

Chapter One.  
Meditation interrupted.

On a distant planet deep in an unknown galaxy, on top of a grassy hill and under the shade of a tree, there sat a creature meditating. The creature's name was Neuron-joy and he was the wisest creature to be found on the planet. Neuron-joy had learned many things in his long life and one of those things was that meditation was important and it should never ever be interrupted under any circumstances!

A sudden roar cut through Neuron-joy's silent reflection. His eyes flicked open. From his high viewpoint over the landscape below, he watched as a fiery ball of rampage shot out of a small cave and disappeared into the thick forest which covered most of the valley below.

Screeches, squeals and squawks rang in the air as the forest creatures scurried for safety or flew frantically out of the forest's canopy. Then silence fell once more as disturbed branches settled back into place. The creature that had caused the havoc, commonly known as the Fixalator, trudged back satisfied to its cave, disappearing into its blackness.

*This has got to stop*, thought Neuron-joy frowning. Day after day the Fixalator would go on rampages, fixing any creature with its hypnotic stare. Any creature fixalated would remain like a living statue for days. Why the Fixalator did it, no - one actually knew. He didn't eat the creatures he fixalated - he was an herbivore!

Neuron-joy went back to his meditation. After an hour he opened his eyes and smiled. He had a brilliant idea. He always enjoyed a new challenge and after thinking about the havoc caused by the Fixalator, he knew this challenge would be worthwhile. *Now, what I need is a strong team to stop the fixalator once and for all*, he pondered. As he sat and thought, the neurons on his head started to hum and throb as they fired up. Orange electrodes zoomed through them as new connections were made. After only five minutes, Neuron-joy knew exactly what he had to do!

Chapter Two.  
Urisco-U

After sending a message via a hillside rodent, Neuron-joy was happy to see his invited guest hopping towards him up the hill. His long-time friend Urisco-U was definitely the best creature for the first part of Neuron-joy's plan. She was the most curious creature on the planet-always asking questions and noticing things that others would have overlooked.

"Why have you asked to see me?" she asked, plonking herself down in front of Neuron-joy. "Don't you normally meditate at this time of day? What is so urgent? How have you been?"

Neuron-joy was used to Urisco-U's bombardment of questions and sat patiently until she ran out of breath. Finally she stopped and studied Neuron-joy's face for answers.

"I have a special mission for you that will really satisfy your curiosity. I want you to do some research on the Fixalator. I need to know what makes him tick so you'll need to look for patterns and connections in his behaviour. Would a week be enough time?" asked Neuron-joy.

"A week? Three days at the most will be enough for such an exciting task. I'll get onto it right away!" Before Neuron-joy could say thanks, Urisco-U was already bounding down the hill towards the Fixalator's cave.

Soon Neuron-joy would have all the information he needed. With a loud contented sigh he closed his eyes and began to meditate.

Three days later...

"Okay, after much investigating I think I've found out as much as I can about the annoying Fixalator," explained Urisco-U, settling herself on a warm patch of grass opposite Neuron-joy.

"Go ahead, I've been looking forward to this," said Neuron-joy, feeling his neurons softly throbbing.

"Well, the main thing is that he can't help himself fixalating and he seems to do more of it on dry, clear days. I observed him fixalating

several times. He uses his weird eyes and if a creature makes eye contact with him- well, that's it! They're immediately rooted to the spot. The dozen he fixalated yesterday are still there."

"Did you discover whether his fixalating has any lasting affects?" asked Neuron-joy.

"Yes, I think it does. I spoke to a couple of creatures who had been fixalated three days ago and they said they still didn't feel quite right. They described it as being in a daze- as if everything around them was in slow motion and not being able to think as clearly as before. I'd assume that if the Fixalator ever managed to fixalate you that your neurons would stop firing quite significantly!" explained Urisco-U.

"That's one thing I will avoid at all costs!" exclaimed an alarmed Neuron-joy.

"I wouldn't want to be caught by him either. I couldn't be without my curiosity! I think he does it to because he wants to be the most powerful creature on the planet," said Urisco-U, a worried look on her face.

"He must be stopped as soon as possible. But how?" said Neuron-joy, his neurons now humming loudly.

