehall, which looms over us, its majestic structure and intricate decoration contrasting from everything else in Gatieville, as though it had been conceived in a different time and for a different purpose.' She paused once more to see how she had captured every

Gatie's attention, who seemed to be marvelling at what she was saying.

'And then there's us. We, too, are also different from everything in Memoryless, with our rapid movement, which we achieve through electro impulses that move us at lightning speed, but at our own will. With our happy, expressive faces and our brilliant light, which changes in intensity as our state of happiness grows from happy to happier. With our busy disposition as we go about the commitment that we have in hand at the moment.'

She said all this and waited for it to sink in, then she continued. 'Look at us, Andie. We're fun to look at, our long arms in disproportion with our square bodies, and our cone-shaped heads, which gives us an air of speed, making our features look aerodynamic, if it weren't for our short legs and wheel-shaped feet. It all comes together and conjures the happy luminous creatures that we all are,' Tanie said, not giving Andie time to speak. 'And there is another thing – I have to go with you,' she said.

'But you're far too young,' Andie replied, smiling at her.

'Yes, but I know much more about Memoryless than anybody here and, what's more, I have a Mapie,' she said.

Andie dropped his wide grin as he heard Tanie mention the Mapie, and remained open-mouthed for a few seconds as the idea of the existence of a Mapie of Memoryless sunk in.

'You have a Mapie,' he said incredulously.

'Yes,' Tanie answered, grinning. 'As I said before, my Papie, Markie, has been to Memoryless on many occasions, and he has left me a Mapie, recorded on a Tapie Cube.'

As the Gaties closest to Tanie and Andie overheard their conversation, the word of the existence of a Mapie got round very quickly and within seconds the hall was abuzz with talking Gaties speculating about the matter. Even the Eldies seemed to be reacting to the news, although they all remained seated at the oval table, turning their heads as they showed their first physical interest in the turbulent night's happenings.

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As Tanie's declaration of the existence of the Mapie became widespread, the noise of buzzing, jabbering Gaties reached a crescendo, and their worried expressions began to show a glimmer of hope.

After a while, Andie endeavoured to make himself heard, but it was becoming more and more difficult as the Gaties got more and more excited. Eventually he got tired of shouting his head off, and seeing that it was not having any effect anyway, he decided to let the yacking Gaties go on yacking.

He looked at Tanie, who looked quite radiant as she rejoiced in the effect her Mapie had caused. He smiled at her and she smiled back at the recognition he showed at the way she had gained the support of the Eldies and Gaties alike.

At that moment Andie didn't truly know whether the Mapie existed or not, but the pure possibility of that fact had returned something very important to the Gaties. And that was hope. The Gaties began to believe that the expedition could be a success.

Time was moving very quickly and Andie left the balcony from where he had been addressing the Gaties, to talk to Tanie very seriously about the Mapie. He wanted reassurance that the Mapie really existed and that Tanie hadn't simply made it up. At that moment he had to admit that he was in some doubt.

Andie came to her side and looked deep into her eyes as he asked her if it was true.

'Is it true?' he asked, searching her face for the truth.

'Of course it's true,' she flickered angrily. 'I don't go about telling lies to you or anyone else for that matter,' she replied, defying him to think the contrary.

'Look, Andie,' she said very seriously, 'before my Papie left for Memoryless on this last occasion, he left me a Mapie which I should use if the need arose. It would help guide me through Memoryless if I needed the help of Goggleyes.

'It contains most of the information I would need to get me through Memoryless, and warns me how to overcome the majority of dangers that will confront me there,' she said, sounding very genuine.

Andie could see that she was telling the truth and squeezed her hand to show how sorry he was for having doubted her. Leaving Tanie to one side, he told her that he had to talk with the Eldies and, moving over to the oval table which was shrouded by a strange intense light, and at which the six Eldies were seated, he took the seat that was allocated there for him.

Tanie could see from the short distance at which she was standing that Andie was communicating with the Eldies, but what took her notice was that none of them, including Andie, were moving their lips. It was quite clear that they communicated through some sort of thought transmission.

After a short time, Andie made his reverence to the wise ones and took his leave. He approached Tanie with a wide grin on his face.

‘Well, what is it?’ Tanie asked.

‘They have given their consent and approval that the expedition must be formed,’ he answered, ‘and, what’s more, they also think that you should be part of the group that goes.’ His smile became even bigger.

Tanie was overwhelmed as she heard the news, and she simply radiated Gatie light and, forgetting her composure, she gave Andie a strong Gatie hug. Andie responded affectionately and, taking her by the hand, he took her to the balcony, to address the Gaties who were massed below, awaiting news from their Jefe.

As soon as Tanie and Andie appeared on the balcony, the Gaties, who had been waiting very patiently, buzzed and flickered with excitement, their bright-coloured light becoming brighter and more intense.

The Gaties made a strong jabbering noise as they talked incessantly. This time, however, Andie didn’t have to struggle to make himself heard, because the Gaties were all very keen to learn the decision that had been reached.

As soon as Andie raised his hands to beg silence, a tremendous hush fell over Gatiehall and Andie began to talk.

‘Gaties! Tanie has left no doubt in my mind that the Mapie exists, and in consequence the Eldies and I have decided that

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we must seek the help of Goggleyes, however difficult that may be,' he said.

On hearing this, the silence became even more acute as for the first time the Gaties really saw how dire their situation was.

