

PHILMORE, XEBOB



& THE IMPOSSIBILITY THEORY

Written by Lucas Spata  
Illustrated by Chris Strebly

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## Foreword

To all children affected by a serious illness:

We have never met before, but I want to thank you. Wait, you are probably confused. “How can someone I have never met before, be thanking me? For what?”

Okay, maybe I should explain. You see over the past four years I have been fighting cancer. With surgery, chemotherapy and radiation I have been pricked, poked, drugged, scanned and examined more times than I can count. I have gone from being extremely hungry and thirsty to not wanting to even see a piece of food or a drop of water. My hair has gone from normal to bald to my current style which looks like a bowling ball with a dead rat taped to the top!

Any of this sound familiar? But through all that has happened, I still feel quite lucky.

Why? Well, when I step back and think of what kids like you are going through, or may have to go through, I can't help but be inspired in how much courage you show. I'm 33, an old man by your standards, and it is different for me. At your age the only “cycle” you should be on is the type that has two wheels that is taking you down a hill at top speed.

Your courage inspires me. But it is not just me. You are inspiring everyone that is battling cancer or any other disease. You are inspiring the doctors and nurses who treat you every day. Plus you are inspiring the scientists that are working hard to find the medicines and cures to get rid of these diseases so no one else has to go through the treatments like you and I. That is why I am thanking you.

I want to help you in your fight. I wrote a story about an awkward furry alien creature named Philmore who, like you and I, is unwittingly forced to take on a huge challenge. I think you will find it funny and entertaining and good way to pass the time. I also think it will be something for you to hold on to for those days when you aren't feeling great. I hope it will just be a reminder to you that you have people like me, that you don't even know, that are wishing you good things.

Good luck with everything!

Sincerely,

Lucas Spata

## Chapter 1 – Philmore the Insecure Marrit

Heroes are born everyday. Sometimes they plunge themselves into a burning building to save a trapped cat. Sometimes they discover a new medicine for sick kids. Sometimes they nab the most illusive of criminals. Sometimes heroes are strong, sometimes they are fast, sometimes they are clever and sometimes they are courageous.

And sometimes they don't even know how brave and heroic they really are.

Philmore was about to become perhaps the biggest hero in the entire universe. He wasn't going to lift a burning beam off a child's broken leg and he certainly wasn't going to come up with a new miracle cure. Philmore wasn't strong, fast or particularly smart. And as for being brave, well we'll let you decide.

It is certain though that when Philmore was eating his breakfast in his family's cold cave on this particular morning, he had no idea that he was going to save Xebob and the Knoggnoggs which in turn would save the entire universe.

He just wanted to pass his Tunnelling final exam.

Philmore slid his bowl of cereal closer towards the one candle in the kitchen. Despite his thick fur and portly frame, Philmore was still shivering. His home planet of Plices was a barren frigid place and the main species, Marrits, were constantly searching for ways to find warmth.

"Don't hog it," Philmore's older brother Stanmore said and slid the candle back towards himself.

Marrits had learned to adapt to the harsh cold of Plices by tunnelling underground towards a warmer planet core. It was therefore very important for young Marrits like Philmore to master their claw-like callipers and become expert diggers.

Today was perhaps the most important exam that Philmore would take in his life.

"Did you study the Depth Ratios?" Stanmore asked sharply.

"Yes," mumbled Philmore.

"And the Eight Rules of Excavation in a Sedimentary Zone?"

"Yes," Philmore answered again, growing annoyed.

"What about the Seven Steps for Properly Removing a Plutonic Stone in a Collapsed Entrenchment during a Bio-Infused Condition Category 3?"

"Uh-huh." Philmore answered, but did not look up from his bowl of Zork Flakes. He hated his brother Stanmore. Stanmore was the only one in the family, maybe on the planet Plices, that didn't think that Stanmore was the greatest Marrit ever to exist. Philmore's brother had graduated with honours in every class:

Digging A+  
Mining A++  
Burrowing A+  
Soil A+  
Tunnelling A+++ (The first ever A+++)

Stanmore was said to be the brightest mind and most efficient digger in the history of the Marrits. He was destined to lead everyone to the planet core and provide all with eternal warmth.