"Well, I may have found the answer!" said Urisco-U excitedly, smiling from horn to horn. "On one of the occasions that the Fixalator was out and about it began to rain suddenly. He started to howl in pain - it was most bizarre. After more observation, I noticed that he was trying to cover the strange horns on his head with his paws - not successfully as his arms are far too short! He couldn't get back to the shelter of his cave quick enough! It would appear that water touching the tips of his horns causes him great distress. That's why he ventures out of his cave mostly on clear days."

"Well done my dear friend," said Neuron-joy, his neurons now zapping excitedly. "As usual your inquisitive mind has solved the problem. I think I have an idea of how to stop all this silly fixalating malarkey."

"I'm glad I could be of help," said Urisco-U. "As I said I would hate to have my curiosity numbed. I'm looking forward to seeing what you do next. Let me know if you need my help again."

With that Urisco-U hopped happily down the hill, stopping briefly to study some colourful buzzing insects before she was on her way again.

With a plan starting to map itself out in his head, Neuron-joy settled down to decide what other creatures could help him with the task. After much careful consideration, he had chosen his dream team.

Chapter Three.  
Copotaree.

Later that day, after gathering together the six creatures and telling them his plan, Neuron-joy sent them all off to practise and prepare. Although they had all nodded enthusiastically about fixing the Fixalator for good, none of them looked too sure about their individual tasks. Neuron-joy decided to keep a discreet eye on them.

The first of the group that he decided to check up on was the three-headed Copotaree, one of the fastest creatures on the planet. His task was to lure the Fixalator into a certain area of the forest - without being caught of course!

Neuron-joy was worried that having three heads would make it difficult for the Copotaree to co-operate. One head was known to talk very loudly over the other two. One was extremely bossy and a right know-it-all while the third head was very shy and quiet.

*This should be interesting* thought Neuron-joy, concealing himself behind a rock. To begin the loud head started telling the other two his idea without even asking whether they had any ideas. The bossy head then cut in, saying that loud head's idea was totally stupid and that his idea was the best. While they argued, the shy head looked at them both blankly, saying absolutely nothing.

"Right then," shouted the bossy head, "Let's practise!"

All of a sudden, Copotaree's three pairs of hairy legs started moving furiously all at once. One pair was trying to run forwards, another pair was trying to go left while the last pair was trying to go right! Neuron-joy had to clasp both hands over his mouth to smother his laughter. Copotaree was getting nowhere fast - in fact all he was doing was moving his legs vigorously, creating a cloud of dust and just running on the spot. After an exhausting five minutes he collapsed to the floor, all three heads panting heavily. He had got nowhere at all!

"Okay, okay," said Neuron-joy calmly, coming out of his hiding place. "This won't do at all. You've got to listen to each other's ideas, be tolerant and agree. You'll never get anywhere like this. I'm off now but when I come back I expect to see co-operation."

Totally worn out, all three heads sighed and agreed to co-operate. The loud and bossy heads decided to let shy head share her ideas first. After some gentle prompting she explained her idea to them. Loud head didn't quite understand it at first but bossy head kindly explained it again to him. It was a really good idea. They compared it to the previous ideas, discussing quietly, even loud head. Eventually they all agreed that shy head's idea was the best: running into part of the forest where they would be camouflaged was a better idea than running into the thickest part of the forest where they might find it difficult to run quickly through the trees. If they ran to the area where the purple trees grew, they would just be able to stand still and the Fixalator wouldn't see them.

Later, Neuron-joy was pleased to see Coporatee running quickly into the forest. The first part of the plan was coming on nicely. *Now let's see how the second part's coming along*, thought Neuron-joy, going into the forest.

## Chapter Four.

### Go-Heava.

Neuron-joy heard the next creature before he saw him.

"I can't do it. My legs weren't made for climbing - they're much too short!" grumbled a low voice from the undergrowth. "Even if I manage to get a metre up I'll probably fall. It's going all wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong!"

Neuron-joy found Go-Heava sitting despondently at the bottom of a large jewel-berry tree whose lowest branches were at least ten metres from the forest floor.

"I can't do it," moaned Go-Heava, when he saw Neuron-joy.

"You can't do it ... yet," replied Neuron-joy softly. "I chose you for this task because I know you can do it. Plus I thought you'd be excited about climbing a tree- trying something different. Also I know how much you love sweet things and this tree has the juiciest, sweetest fruit on the planet. Now have a go!" With that Neuron-joy settled himself against another tree and started to pretend to doze.