Andie broke the silence once more. 'The expedition will commence as soon as possible as, unfortunately we have no time to lose.' He paused to let his words sink in. 'I will lead the group and Tanie will also form part of it,' he said as he glanced at Tanie, who still looked very pleased with herself.

Some of the Gaties began to shout their disapproval at the fact that Andie would be leaving them to go on the mission, but Andie was quick to quell this, making it quite clear that unless they succeeded, the very existence of Gatieville would be in question.

Tanie remained happy throughout Andie's speech, almost as though a great weight had been lifted from her shoulders, knowing that she would be going on the expedition and in some way following her Papie's footsteps.

'All that remains then is the question of who else will come with us in search of Goggleyes.' Andie scanned the bright creatures that buzzed below him. 'I need three volunteers for the deadly mission that lies before us,' he said, as the Gaties began jabbering amongst themselves once more.

They stood in a mass of Gatie light with wide-eyed expressions on their comical faces, which would undoubtedly have made any human laugh had they been able to observe them. But at the same time it was quite a spectacle to see so many Gaties gathered at the same time and place. The mixture of light that they conjured gave everything an air of complete happiness, not what one would expect on such a serious occasion.

Andie lifted his long arms to bring the Gaties to silence and began to speak; he sounded very serious, not at all Gatielike, and even his expression could be described as solemn.

'Fellow Gaties, it's time to pass from mere words to action. As I said earlier, I will be leading the mission into

Memoryless and Tanie will also be coming. This means that I need three other brave Gaties to come with us.’ He paused. ‘Some of you wanted me to stay behind to help fight the Viries. But what I can’t do is ask any of you to go on a mission if I’m not prepared to do it myself. In any case, the Eldies will be here, and they are far wiser than I, and I feel sure that they will come up with some sort of answer if the expedition fails,’ he said as he looked at the Eldies, expecting some sort of support. But, as was usual, they kept the same inert expression on their wrinkled faces.

‘I will, however, not waste time, as I know how critical our situation here in Gatieville remains.’ As he said these words, his light became less luminous as his sentiments became visible. Pulling himself together, he continued to speak.

‘Once again, I must appeal for three volunteers,’ he said, expecting some response, instead of which he got silence. This time the Gaties didn’t have to be told to keep quiet as they didn’t wish to make a sound, in case it was interpreted as a sign of volunteering for the mission.

‘Come on, there must be someone amongst you that wants to help save Gatieville,’ he said, almost pleading. But still he got no response.

Gaties are happy-go-lucky creatures and are not noted for their bravery; they didn’t want to know anything about risking their lives. The Gaties of Gatieville had only known peace with joyful days of playful splendour; in their world of happiness they had never known the feeling of danger that now affronted them.

But then a voice broke the silence. It was Robie, the same Robie who had seen how the Viries had devoured the beauty that was Paradise Isle, and the same Robie who had brought this terrible news to the peace of Gatieville, and it was now the same Robie who was at the forefront of the mass of Gaties, and who, despite what he had seen, was now putting up one of his long arms to be counted as one of the few who would be going in search of Goggleyes.

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‘You can count on me, Andie, you can count on me,’ he said coolly, in a strong loud voice.

The onlooking Gaties flickered nervously in admiration, but Robie pretended not to notice. For some reason they already seemed to regard him as a hero.

Tanie, who stood close by, touched Robie on the back as he approached the front.

‘Hi, Robie, I’m Tanie,’ she said in her usual friendly way.

‘I know,’ he answered almost blushing as he looked at the beautiful young Gatie, whose fine and fragile femininity made him feel nervous.

‘You must be very brave, volunteering like that,’ Tanie said to him, as she tried to become his friend.

This was too much for Robie; his light just went crimson as the words embarrassed every electro fibre of his luminous body. He just grunted, not being able to speak, and luckily for him – or at least he thought so at the time – Tanie’s attention was drawn by Andie, who was still trying to get more help.

Andie thanked Robie publicly, but impressed on the Gaties that he still needed another two. It was then that he recalled his two faithful friends, Juanie and Petie, and seeing that the response from the Gaties who watched him in silence was not what he had expected, he thought what better company to go on this dangerous mission than the very same friends that were always with him? He smiled a little as he recalled them.

‘Where are Juanie and Petie?’ he asked the glowing Gaties, knowing that they couldn’t be too far.

‘Here we are,’ they both said, simultaneously sticking their long arms into the air, to show where they were and not really knowing why Andie had called them, as they didn’t normally pay any attention to what was going on around them, living in a playful world of their own.

As they put their arms up, Andie saw his chance and didn’t waste it. ‘Oh good,’ he said. ‘I knew I could count on you two,’ he said, as he tried to hold back his laughter.

Juanie and Petie looked at each other, wondering what they had got themselves into. They were like two drops of

water, identical in looks and in actions. They went through life repeating and doing what one another did or said, no matter what or where. They both shrugged their shoulders and grinned as all the Gaties that were around them cheered at their new-found heroes.

Juanie and Petie could be considered somewhat different to the other Gaties; they were much taller for a start, almost as tall as Andie, who was by far the tallest of the Gaties in Gatieville. But at the same time they were different because they would only socialise with themselves, and Andie, of course – they would always be following Andie about. They seemed to need to be close to someone important, and they enjoyed the way the other Gaties looked up to him, and in turn their regard of them who were his closest friends.