Stanmore was destined to be a hero.

"You have to know these things Little Phil," his brother said. Philmore hated when he called him 'Little Phil'.

"The future of our planet depends on you knowing how to dig and tunnel properly. We need to find new and innovative ways to keep getting lower and lower so that we can all stay warm."

Philmore's mother smiled and rubbed Stanmore's head.

"Philmore, your brother is right," she said. "We need you to help save us because they say that every day the planet is just getting colder and colder. We need to keep digging closer to the center of the planet."

Philmore had heard this every day since he was born. He remembered his first words were the immortal pledge of all Marrits:

"Forever I make this pledge: I must dig, I will dig,  
For every great Marrit to stay warm and live,  
I shall always find new ways to dig!"

Philmore rolled the one eye that centered his face.



"Maybe there is some hope if we go towards the surface," Philmore said, but he soon regretted making the comment.

Philmore had always thought that perhaps there was some safety in the world outside of the caves and underground tunnels where the Marris lived. Of course, this went against everything the Marris were taught and what was in their sacred pledge.

"THE SURFACE!!!" Stanmore's eye almost popped out of his head as he screamed the words. "DO YOU KNOW HOW COLD IT IS UP THERE!!!"

"Philmore!" his mother scolded him as if he had said a swear word. "Don't talk like that!"

Philmore pushed his cereal bowl aside and left for his big Tunnelling exam unsure if he would ever be as adored as his brother. He wasn't sure if he would ever be a great digger or a great anything for that matter. He certainly knew he would never be a hero to the Marris like his brother.

How wrong he was.

## Chapter 2 Philmore Makes a Discovery

The instructions for the Tunnelling final exam had only five steps.

Start at the mark.

Dig in a line parallel to the ridge of Thorpl.

When you reach the large Plutonic Stone of Marion make a sharp drop and dig down under the stone.

Retrieve your flag when you reach the Lake of Pinkerap.

The first ten students to get to their flag pass the Tunnelling exam.

Philmore sighed and eyed his classmates. They were all much bigger and stronger than him. They were skilled and dedicated. They all practiced digging in their free time and all dreamed of one day becoming as known and celebrated a digger as Philmore's older brother Stanmore. They were all "mini Stanmores" as far as Philmore was concerned and they were all as large and smart as Plutonic Stones.

There were ten "mini Stanmores" and him.

Philmore wasn't good at math, but he was good enough to make a simple calculation. If the first ten students that reached their flags passed the test that meant that one of the students would fail. Philmore could feel the huge eye of each of the other students glaring at him. They were thinking the same thing as him.

He was expected to come last. He would be the only one to fail.

"Try not to dig yourself off the planet Phil-meat," said Nazbert, one of his fatter and louder classmates. The other students laughed at the joke.

"Or bury yourself in your own hole again!" said another classmate reminding everyone of the many failures Philmore had famously experienced in Tunnelling class.

The mocking of his classmates combined with the pressures of the exam caused Philmore's stomach to become uneasy. As often happened when he became nervous Philmore lost control and the gases in his stomach would make an embarrassing situation even worse.

"BURRRRRRP!"

Without warning, Philmore nervously belched. The distinct smell of Zork Flakes filled the air. The whole group exploded in such a ruckus laughter that it felt as if the cave shook.

Philmore bowed his head and shuffled over to the starting mark. He just needed to be faster than one other student to pass the test, but he already felt like he was miles behind. He tried to ignore the other jokes that followed, but he couldn't help hearing the last lingering lines before the test started.

"...nothing like his brother..."

At the sound of their teacher's whistle the test began. A hail of dirt, sand and stones was thrown into the air as Philmore and the other students tore into the wall in front of them. Each student with their callipers and scoop-like hands surgically moved the dirt in front of them. They peeled away layers of dirt at first then carefully packed the mud around the sides of the walls they had just created. Within seconds each student had made a hole big enough for them to step through. After sealing and reinforcing the roof of their hole, each young Marrit proceeded to dig forward and repeated the process. In a matter of minutes the holes they had dug almost magically formed into little tubes. Tunnels.