Go-Heava's eyes lit up. Just the words 'juiciest' and 'sweetest' had perked him up. He'd heard of the elusive jewel berries. He needed to climb this tree. Just because he had short legs didn't mean he couldn't climb. He wouldn't know unless he tried.

With a new determined look on his face, Go-Heava wrapped his four stumpy legs around the tree's wide trunk, digging all his claws into the rough bark as deeply as he could. With a deep grunt, he pulled himself up with his front legs, first releasing then digging his claws in again. His back legs followed. Looking down he saw that he was half a metre up the tree. Grinning, he pulled himself up again. Then again. Suddenly, a chunk of bark

broke up under a claw. Go-Heava tumbled to the floor, landing heavily on his back.

"Right, that's it," he declared, shaking away dead leaves. "This tree will not beat me. I was getting somewhere then. I just forgot to put my claws in deeply enough. I won't make that mistake again!"

Through half opened eyes, Neuron-joy was pleased to see Go-Heava have another go. This time he climbed steadily to the lowest branches. Neuron-joy could see it was hard work for him and it took a lot of effort but he did it in the end. Soon Go-Heava disappeared from view as he pushed through the succulent leaves of the tree and into its upper canopy.

"Wow! You should see it up here!" Go-Heava shouted. "You can see for miles and miles. I never knew there were so many different trees and things to see. Just look at those enormous butterflies and those strange birds. I'm going to climb every tree in this forest- I can't wait! It's absolutely fantastic. My goodness- there's the jewel berries... They're massive... Mmmmm ... Heaven in my mouth!"

Neuron-joy smiled knowingly. "Make sure you come down soon," he shouted up to the tree, "Don't forget the plan."

"Don't worry," replied Go-Heava, his mouth full of berries. "I'll be down soon just after I've eaten a few berries."

*More like a million, thought Neuron-joy. Now, I wonder where that little creature is. I hope he was concentrating at the meeting- our plan can't work without him. Ah, here he is now - better late than never.*

## Chapter Five.

### The Cotternance

A small bird-like creature appeared from the undergrowth, its beady eyes flickering as its head cocked this way and that way.

"Sorry I'm late. I got distracted by a strange noise, then I saw some weird footprints, then I ..."

"My, my, my. You do get distracted don't you," interrupted Neuron-joy, shaking his head. "You must keep your mind on one thing at a time.

"I know, I know," replied the Cotternance, wandering off to look under a rock. "I want to stop the Fixalator as much as anyone else."

"Okay, come over here and concentrate," said Neuron-joy getting exasperated. "Show me what you can do."

With that the Cotternance lowered his head and used his head suckers to suck up the water held in the cup-like leaves of a nearby plant. Focusing, his eyes unblinking, he found his target: a tiny black beetle. He held his breath and got ready to fire but at the last second he was distracted by a honey bee buzzing behind him. His head turned slightly and a cold jet of water squirted from his beak, landing ineffectively on Neuron-joy's foot.

"Thanks a lot," muttered Neuron-joy, shaking the water from his foot. "You've got to remember to focus! Get lost in the task and focus properly."

"I'm really sorry Neuron-joy. Right, this time nothing will distract me - absolutely nothing!" The Cotternance loaded up its suckers with water again.

This time his eyes were set like stone on his target. As he aimed his squirter beak, a large spider plonked down onto the end of his beak. Amazingly the Cotternance totally ignored it, even when it started crawling towards his eyes. A hard jet of water hit the beetle this time, sending it spinning off its leaf.

"Fantastic shot and concentration," exclaimed Neuron-joy, patting the Cotternance on the back. "Keep practising and don't forget to practise getting into position with Go-Heava. In fact I think I can hear him coming down now."

Go-Heava landed with a thump next to them, his smiling face covered in a strange luminous purple.

"Right, come on. Jump up onto my head. I'll have you up the tree in no time," said Go-Heava confidently to the Cotternance. The Cotternance hopped happily onto Go-Heava's head.

Neuron-joy watched them both disappear into the canopy of the forest. He couldn't believe that everything was going so smoothly. It was amazing what could be done if the creatures put their minds to it. *Now, I wonder how the next creature is getting on,* he pondered, going further into the forest.

## Chapter Six.

### Divet-Pongu

He soon found Divet-Pongu. She was digging an enormous hole using the spade-like end of her tail. Great droplets of sweat poured over her face and she was smothered in sticky clumps of mud.