‘In that case,’ Andie concluded, ‘there is no more to be said. Our team is complete.’

He told the members of the expedition to come to the balcony in order that all the Gaties could see them. When they appeared on the balcony, all the Gaties began to buzz and flicker brightly as they cheered their heroes.

Andie turned to the members of the expedition and told them in a loud voice so that all could hear, ‘We will meet here in two clockspans,’ which meant two complete turns of the electro sundial.

‘And from here we will go to the borders of Gatieville and into Memoryless,’ he said, his words sounding quite frightening.

With these words, the Megatalkie had finished. Gatiehall, with its towering ceilings, became a jungle of moving Gaties as they flickered brightly and jabbered and jittered wildly while they moved to the huge doorless doorway – doorless, because in Gatieville there had never been any need for doors, as Gaties didn’t have any need for privacy or, until now, any enemies to keep out.

Juanie and Petie came to Tanie’s side, not having had the chance to be introduced properly. They did the honours

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themselves and Gatie-hugged Tanie affectionately as Gaties often do.

‘Gatie nice to meet you,’ they both said.

‘Likewise,’ Tanie answered.

They tried to do the same to Robie, but he was not having any of it and shrugged them both off, saying, ‘Don’t you even dare,’ in his usual bashful way.

Andie thanked them all and patted Juanie and Petie on the back, feeling a little guilty about the way he had forced them both into the situation in which they now found themselves. Nevertheless, Juanie and Petie were very grateful for Andie’s show of affection because they truly idealised Andie, and considered themselves special to be his closest friends.

‘Go home and collect everything that you might need,’ Andie said. ‘But remember we have a long way to travel, so don’t bring too much weight as we might need to travel fast, very fast,’ he said, his expression very thoughtful.

Andie didn’t have to go anywhere because he lived in Gatiehall. He simply left the main gallery, leaving his friends to go where they pleased, and the Eldies to continue with their silent thoughts.

Robie also remained at the hall, having lost his home when the Viries took out Paradise Isle. When Andie mentioned home it made him recall how the horrid Viries had devoured his beautiful retreat, and the terrible scene which was still vivid in his mind as the terrible humming noise that preceded the pulsating dark glow of negative erasing mass, which in little or no time devoured his once peaceful and tranquil home. He lingered a little at Andie’s words, now realising that his home was wherever he found himself at that moment, having nowhere to go and not a single care in the world, and still less anything to fetch or carry.

Tanie, however, did have a home, the same home where she had known so much happiness, with long idle days spent with her Papie, when he was at home that is. And, of course, she had something very important to fetch. So, saying goodbye to her new friends, she moved slowly out of Gatiehall, at the

same time admiring the immensity of the huge structure. She passed the huge doorless doorway which led into the heart of Gatieville, the electro impulses causing her tiny wheel-shaped feet to gyrate, as did those of all Gaties, and thus producing the energy that movement required. She looked back and saw Juanie and Petie, who had also remained in Gatiehall, not having anything more important to take than their own company. Tanie had to go home, because that's where she had left the Mapie, and that was, of course, something that couldn't be left behind as the successful outcome of the mission to a great extent depended on it.

Tanie was very proud to have the Mapie in her possession; it made her feel important and she felt very glad that she could help to save Gatieville from what seemed a terrible fate. She felt quite happy with herself, and didn't seem to care about the impending danger that would soon be confronting her.

Passing through the enormous doorways, Tanie gathered a little speed and, glancing back, dwelt on the strange structure of Gatiehall. It was so unlike the rest of Gatieville and yet so much a part of it. The huge doorway gave way to the Gatieville that she knew so well, and her eyes sparkled as they took in the bright one-storey metropolis that lay before her in the most orderly of fashions, and all of which produced an air of 'welcome home'.

She moved down the path which led away from the hall and observed the now not-so-busy Gaties, who had ceased to do what Gaties normally do, which is, as everyone knows, very important, very important indeed.

The Gaties had also observed Tanie as she came out of Gatiehall, and would have liked to have touched her and cheered her, but they had sensed that she wanted to be alone, on perhaps her last stroll though Gatieville. So the majority of Gaties either watched or followed her at a distance.

Gatieville was not especially big. But for Tanie, who lived on the other side of Gatieville and who had to be back at Gatiehall within two electro sundial spans, it meant that she would not have the time to spend that she would have liked to

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admire and contemplate all the beauties that she had on so many occasions taken for granted, wondering if this would be the last time she would be able to do it.

She spent a short time admiring the few things that she most liked and where she had passed so many of her happier days, like Gatieville Park, with its lavish electro green undergrowth neatly ordered and cared for by electro green fingers; and multitudes upon multitudes of brilliantcoloured flowers, and in the centre of all this, the beautiful electro blue pond with gigantic lily pads on which the younger Gaties would often lie as they took in the rays from the electro sun while they rested from their incessant play, as they gently floated on the substance that anywhere other than Gatieville would be water.

She reminisced on the colourful play apparatus that could be found in Gatieville's park playpen. This was where the young Gaties would play without relent as their jabbering parents looked on, resting a little from their raucous young ones. She remembered the few occasions when her Papie would be watching over her; she smiled, recalling that, more often than not, it would be one of her neighbours, because her Papie was off on one of his mad adventures.

Tanie didn't have a Mammie. She never knew why; her Papie never talked about it. He just closed up and became silent and sad whenever she mentioned it. She looked around once more, and returning her thoughts to reality and the present, she continued with the duty that she had taken upon herself. 'No more time for fond memories,' she said to herself.