That is, everyone except Philmore. He had been so anxious to surge ahead of his mocking classmates that he had dug too far into his hole before reinforcing his tunnel walls. He made one more sweeping motion and then felt his whole tunnel begin to shake.

"Oh no," Philmore thought, but it was too late.

Before he could patch the cracks that were growing, the walls around him crumbled over him and buried him in wet dirt. Philmore would have to start over while his classmates raced ten meters ahead into their respective tunnels. Philmore's teacher frowned. Nazbert and the others howled and snorted.

Philmore sighed. Maybe digging just wasn't his thing, he thought.

For his second attempt Philmore went at a slower and more deliberate pace. He stopped early on to coat the walls with mud to make sure he did not repeat his previous mistake. He did not want to go through the humiliation of having another tunnel collapse on him. His care paid off. His tunnel held, but by the time he reached the Plutonic Stone of Thorpl his classmates were a full fifteen minutes ahead of him and well on their way to digging below the stone.

Plutonic stones are solid dark green rocks that are spread throughout the ground of the planet Plices. They are like the seeds in a watermelon. No matter how small a bite you take you are likely to catch one. When digging tunnels under the surface of Plices one will almost always come across a Plutonic stone. Because they are harder than diamonds and usually as big as houses, Marrits had to learn to dig around these obstacles. As Philmore came up to the dark green wall of the Plutonic stone in his tunnel he thought about what to do.

"When you reach the large Plutonic Stone make a sharp drop and dig under the stone," remembered Philmore.

It was the third and probably most important rule of the test. Philmore felt the moist ground below him and thought about how far his classmates were below him. There was no way he would be able to catch up to them now. Surely he would retrieve his flag last and be the only one to fail the Tunnelling final exam. Philmore let out another heavy sigh as he thought about how his classmates would ridicule him when he arrived last. Then Philmore did what often got him in a great deal of trouble.

He decided to not follow the rules.

Instead of digging straight down into the wet and smelly ground below him, Philmore began scraping at the dry dirt to his left. He also dug at a slight angle.

A slight angle up...towards the surface.

"If the stone is round, then at some point I will reach the top," Philmore thought to himself. He reasoned that if he was near the top of the stone then it would be quicker to go over the top rather than digging the long way around the bottom. The only danger, of course, as he had always been told, was that going towards the surface was where the temperature dropped and he could risk freezing to death. Philmore thought of his laughing classmates and condescending brother. The risk was worth it.

With new energy and fervour, Philmore ploughed into the dirt in front of him and was soon moving up the side of the Plutonic Stone. He madly secured the walls around him and motored forward. Philmore had never made a tunnel with more passion and in a faster time frame. He began feeling confident and strong. It was a new sensation for him. He smiled as he thought about the looks on everyone's faces when they would finish their tunnels and arrive at the flag only to find him resting there. But Philmore's daydreams were soon broken as he began to notice something odd.

As he tunnelled further up, the ground was not getting colder. The dirt in his claw actually felt warm.

This went against everything he had been taught. The reason that Marrits tunnelled down was because the surface of the planet was cold and the core was warm. But here he was, a student trying to pass his Tunnelling final exam and with every scoop of dirt he unearthed he was proving the exact opposite.

"How is this possible?" Philmore thought to himself with a fresh portion of warm dirt in his claws.

He kept digging and every time he stuck his claw into a new patch of soil it became noticeably warmer and warmer. Eventually it became so warm that the little grains of sand almost seemed to bite at his skin. The ground was not only dry and warm, the dirt was starting to become finer consistency like a powder. Eventually

the heated sand became so warm that Philmore had to make very quick slashing motions at the dirt to avoid being burned.

Then things got really strange.

Protruding down from the front of his tunnel dangled what looked like a long red metal noodle. But unlike a noodle, the red thing was hard and glowing. Philmore reached out to touch it and quickly realized where the heat had been coming from.

"Ouch!" Philmore hollered as one of his claws brushed too close to the red noodle.

Philmore decided to sweep away the dirt around the red noodle and follow it further towards the surface. The red noodle was long and extended for several meters further until it came to a ball with a screen inside it. From



the ball, Philmore could see there were several other noodle-like arms extending in every direction. It was almost like some kind of red mechanical bug. Many of the arms appeared to have been broken, as if this ball had dropped from far above the surface and drilled its way deep into the ground of Plices.