"You look like you've been working really hard," commented Neuron-joy, inspecting the hole admiringly.

"Well, it was extremely hard to begin. I nearly gave up! The ground was too hard and stony where I first started digging. It made my tail jar painfully," explained Divet-Pongu, pulling herself out of the hole by climbing up a thick vine that she'd draped over the edge.

"What kept you going?" asked Neuron-joy. "You've managed to dig at least four or so metres down and all the sides are practically vertical."

"I wasn't going to be beaten by a hole so I tried some different strategies," explained Divet-Pongu, wiping a clump of mud from under one of her eyes. "First I moved to a different area to dig - I realised that a bit further over that the ground wasn't quite as dry and stony. I also gave the edges of my tail blade a good sharpen on that large rock over there: first time I'd done that but it came up a treat. As I was digging, I found that I needed to hold my tail at a certain angle. In no time at all my tail was slicing through the ground like a knife through butter. Taking time to work out different strategies was the break-through I needed. Without them I'd have given up ages ago."

"Well done- you've dug the perfect hole. It's just the right size for the Fixalator. He'll never escape from there," praised Neuron-joy.

"Thanks- I'm so glad I didn't give up," said Divet-Pongu. "Now for a long soak in the forest river." Divet- Pongu headed off, proud of her achievement.

Neuron-joy walked around the hole excitedly. Soon his plan would come to fruition. There were only two more creatures to check up on.

## Chapter Seven.

### Rove-Imp

Neuron-joy didn't have to wait long. A slug-like creature crawled into the clearing pulling a heavy net behind it which was made out of strong vines.

"How did you get on with the net-making?" asked Neuron-joy. He'd been worried about this particular task as making a net that wouldn't break was a tricky task.

Rove-Imp explained that he had needed to improve the net a few times before he was happy with it. First, the whole net had been too small so he had to improve the dimensions. Then he realised that the holes were too big in places and he was worried that the Fixalator would be able to get his arms through them. Then he thought he needed to double secure all the knots. Eventually he had made all his improvements. Obviously it wasn't as perfect as a spider's web but he had done the best he could and he was confident that his net would now hold the Fixalator securely.

Neuron-joy thanked him profusely for all his effort and hard work. Then he helped Rove-Imp to carefully spread the net over the hole, securing it in place with some well-positioned rocks and covering it with a thick blanket of foliage. Rove-Imp kindly agreed to stand guard next to the hole to ensure that no creatures fell into the hole accidentally.

*Just one more of the team to see,* thought Neuron-joy. As he made his way back to his hill-top cave, he felt his synapses tingle with excitement. Everything was falling nicely in place. The Fixalator would soon fall nicely in place too - right into a lovely, huge hole!

## Chapter Eight

### Animage

He found Animage waiting outside his cave, drawing in the sand. The whole area of sand outside his cave was covered in strange diagrams.

"Someone's been busy being creative. What a marvellous imagination you have," said Neuron-joy, crouching down to study a diagram.

"Yes. As you can see I've had lots of different ideas but I think only one of them is the best solution," replied Animage. She quickly explained her final idea of how to banish the Fixalator forever.

Neuron-joy nodded eagerly in agreement and congratulated Animage on her creativity. Neuron-joy himself would have found it hard to have come up with such an original idea. He told Animage to inform the rest of the team of the last stage of the plan and to advise them to get as much rest as possible. With a contented look on his face, Neuron-joy went into his cave, snuggled down onto his soft bed of moss and was soon in a deep sleep.

## Chapter Nine.

### Fixing the Fixalator.

Neuron-joy stretched, looked out of his cave and noticed it was a bright, cloudless morning. *A perfect day*, he thought. He hoped the rest of the team were up bright and early, ready to get into their positions. After a quick breakfast, Neuron-joy went to the forest and was pleased to see that all the other creatures were ready and raring to go - their confidence soaring high after the previous day's practice and preparation.

The Copotaree was concealing himself behind a tree, ready to run out and get the Fixalator's attention. Go-Heava was climbing a tree, carrying the Cotternance who had already filled up his suckers to bursting point. Divet-Pongu and Rove-Imp were ensuring that the hole was still covered in enough foliage and the net still secure.