The electro sun was beginning to show itself over the horizon, its brilliant redness already producing a sense of warmth. She knew that she would have to hurry to be able to meet her friends on time. So she put on a bit of speed, not too much at first, but gradually reaching Gatie speed, showing her true ability as a Gatie creature of light speed.

Her indescribably fast speed showed what Gaties were really about. Their true nature, which could be seen as their mission in life became clear, which is, as everybody knows, to

transport memory at vicious speed throughout their environment.

Tanie became like a streaking missile, her speed only apparent through the immensity of the beautiful coloured light that she emitted in her wake, as with expertise she dodged the many obstacles that were in her path. Within seconds she began to slow as she found herself at the entrance to her electro cabin.

All the houses in Gatieville looked the same from the exterior. But, as one entered through the doorless doorway, one saw the change, because every single house in Gatieville was different within, showing the strong personality that each Gatie had as individuals. Each house had a touch of distinction that marked it from any other in Gatieville.

Tanie entered her house and immediately felt at home; hers was even more different from the others, because her Papie had filled it with the strangest of objects that one could imagine, all the fruits of his countless adventures into Memoryless.

Tanie felt good inside. She always liked to return home, although on this occasion it saddened her to see so many objects that reminded her of Papie, and she wondered if he was well.

The houses themselves were very luminous inside, as one would expect, being the abode of a Gatie. There were numerous objects of strange shape and peculiar form, and one would have to have a very vivid imagination to discover what they could possibly be. Tanie had a quick browse round as if to make sure that everything was in its place; this, of course, was more a habit than a precaution. It was then that she remembered why she was there, and that she was in a hurry, so she quickly went to the place where her Papie had left the Tapie Cube, which contained the muchtalked-about Mapie.

Tapie Cubes, as some people know, are where Gaties store any relevant information that they wish to save. And Markie, Tanie's Papie, had stored the information about the Mapie on one of these, to be used by Tanie in the future if need be.

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And the need had arisen, so Tanie took the precious Tapie Cube from a hiding place within one of the strange objects that Markie had brought back from Memoryless and inserted it into her screenie, which was a small screenie that formed part of her body.

As in the other Gaties, when deactivated it was just a small opaque screen, blank in appearance. But when activated it was something quite different. It would buzz into action and project any image contained in the Tapie Cube, to amazing reality. The three-dimensional image would be difficult for anybody seeing it to tell the difference between the real thing and the Gatie screenie projection. Tanie didn't activate the Tapie Cube because they had a limited lifespan and she didn't want to waste any of the projections.

This would be a safe place for it, she thought, with no risk of losing it if she were going fast. She took another quick look around her small, cosy dwelling and wiped a small clear electro tear from one of her big colourful eyes.

And this time without looking back, she went back into the streets of Gatieville, where more than a few Gaties had been waiting for her. She had already been marked as a heroine and she would now have to live with the fame and responsibility that this gave her.

Tanie bowed her head shyly on seeing so many Gaties, some of whom wanted to touch her. They gradually let her through and she smiled and greeted their affection. As quick as possible, without seeming rude, which was something that she wouldn't dream of, she managed to get past them, and quickly gained speed to make up for lost time.

The electro sun began to brighten the far-reaching horizon, and she now realised that she would have to move at Gatie speed to be at Gatiehall on time. The Gaties who had been cheering her made no attempt to go with her. They simply watched their intrepid young friend as she dashed off, a gush of light in search of her destiny.

Tanie thought deeply while she travelled at Gatie speed, although it would seem quite impossible for any mortal to do

so at this astonishing speed. This was so typical of her kind. She thought about the lush electro green metropolis of country-like appearance that was her home. She wondered about the Gaties, as she often had, and all she had seen and heard of their origin, and recalled the old tales about the reason for their creation.

Most of them seemed to coincide in that they said that they were created by someone who wished to create a perfect world of amusement, in contrast from his own. And it seemed that some freak electronic accident, like perhaps the secret of life itself, had caused the Gaties to live.

The true fact of the matter was that the tiny electronic creatures, which no doubt had been conceived for some unknown reason, were now really and truly alive. They had feelings; like other living souls they worried, they played, they cried, and they laughed – how they laughed. The Gaties had perceived all the best of the human spirit, without its defects, because, unlike humans, they did not have the lust for destroying their own kind.

Tanie analysed how her life had changed in such a short time, from the daily gush of colour and youthful enjoyment, to the deadly threat that the Viries posed to her very existence. Within seconds Tanie began to see the huge outline of Gatiehall, and seconds later she found that she had to slow down or she would zoom past her arrival point.

The entrance to Gatiehall was very crowded, as she had expected, with hundreds of milling Gaties who waited patiently for their leader to appear. When she saw the beauty of Gatiehall surrounded by all the glowing Gaties, she couldn't help but think how beautiful life was and, without realising it at first, she began to say, 'I want to live.'

At first she said it softly and she thought how terrible it would be for all that she loved to be devoured by some sort of Virie monster that didn't even have a face. Almost without noticing, she said it again, but louder, 'I want to live! I want to live!'

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The Gaties that were closest heard her, and being the excitable creature that Gaties are by nature, they caught on to her words and, using anything for an excuse for a Gatie fun party, they began to repeat what they had heard, like some old scratched record. They repeated it over and over, until all the Gaties around Gatiehall were chanting Tanie's words that thudded through the air and mixed with the desire they all had to live.