Philmore leaned in and examined the ball. He had never seen anything so brilliant and beautiful. Through a clear window Philmore could see twinkling lights and lasers flying around inside. In the center was a glowing purple light so bright and brilliant Philmore could barely look at it before his eye began to water.

“Wow!” Philmore said.

By now he had completely forgotten about his Tunnelling final exam. Whatever this red ball with noodle arms was, he had just found something that could really help the Marrits. It had the heat of a month’s worth of candles. He couldn’t wait to show this to his classmates and his brother. Maybe they would stop calling him “Little Phil” now.

Staring closer into the window, Philmore noticed that the lights and lasers were actually forming complex symbols and letters. What at first appeared to be random flashes and sparks now looked like some kind of code.

Whatever this thing was, it was trying to communicate something.

There were over a thousand languages on the planet Plices alone and none of these markings and symbols appeared to be anything that Philmore recognized. But the shapes and symbols kept changing every minute or two. Then Philmore saw some familiar sharp angled markings that he recognized as the language Azzbak.

Azzbak was an ancient and primitive language familiar to all one-eyed creatures in the universe. Once known as “English”, Azzbak was said to have origins from an extinct two eyed species known as humans that had managed to destroy their home planet after only a few thousand years. Azzbak was used by all creatures in the universe as a constant reminder of the human’s follies and for all to never repeat them.

“hElp uS pLease,”

Someone, somewhere was calling for help. Then the next words followed:

“knOggknOggs in troUble...”

“Knoggnoggs?” Philmore was confused. He had no idea what a Knoggnoggs was. The words continued.

“nEed bEst bRavest to sAve uS. hElp uS pLease.”

Philmore instantly thought of his brother and scoffed. If he showed this ball to anyone on Plices they would instantly think that Stanmore was who this message was for. Then the final phrase scrolled across the screen:

“fOllOw light, sAve Xebob..... Say OBobulungbok. pLease.”

The words faded and a new series of symbols replaced the words that Philmore had just read. Under his breath he muttered the last words to himself. Follow light? What did that mean? Save Xebob? Who was Xebob and what was happening to him? Whoever he was, Philmore was sure there was nothing he could do to help him.

Then it happened.

Without thinking what he may be doing or what could possibly happen, Philmore repeated the phrase that the red ball had asked him to say.

“Obo...” Philmore said, “bulung...bok.”

## Chapter 3 The Misty Planet

Zip.

That's how quickly it happened.

Philmore could not have described it any differently. One moment he was on his home planet of Plices digging around a Plutonic Stone during his Tunnelling final exam, he said the word "Obobulungbok" when suddenly he felt like his entire body had been sucked through a straw. Now he was here. Except he wasn't quite sure where "here" was.

Wherever it was, it was much warmer than his home planet and full of mist. The ground was covered with jagged green rocks like the remains of a million smashed water glasses and any trees or plants were grey and without leaves. The sky was filled with menacing black clouds and the rumble of thunder echoed in the distance.

He didn't know how, but when Philmore had repeated the word "Obobulungbok" he accidentally activated the red beacon with noodle arms. The beacon transformed his body into a beam of light that shot him directly to this strange planet that had been calling for help.

"Where am I?" Philmore thought to himself.

Then he heard a voice.

"Fling doesn't think this CREATURE looks like much?" came a hissing voice from the mist speaking in the Azzbak language.

"Fling can see why such a creature has called for someone to save it. It needs Fling, the best and bravest to save it,"

This Creature? Philmore wondered if the voice was referring to him. Philmore guessed the voice must be talking to him, but so far Philmore saw nothing and only heard the sound of the hissing voice approaching closer and closer.

"Fling would never live on a planet with these sharp stones and barren waste of landscape. Look at this dump! Maybe it is a paradise for puny fuzz ball creatures, but not for the bravest and the best."

Philmore felt naked as he scanned his "puny fuzz ball" form. He wanted to tell the voice that he too was a visitor to this strange dark land, but still could not see who was speaking. Then slowly through the mist he began to detect something extremely tall. It looked like the roots of a tree. There were two thin ridged tubes extending into the mist in front of him.

