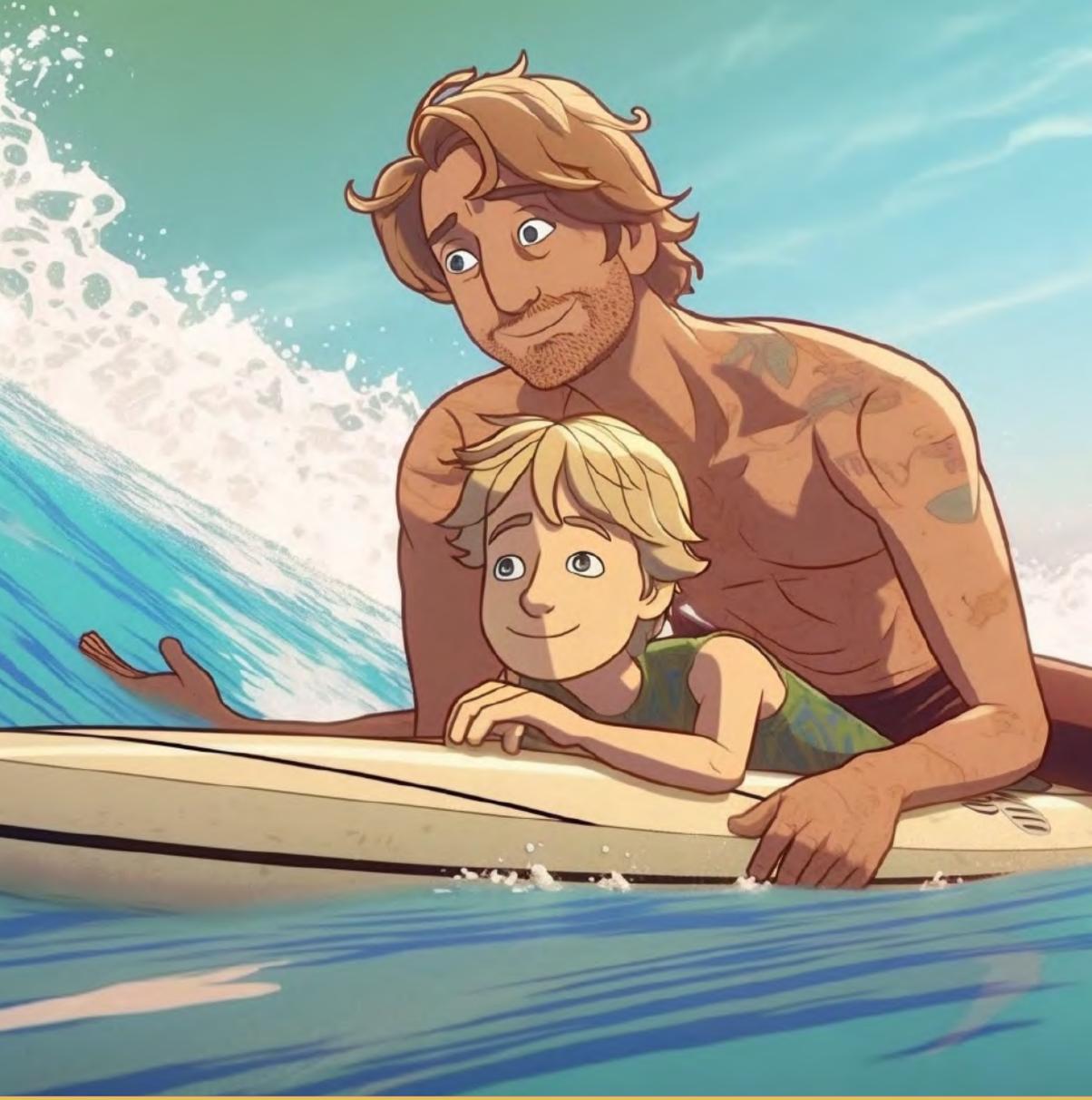


Voodoo Voodoo

And Two More Waves!