The Gaties all chanted what they had heard Tanie say, almost parrot-fashion, and this, as usual, went on for a long time, because till now the time factor had meant nothing to the Gaties, playing or chanting any catchy phrase that they might hear from one another.

On other occasions they would simply chant, 'Gaties here, Gaties there, Gaties everywhere,' repeating it in unison, making a pleasant humming sound that made any Gatie who heard it join in. After a while, the Gaties got tired of repeating Tanie's words and began to chant their usual melody, and pretty soon the hundreds of Gaties that were gathered around Gatiehall were all having a go at their favourite chant.

Tanie observed the legions of Gaties, whose brilliant light and unceasing chant of 'Gaties here, Gaties there, Gaties everywhere' made the occasion shine with the importance that it no doubt had. Their light mixed in such a way that it was impossible to know the exact number of Gaties that had gathered there to see their heroes off. Tanie would have joined in, but she knew that Andie and the others were waiting, and their business was far too important to go off on a Gatie chant.

She entered Gatiehall, its magnificence as always dwarfing all who entered, but at the same time representing the true home of all the Gaties, making any Gatie who entered feel at home.

Robie, Juanie and Petie were waiting within. They flickered brightly as they saw Tanie and smiled as they observed the tremendous Gatie fun party that had been organised in her honour. They greeted each other affectionately, a strong bond of friendship already growing between them.

Andie was, as usual, above the main gallery in his quarters, a brilliant room which shone with the Gatie light energy that filled everything in Gatiehall, although for some reason it seemed to linger in this room, as though to boost the energy that any leader might need.

He left the privacy of his room and went to the side of the Eldies, who seemed to be in a state of emptiness as their minds were set on far-reaching horizons and thoughts, perhaps trying to find a solution for the Gaties' problems.

Andie didn't say a word, but they soon became aware of his presence, and without making any physical effort they said their goodbyes, not wishing to show any emotional signs of weakness in front of the other Gaties. Each of the Eldies in turn seemed to embrace the young leader of the Gaties with a strong wilful presence that filled the air. The wise Eldies now knew that they would have to await the onslaught of the Viries without the physical presence of Andie, and this would prove more than difficult as the Eldies didn't have the physical capability that they would no doubt need. Nevertheless, they didn't show any sign of weakness, and their aged faces remained as always, even knowing that they would now have to await Andie's return, if, of course, he did return.

At that moment, one of Andie's aides came and told him that Tanie had returned and was waiting with the other members of the expedition in the entrance.

'Go and tell them to come up,' he said to his aide, who within seconds was telling the four Gaties that Andie had asked them to go up to the gallery above.

Smiling as was the custom with Gaties, they quickly followed Andie's aide to the floor above.

Andie greeted them all affectionately, but especially Tanie, over whom he fussed more emphatically, having already grown very fond of her. The Eldies remained seated around the large oval table, and Tanie wondered if they ever moved, or, she thought, smiling, perhaps they had become stuck to the chairs.

The Eldies seldom spoke, not having the necessity, as they could communicate with each other by thought transfer. Tanie

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stared at them almost rudely, but they just appeared to look into space, not expressing the slightest emotion. But what expressive eyes, the wrinkles showing peace and a deep knowledge of things, she thought. But under all that, Tanie could see and sense an aura of joy and happiness present in all Gaties, no matter what age.

‘Tanie, Tanie,’ Andie said, having to call her name twice as she seemed to be absorbed by her own thoughts.

‘Yes, yes,’ Tanie finally replied, as Andie took her gently by the hand, and took her before the Eldies, who, of course, remained seated, not wishing to look too interested.

‘Tanie, the Eldies and I would like to see the Mapie, or at least the first part of it,’ he said, looking to the Eldies to see if they showed some sign of agreement. But naturally they didn’t blink an eyelid.

‘Of course,’ Tanie replied, feeling very pleased with herself for all the attention she kept getting. She smiled at the Eldies, trying to draw with her beautiful youthful gaze a sign of Gatieness, and for one brief moment she thought she saw a smile showing through the aged wrinkled faces. But perhaps it was just wishful thinking. As there seemed to be no response, Tanie glanced back at Andie, who nodded understandingly, perceiving her frustration.

She pressed the switch on her screenie, and the small screenie which was located on her chest immediately grew bright. At first it showed nothing, but within milliseconds a bright white beam poured from the front of the screen and a three dimensional image grew from the floor upwards, and it soon became clear that it was Markie, Tanie’s Papie.

The image was so incredibly real that one could have been tempted to touch it. Markie’s image appeared with a bright smile on his face, and if one looked carefully one could see a great likeness between him and the Eldies.

His face, like those of the Eldies, was aged and wrinkled, but there the similarity ended as a kind of cheekiness changed places with the solemn expression that the Eldies possessed. There was also an expression of rugged determination that

gave the impression that he was a Gatie who liked to get things done.

The large gallery, which was already very well illuminated, became even brighter as the almost supernatural image from the screenie became visible. As the unreal reality of Markie's image began to speak, Markie directed his vision towards the Eldies. Although he couldn't see the audience that were seeing him at that moment, it was as if he almost knew that there would be a lot of Gaties seeing the Tapie Cube when he made it.