Soon everyone was ready. A hush fell over the forest in expectation. Neuron-joy hid behind a tree and signalled to Copotaree. Then Copotaree coolly wandered daringly close to the Fixalator's cave, making as much noise with his six feet as possible.

As quick as a flash, the Fixalator thundered out of his cave like a whirlwind. Copotaree turned and sprinted towards the forest, knowing exactly where to head for. His legs were so fast they didn't seem to touch the ground while his three heads moved to-and-fro in complete unison as his legs stretched back and forth in a perfect unbroken rhythm. It was a joy to behold. The Fixalator had no chance of catching him. He pounded along on his short, clumsy legs following in the wake of a dusty sand cloud made by Copotaree. Copotaree disappeared into the forest and the Fixalator followed, lured like a cat to the cream.

Amongst the trees, the Fixalator came to a standstill. He grunted angrily. Copotaree was nowhere to be seen. Leaves rustled above him. Suddenly, a jet of water hit the middle horn on the Fixalator's head. He howled in pain and began to run further into the forest. A few seconds later, another jet hit him, sending him running in another direction. High up in the trees, the Cotternance hopped happily from branch to branch, aiming his squirter in different directions to 'guide' the Fixalator to the hole. Concentrating hard, he didn't miss once. Finally the Fixalator fled into the clearing where Divet-Pongu and Rove-Imp were ready, hiding behind a tree.

The Fixalator stopped and sniffed the air, his eyes blazing menacingly. Copotaree lined up one more shot- he only had one squirt of water left. He aimed... and fired. Splat! The hardest jet of water hit its target. With a dreadful howl of despair, the Fixalator leapt forward to escape and fell like a rock into the deep hole. Foliage snapped beneath him and the net wrapped around him tightly. Divet-Pongu, Rove-Imp and Neuron-joy came quickly out of their hiding places and pulled the loose ends of vines so that the mouth of the net tightened completely. Knotting the ends together, they secured them around a tree. Not a sound came from the hole. The Fixalator had knocked himself out as he had fallen. With quick thinking, Neuron-joy jumped into the hole and, using some of the broken foliage, wrapped a blindfold of leaves all around the Fixalator's head. His eyes could do no damage now.

"Now for the final stage of our plan," exclaimed Neuron-joy, clambering out of the hole. All of the team were in the clearing now. Each of them grabbed the end of the net using hands or mouths and gradually, after much puffing and huffing, they managed to pull the Fixalator out of the hole. Eventually, after twenty minutes or so, they had dragged him out of the forest and into the middle of a circle of mirror stones, which had been strategically placed by Animage. The team had to shield their eyes as rays of light reflected from stone to stone. No matter which way they turned they couldn't avoid seeing their own faces.

They loosened the net and retreated to a safe distance outside the stones... and waited. After a while, the Fixalator began to stir. His huge hairy form shook off the blindfold, foliage and the net as he stood upright, looking utterly bewildered around him. His kaleidoscope eyes stared this way and that as he tried to escape his own reflection. No matter what way he turned, he couldn't escape his own deadly stare. Gradually, his movements became slower and he slumped to the floor, numbed by his own stare.

The team cheered and hugged each other. Their plan had worked like a dream. Every one of them had played an important part and now they wouldn't have to worry about the Fixalator ever again.

Over the next few days, they constructed a high wooden fence around the ring of stones as an extra precaution. During the night, when the stones didn't reflect so well, the Fixalator's numbness wore off slightly. Neuron-joy suspected that eventually the Fixalator would learn to close its eyes and the numbness would wear away completely so penning him in was a good idea. The Fixalator would have to be kept like a caged animal, fed and watered by the other creatures who would have to shield their eyes to prevent being fixalated.

A week later, Neuron-joy was sitting on his hill in the shade meditating. He was no longer interrupted by the Fixalator. It was bliss! Suddenly a swarm of insects, a species that Neuron-joy had never seen before, buzzed around his tree and settled on a branch. His eyes flicked open. *Something new to be fixed*, he thought, smiling. His neurons started to hum gently ...

The team: 8 learning muscles.

- Neuron-joy: enjoy learning.
- Urisco-U : be curious.
- Copotaree: be co-operative
- Go-Heava: have a go.
- The Cotternance: concentrate.
- Divet-Pongu : don't give up.
- Rove-Imp: keep improving.
- Animage: use your imagination.