"Fling should probably say something," the voice said. "Greetings dear Xebobian. Does the being in need have a title and name?"

Philmore continued to stare at what he thought were two long roots moving towards him. Then momentarily the mist cleared and Philmore began to make out a body extending from the two roots. The two roots were actually legs.

Philmore looked down at the short stumps at the bottom of his own body. Marrits had huge feet, but very short legs. Being tiny was a huge advantage when one spent most of their time crawling around the little tunnels. The tree-length legs of this creature would never fit in even the vastest of caves on Plices, Philmore thought to himself.

"Title?" Philmore asked as he scratched his head with his claw.

As the mist cleared Philmore got a clearer picture of the form before him. It was like no creature that Philmore had ever seen before. It had the lush crimson body and wings of bird, the long and thick neck of a snake and the ferocious mouth of a bear. And it had a single eye, just like him.

"It doesn't have a title?" the creature hissed as it extended its neck towards Philmore.

Fixed at the end of the long snake-like neck, the eye was constantly in motion swinging back and forth like a pendulum. It almost made Philmore dizzy to follow it.

"Fling would not normally take such a request from anything less than royalty, so you must at least be a prince in these parts?"

The long-necked being continued to move in circles seemingly examining every last fibre of Philmore's thick coat.

"I'm just a kid..." Philmore started and then thought better. "I'm a Marrit from the planet Plices."

"Hmm," the creature answered in obvious disappointment.



## Chapter 4 Together Towards the Light

“Well, I’m Fling, descendent of Antadar, heir to the throne of Hadutr, of the great Soltars from the magnificent planet Balistatix,” said the creature.

Philmore was stunned. He wasn’t quite sure what it all meant, but it sounded very impressive. He tried his best to make his own name sound as impressive

“Well, I’m Philmore, brother of Stanmore....”

“Well, Hairmore,” Fling continued, not too interested in hearing Philmore’s attempted title. “We received the message beacon that you sent to my home planet and I am the best and bravest. Perhaps you can provide me with more details so that I can begin the process of saving you?”

“It’s PHIL-more,” Philmore started, but Fling had already swung his eye away to begin examining the grounds further.

Philmore swallowed hard. Things were getting more complicated and confusing by the second. He was on a strange planet with no idea of how he got there or how he could get home. He was with Fling, an even stranger creature who didn’t seem very pleasant and couldn’t remember his name. And now he recognized a bigger truth.

This creature, Fling, was just as confused as him.

“I didn’t send you the beacon,” Philmore said to Fling.

These words obviously confused Fling. The large flamingo-like Soltar pivoted on its feet and faced Philmore again. The once very smooth and flowing neck and eye became rigid and stood straight up.

“But Fling found the beacon and was transported here to save you...” Fling said. “If Hairmore is not Xebobian, then...”

After some initial confusion Philmore explained what had happened to him. He told Fling about his home planet of Plices and the Marrits that lived under the surface. He told him about his annoying brother and his Tunnelling exam and the plutonic stone. Then finally he told him about the red beacon that he had discovered and how he had said the special phrase and how the next thing he remembered he was standing in the mist of this dark planet.

“No way,” Fling said and for the first time sounded exactly the age that he was, a kid just like Philmore.

Philmore knew no one would believe him when he told him this story. It sounded ridiculous even to him.

“No, really,” Philmore started. “I swear it’s the truth, I swear it on the Pledge of Marrits that’s exactly what happened!”

“It’s not that Fling does not believe that you speak the truth,” Fling answered. “It’s just that the exact same thing happened to Fling,”

Fling then told the story of how it came about that he was standing right there. Fling was a Soltar and came from planet Balistatix. Balistatix was warm with most of the surface covered in two meters of water. Soltars survived on a diet of toppi fish, which lived in the soft muddy substance below the water. Not too long ago Fling was doing his morning toppi fish hunting when he was almost struck by an object that came hurtling from the sky.

“It nearly took Fling’s beautiful head off!” Fling exclaimed.

Then, just as Philmore had done, Fling inspected the object further, said the secret phrase and was immediately transported to this new dark and misty planet.