'Tanie, if you are seeing this now, it's because, as I feared, you and the rest of the Gaties in Gatieville are in great danger. And I know you are doing just as I expected, and following my instructions to the letter.' He paused, visibly thinking before he spoke once more. 'As you all know, especially you, Tanie, I have always been a very restless Gatie, and you have heard me on more than one occasion talk about my dream of finding Goggleyes and the truth about our creation,' Markie said, this time taking an even longer pause.

Tanie could see out of the corner of her eyes that even the Eldies were totally absorbed by her Papie's words.

Markie continued once more as though he had remembered what he had to say. All the flickering Gaties who were lucky enough to be present flickered nervously as they waited for the story to continue.

'On my countless journeys through Memoryless, I managed to pass and get through the not few dangers that will now await you there.' He looked at Tanie directly, knowing that she would be going, and then he scanned the rest of the gallery as though he could see the onlookers.

The gallery had filled completely with Gaties, who all showed the uttermost interest in Markie's tale, and stood open-mouthed at the possibility of such an experience.

Markie went on. 'The conclusion that I have reached, and I know that among the Eldies there must be more than one sceptic, is that Goggleyes is not purely an old Gatie tale, but that he really does exist.'

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The gallery became abuzz as the Gaties couldn't contain themselves any longer and they all began to jabber loudly. Markie's image became silent, almost as if he were aware of the reaction. Andie managed to get the Gaties to become silent just in time, because Markie began to speak once more.

'What is more, I am certain that if we find Goggleyes and make him aware of our existence, he will surely help us, because I am now convinced that he was responsible for our creation. We form part of him, because we are part of his memory,' he said, going silent before directing his last words at Tanie.

'Tanie, I would have liked to have been with you on this, your first journey into Memoryless, and to have been able to help you through all the perils that now face you, and that will now endanger your very existence. But as you know, my determination to seek Goggleyes couldn't wait, and my spirit of adventure, which was always far too strong to remain in Gatieville for any length of time, has meant that I am not at your side now. No doubt I will see you in the near future, but in totally different surroundings, and I'm sure that you will have good strong Gaties by your side to help you pass the dangers. Use this Mapie well. It contains much information about Memoryless and the Void,' Markie said.

The image began to fade as the first part of the Tapie Cube finished. As the brilliant image got thinner, Markie was heard to say, 'Remember that the Mibies are our worst enemies, far worse than the Viries. Beware of them: they can take any form, and love eating our Gatie light energy.'

Just as the image went out, Markie said, 'They have no false reflection.' He said this very adamantly, as though for some reason it was very important.

The image went completely out and left every Gatie in the gallery wondering what would happen next.

'I wonder what he meant by that,' Andie said looking, at Tanie.

'I don't really know,' Tanie answered, 'but I'm sure it must be important.' She continued, 'We won't be able to use

the Tapie Cube till we're in Memoryless because, as you know, we can only use it three more times before it becomes of no use, so every time that we use it, we must pay the utmost attention to every single detail. Our lives could depend on it.'

Small electro tears could be seen in the rivets of Tanie's eyes as she stared into the space where her Papie's image once was. Although the image had completely faded, Tanie thought she could hear a weak voice saying, 'You'll always be in my thoughts, Tanie.' But this didn't seem possible as the Tapie Cube image had long since faded.

'I must be hearing things,' she said to herself, but then Andie smiled as if to acknowledge what she had heard, although nothing more was said about the matter.

The Eldies called to Andie, who was quickly by their side, as once more the thought transfer became the means of communication. They looked at each other briefly and it was obvious that the Eldies were giving Andie instructions.

A few minutes passed and they seemed to have reached some sort of agreement; shortly afterwards, one of the Eldies got up and went to the front of the balcony to address all the Gaties, but especially Tanie, who he had taken by the arm with the boniest and most wrinkled hand that one could possibly imagine. Tanie could see at close hand that he really looked ancient. He must have been the oldest of the six Eldies, and he certainly seemed to be the one in charge.

He told Tanie that his name was Pathie, which made Tanie very pleased that an Eldie was actually addressing himself to her. She lit up, almost embarrassed by the honour. She thought she saw a slight smile on his face, and with gentle bony hands, he took Tanie by the head and slowly began to press his bony thumbs in circular movements around her forehead.

Tanie looked at Andie, who reassured her with his smile. Pathie, the Eldie, began to stare deep into her eyes, as Tanie felt a warm sensation that penetrated her innermost thoughts. She felt a little dizzy as an immense shock wave began to enter her very mind, and she began to be aware of many things that before she had always taken for granted. She was now aware

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that she was receiving a tremendous gift. The Light of the Eldies was being bestowed upon her. Within seconds she began to look at many things under a different light as her whole understanding of everything, and the concept of life itself, portrayed a totally new comprehension of true light. The Light of the Gaties, but seen through the eyes of the Eldies, who had discovered a more precise meaning for all that surrounded them.

Her eyes sparkled in true gratitude as she realised the priceless gift that the Eldies had decided to give her; she had become, at a very early age for a Gatie, one of the chosen few, perhaps because of her pure Gatie spirit, which was full of pure light memory.

Tanie was now aware why the Eldies rarely spoke. It was simply not necessary for them, because they were always aware what any Eldie or Gatie was thinking. And only those with the power of Eldie light thought could block this off and control it at will. This included all the Eldies and Andie, and now it seemed that Tanie was to become one of the gifted ones.