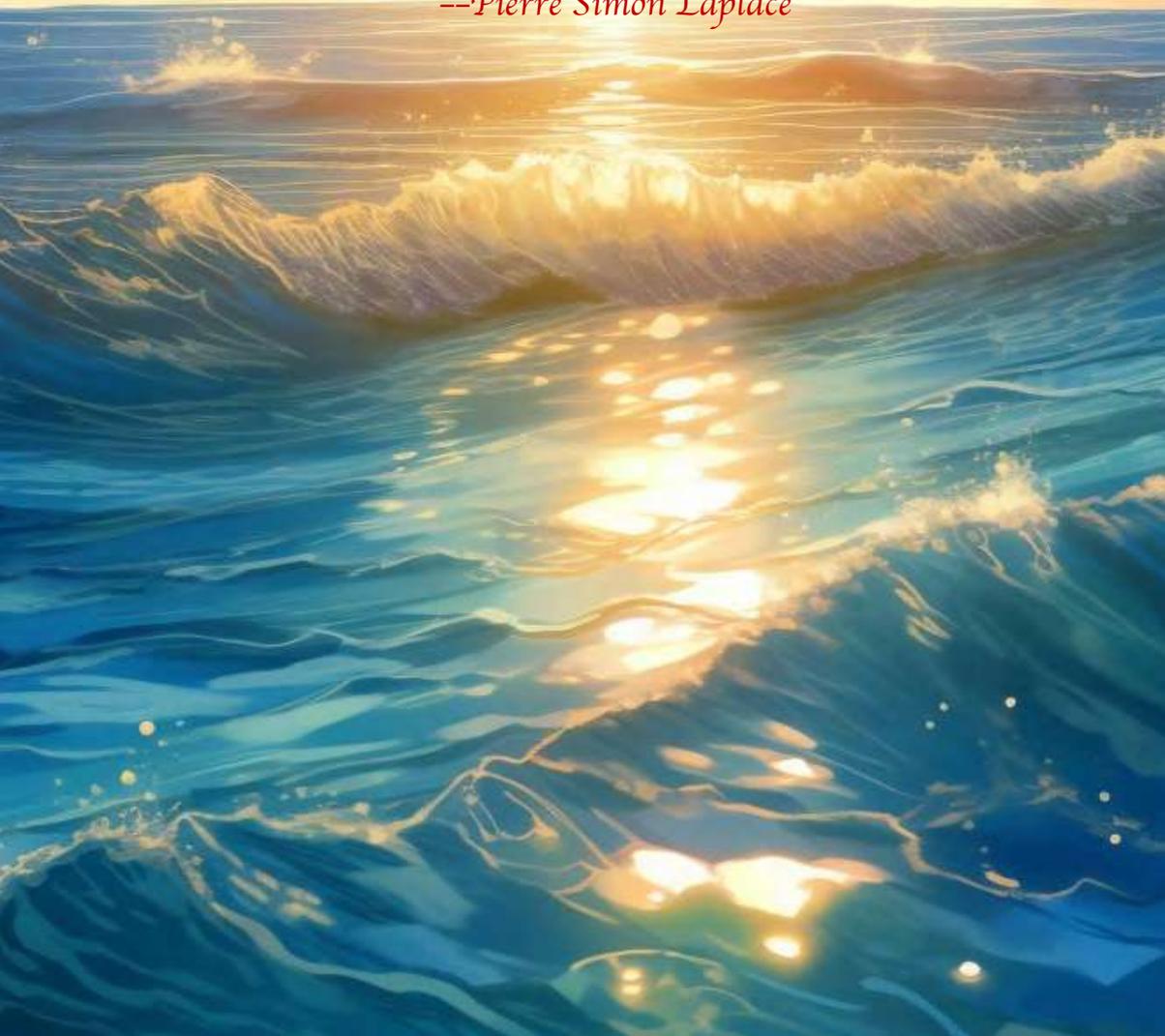
“All knowledge degenerates into probability.”

