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# Gooney Ducks and Naked Physicists

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Part XLII  
Math: The Common Denominator!

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Abstract: An allegory of modern science.

*Part XLII*

*People dancing all in the street See the rhythm all in their feet  
Life is good, wild and sweet...Let the music play on (Play on, play on)...*

SCENE I. Seattle. First day of school, teachers lounge.

[Enter FRASIER and NILES, lattes in hand.]

Niles: Hey Fras, haven't seen you in a coon's age! Looking good! Nice tan...like the shades. Must've been some vacation!

Frasier: *Buongiorno*, Niles! Not to make you jealous, but...Venice, Rome, Florence, and lying on the beach on my belly in the sand sipping champagne at Lucca...think I graduated to a higher class of decadence. I've been cuttin' loose and flyin' high! Ahh... "*la dolce far niente*"—the sweetness of nuthin' to do, and all day to do it! *Fantastico!* Don't know if I can make the transition back to reality. My body and mind are in rebellion! What about you?

Niles: Me? I flew to Spain for a scientific conference. Late nights and long flights... Sounds dull, I know, but you won't believe what happened! I met this girl!

Frasier: Tell me. Spill the beans, *amico!*

Niles: Gosh, where to start...*Well, if you ever see the moon over Parador, if you ever see it floating over the Gulf of Sorrows, or smell the gardenias in the air, see the sunlight...on the red tiles of the rooftops, and happen to be with a warm woman, you'll never forget it. Never.*

Yep, think I'm in love! Got a picture on my phone. Name's Lauren...

Frasier: *Che bella!* What a dish! Now you're makin' me jealous. I should've gone to Spain!

Niles: Yeah, I went to the store to buy some bread and came out with a girlfriend instead! Still can't believe it. Must be true what they say in Spain: *Si no hay pan, no hay comida.* She's even got a sister who lives right here in Seattle. Works for some P.I., a real character. But that isn't all. There was this speaker at the conference with the wildest idea. I was talking to a couple of professors about it over a beer afterwards...

Frasier: Whoa! *Amore a prima vista?* But lemme see if I got this straight...So far, boy meets girl, and three professors and a señorita walk into a bar? The first professor says...

Niles: Ha ha, very funny. Do you want to hear the rest of my story or not?

Frasier: Sure, I got a few minutes of vacation left...why not? Shoot!

Niles: Anyway, like I was saying about the conference, remember Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Power of Myth*?

Frazier: Of course, the ol' call to adventure and "hero's journey": drawing parallels between myths, fairy tales, and legends throughout all civilizations?

Niles: That's right, comparative mythology. But where Campbell saw myth as the common connection throughout history, this guy saw math!

Frasier: Ooh! Math as the common denominator!

Niles: Yeah, Fras. He called his concept "comparative mathology," or "the monomath." And instead of myth as the basis of our existence and how we interpret our reality, he talked about math as the true basis of our being—the very origin of language and thought. He even shamelessly borrowed a quote from Campbell, replacing the word "myth" with "math"!

It went something like this:

*...In all times and under every circumstance, the "maths" of man have flourished; and they have been the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind...Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of "math."*

Frazier: Wow! "The Math with a Million Faces"? "Beneath Every Myth Lies the Math"? What a fun idea! I can just hear my spurs jingle! In a spotless coat of armor riding a handsome steed...the real hero of every story would be Sir Mathalot! Sure, to be able to count your "*white horses and ladies by the score*," your Seven Kingdoms and seven dwarfs, your dungeons, dragons, magic beans and giant beanstalks, to sit at the round table and recount tales of knights vanquished and number of damsels in distress rescued from the clutches of evil gnomes, sorcerers, and enchanted castles—forsooth! To valiantly walk through any myth (or should I say, math)—whatever myth (or math) you're in—you just gotta have the math (or is that a myth? I'm confused)!

Niles: Very "punny," Fras. For a minute there I almost forgot you're the lit professor. But you got the idea. So, as I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted...

Frasier: Ooh, there's the bell! Duty calls! Have to put the rest of your story on hold, Niles. But let's meet up later at the Garage. I got a hankerin' to shoot some pool and chow down on a little pub grub. By the way, bring your math (I mean your cash). I'm feeling lucky...*Ciao!*