She simply had to think something and transmit it to one of the few if she wanted them to hear or understand what she was thinking. And, unless she blocked it off, they were always aware what she or the others had in mind.

Andie was the first to transmit to her his thoughts, and on realising this, she turned her head slightly, because Pathie was still holding it, and she saw Andie wink as he telepathically welcomed her to the light of the Gaties. Tanie grew still brighter as she received more light energy from Pathie and still greater knowledge. And the onlooking Gaties couldn't help but remark that she was growing still more beautiful as the Gatie light energy became increasingly more visible. A few more seconds passed and Pathie let his hands fall. He looked quite exhausted, one might even say pale. But slowly and surely he made his way back to the oval table where the other Eldies received him with some signs of emotion. Perhaps the occasion merited this; after all to bestow such a gift was not a common occurrence even for the Eldies.

This time Tanie could see what before she couldn't, and she heard, even in the silence, everything that there was to be heard. And now she could see the Eldies as they truly were: creatures of light and wisdom, but who would always keep this unto themselves, reserving this great treasure of treasures to bestow only on those who had the clarity of light thought to be worthy of it.

Tanie was overwhelmed with her new knowledge, and she thought how invaluable it would prove when they were travelling far from home in the depths of Memoryless. But it was then that she recalled that she would only be able to communicate with Andie, and that the other members of the party and her new friends would be at a great disadvantage, not being able to communicate telepathically. There was no need to project her thoughts, because Andie and the Eldies had been able to perceive her thought patterns, as she still hadn't learnt to shut them off yet.

Andie didn't have to be convinced; he could see immediately what a great advantage it would be for all the members of the expedition to have this capability, and he made his opinion known to the Eldies, who immediately gave a negative response.

He got closer to Pathie and they were seen to be discussing the matter. Tanie understood everything, and to some extent could see Pathie's point of view, because to bestow so much Gatie light energy could and should not become a commonplace thing.

Tanie interrupted, begging pardon for such an intrusion, but she was promptly allowed to give her opinion.

'Pathie, what if you only gave the others the power of thought transfer? Would that solve the problem?' she asked.

Andie and Pathie both looked at each other, thinking that it was a good idea, and both of them congratulated each other for the brilliant brainwave that they had had. The other Eldies all seemed to be nodding their heads in agreement.

The Eldies made a short deliberation between each other, and came to the conclusion that even thought transfer was too

big an attribute to give away so lightheartedly, but considering that the successful outcome of the mission could be at stake, they all unanimously agreed.

Pathie got up quite reluctantly and, it must be said, with a lot of difficulty, but nevertheless he got up. He went over to where Robie was standing. Robie looked quite worried, but tried his best not to let it show. Stretching out his long bony arms, Pathie touched Robie momentarily with his two long index fingers, causing a short spark to illuminate Robie's mind, and it was done. Robie could now hear and speak to the chosen few. In a short breath Robie had received sufficient knowledge to be able to transfer his thought. But only this. Pathie and the other Eldies were not prepared to share any more Gatie light knowledge with any Gatie until he or she had proven their worth.

Although Robie had not been enlightened with the same amount of knowledge that Tanie had, he did feel and perceive a tremendous current into his memory cells, that shocked into him the sufficient know-how to be able to thought transfer at will. He, like Tanie, also became radiant, but in a more modest way.

His colourful comical body tingled with a sense of importance that, moments earlier, he didn't have. He looked at his friends and smiled widely as he was able for the first time to hear what the others were saying and thinking.

Pathie couldn't help being more sparing with Robie. After all, 'Who was he? A small, insignificant Gatie who happened to be one of Andie's friends. If he returned from Memoryless, perhaps then he could have the gift of further knowledge,' Pathie said, so that the others could hear. He made it clear that he was holding back his profound knowledge and wisdom that he and the other Eldies had accumulated over such a long time span.

Robie didn't seem in the least upset by Pathie's declaration and was more than happy with the treasure he had received. Anyway, being a simple Gatie at heart, he didn't think that he would know what to do with so much wisdom if he received it.

He chuckled at the idea and saw that Tanie and Andie also gave a brief smile at his thought. Pathie then turned to Juanie and Petie, who were a short distance away, jabbering nervously about the fact that they would be next. Pathie looked at Juanie and Petie, and seeing that they were really quite a comical sight even for Gaties, he turned and looked at Andie, who shrugged his shoulders and, smiling, more or less insisted that Pathie continue.

This time he lifted both hands, and nodding his head as though he were still reluctant, he touched them both on the forehead, making a spark, which, as with Robie, flowed the knowledge of thought transfer into what seemed quite empty heads. Like Tanie and Robie before them, they also changed their expressions and began to look quite intelligent, when they found like the others that they, too, could communicate at a distance.

It was amazing how they could be in constant contact with each other, without the need to physically speak or even to be close to one another for that matter.

The four new chosen ones radiated with colourful Gatie light knowledge as their enlightenment became ever more apparent. Pathie finished his exhausting chore and turned to face them. His face looked even older than before; it seemed clear that to transmit Gatie light knowledge was a very taxing task for one as old as he. Tanie, who felt somewhat sorry for him, could see that he would take quite a long time to recuperate from this task of tasks.

This time Pathie opened his mouth to speak, because he wanted all to hear, not only the few. At first he seemed to wheeze as the air escaped from his lips. But he slowly gathered a little strength and his words could be heard.