--David Hume

“VOODOO VODOO” AND TWO MORE WAVES

The most important questions of life are indeed, for the most part, really only problems of probability.

--Pierre Simon Laplace



VOODOO VOODOO

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Second Edition

“Probability is not a mere computation of odds on the dice or more complicated variants; it is the acceptance of the lack of certainty in our knowledge and the development of methods for dealing with our ignorance.”

Nassim Nicholas Taleb



It may have been Drainpipe at Zuma Beach or even T's at Santa Monica, but I have a distinct memory that my surf companions and I first discovered the magical mantra at Corral beach Malibu.





The ocean was nearly flat and I was out in the water with my childhood friends, Pat Donahue, Joe Dichiro and Rob Gilmore. I was 13 or 14 years old.





We were all attempting to bodysurf but no waves were coming in, when all of a sudden someone in our group came up with a most infectious chant, apparently improvised right on the spot.





Voodoo, Voodoo
and two more waves;
you know we need them
and we need them today!





We started chanting in unison, splashing the water, and laughing out loud. Then to our utter amazement, as if King Neptune had turned on his hearing aid, a set of waves approached from the horizon.





Pat caught the first wave and the rest of us caught the second one which was slightly bigger. And then, almost as if responding to some hidden cue, the ocean went flat again.





I think it was right then and there that the Voodoo Voodoo chant became part of our surf lore and one which we used whenever we needed waves.





Of course, we never literally believed that the chant worked, but over the years we did find a number of remarkable synchronicities whenever it was invoked.





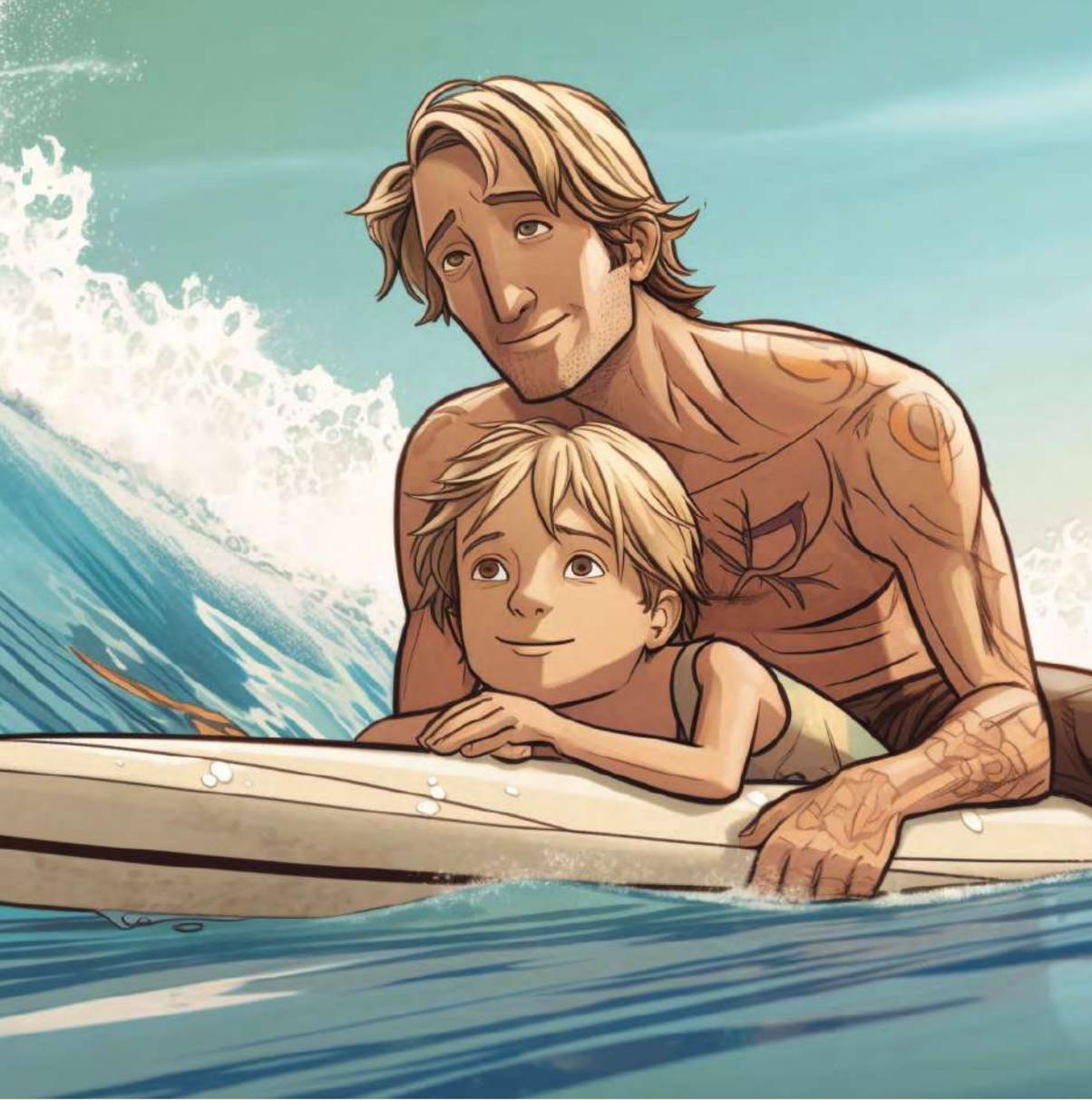
I bring all of this up now because this last summer I was in Waikiki with my family for a much-needed vacation.