‘I have given these chosen Gaties the gift of thought transfer, and at an infinite distance they will be able to communicate with each other if they so wish. It is something they must learn to use, and to use wisely,’ Pathie said, even weaker than before.

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Taking them in turn, he embraced them all, but leaving Tanie for last. As he embraced her, he whispered in her ear, 'You have the true Gatie light. Use it well and we will succeed.' He squeezed her fondly, as she thanked him profoundly.

When Pathie released Tanie, she felt strange because it was as if all the Eldies had been embracing her. It was as though they had the ability to become one.

Tanie looked at them all. They were so alike. 'Perhaps they are all one,' she thought. Turning away, she left it at that, just a thought.

They all said their goodbyes, and Pathie returned to his place beside the other Eldies, who immediately joined their long bony hands in a circle and began to meditate, apparently blocking themselves off from their immediate surroundings.

Andie and the other members of the party were now truly ready. With Andie leading the way and his friends by his side, all radiating the most amazing expression from their luminous faces, they went down the huge crystal staircase which projected Gatie light rays from its centre, making it appear that they were floating on light.

On reaching the bottom, the flickering, jabbering Gaties massed around the chosen ones and, buzzing excitedly, they followed them through the doorless doorway of Gatiehall and into Gatieville. Only to be received by even more brilliant light creatures, who cheered enormously, as they opened the way so that the small group of heroes could slowly but surely make their way to a very uncertain future.

The colourful light that the Gaties emitted was indescribably beautiful. Every single Gatie in Gatieville left whatever he or she had to do, to accompany the intrepid five to the borders of Gatieville and Memoryless. They all flickered nervously with excitement, and if it hadn't been for the dire situation in which Gatieville and the Gaties found themselves, it could have seemed that the Gaties were having some sort of celebration.

Andie kept to the front with Tanie by his side, followed closely by Robie, Juanie and Petie. They were so full of Gatie light energy that they looked larger than life, almost as if they had grown in stature. They stood well out from the rest of the Gaties, their body light and personal auras far more majestic. They didn't seem to be carrying anything, except for Andie, who had a very strange-looking object strapped to his side. It was long and dull, and didn't look at all Gatielike. Many of the Gaties asked themselves what it could be, because it was something that none of the Gaties had ever seen before. Its origin was no doubt from the beginning of Gatie time, and maybe it was as old as the Eldies themselves, they thought.

Others, who seemed to know everything, said that it was a weapon. And they weren't mistaken, because it was a dreaded Mibie torch, with the capability of erasing anything that it touched when wielded by he who possessed it.

Soon Gatiehall fell behind in the distance, and all that they could see was the outline and the bright Gatie light that penetrated the huge doorless doorway and the gigantic windows. As they lost sight of it, a tremendous dread overcame their hearts as they all wondered if it was the last time that they would see their precious Gatiehall. They followed the well-lit path which led from Gatieville to the exterior borders. They didn't hesitate once, knowing that they had a task to fulfil, and little time to do it in.

It wasn't long before they got to the far end of Gatieville, and they were confronted with what looked like an impenetrable mass of coloured electrostatic that buzzed violently as if to warn all who approached to stay well away. Beyond this was Memoryless, and who knew what else. Stopping a few paces from the mass of static, Andie turned to the Gaties who had followed them there. They had now arrived to the exterior boundary and there was no turning back. Memoryless would soon overwhelm them. It seemed that there was no entrance into Memoryless; the static looked impenetrable, almost as though it acted as a shield.

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The five brave Gaties looked towards the mass of Gaties who were waiting to see what Andie was going to say to them. They stood with their backs against the static, sparkling electro haze, which appeared in a very sinister way and that caused Juanie and Petie to shiver at the thought of leaving their friendly home Gatieville.

‘Gaties,’ Andie said as he looked over the vast sea of Gaties who had come to see them off. The sight was quite impressive. And for the first time in his colourful life he was stuck for words. He didn’t like saying goodbye, so, swallowing hard, he got a few words together. ‘We will endeavour to return as soon as possible with the solution, but in the meantime be as brave as possible, and obey the Eldies. They will not let you down.’ I hope, he said to himself, concerned.

The electro haze that formed the static barrier continued to buzz as all five waved their long arms as they said goodbye. They turned to enter the static electro haze, which at first seemed to put up some resistance, but as they pushed a little harder it gave way and their bodies seemed to become elongated as the fuzzy stuff twinkled with the Gatie light that they produced.

They took another step and they had passed the boundary that divided the two worlds. Yet another step and the electrostatic disappeared and they became engulfed in the most tremendous darkness, which at first they couldn’t quite assimilate. They had never experienced anything quite like it. They felt stunned, and they all jabbered nervously to each other.

Andie, who was also very frightened, tried hard to keep control of the situation. ‘Keep Gatie,’ he kept on saying, ‘keep Gatie.’

They all shuffled about nervously, all except Tanie, who really kept her cool, as though she knew what to expect. By increasing her Gatie light to a brilliant level, the surrounding darkness didn’t look so terrifying, and after a few moments her friends began to calm down and Andie made his usual comment about keeping their heads. Tanie projected her

thoughts, telling them to turn their Gatie light up, which they eventually did, although Juanie and Petie took their time about it, still having their heads in a bit of a muddle.

Their first step into Memoryless had proven quite a shock, and with the light they projected they looked into the blackness of the Void.

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