The surf had been amazingly good for most of our trip. However, near the end of our sojourn, the South Shore had gone flat.





Due to the sea's calmness I decided to take my youngest son, Kelly, out for a paddle. He was only five so the fact that there were essentially no waves worked to our advantage.





I just thought we would have some fun
looking at the sea turtles and the
surrounding reef.





dddssddd

Kelly and I paddled out pretty far out to a spot called "Pops" (slang for "Populars"), since I thought we might find a tiny little wave to ride. But alas no such luck.





After looking around at the surrounding beauty (with a breathtaking view of Diamond Head and the wall to wall high rise hotels), Kelly asked me why we couldn't surf a wave together.





I explained that there was no incoming swell so most of the waves that were coming through were not breaking strong enough to ride. Kelly was a bit sad since he really wanted to surf with me.





It was right then that I told him of how when I was quite young my friends and I came up with a chant that when rightly repeated could generate waves.





dddssddd

Naturally, I exaggerated a bit-- detailing the mythological lore with tidbits about how King Neptune and his crew make waves by blowing huge bubbles from under the sea whenever they have a birthday.





Kelly was wonderstruck and, to my chagrin,
bought the story hook, line, and sinker.
Then Kelly exclaimed, "What is the chant?"





I hesitated for dramatic effect wanting Kelly to think of how truly magical the mantra was and how only very few surfers in the world know of its power.





I finally gave in and explained that a special group of jelly fish sing the mantra in harmony and we must do the same.



"Voodoo Voodoo, two
more waves; you know we
need them and we need
them today!"

Kelly immediately understood and in unison
we sang, "Voodoo, Voodoo, two more waves;
you know we need them and we need them
Today!"





Well, to my complete astonishment, right when we finished singing the chant, a series of unexpected waves came, triple anything that had come in for the past few hours.





Kelly and I didn't even have to paddle but two yards and we were gliding down the pristine face of a three-footer.





As we paddled back, the ocean went to sleep again and was as smooth as the sheets on our beds at the Royal Hawaiian. But Kelly was too stoked to give up now. He turned to me and yelled, "Let's do that chant again."





We chanted again, but this time a bit louder since I explained that King Neptune lives deep down in the ocean and sometimes is hard of hearing.





I must admit that I was completely shocked when a set even bigger than the last one loomed on the horizon. We slid right this time all the way to the sand.





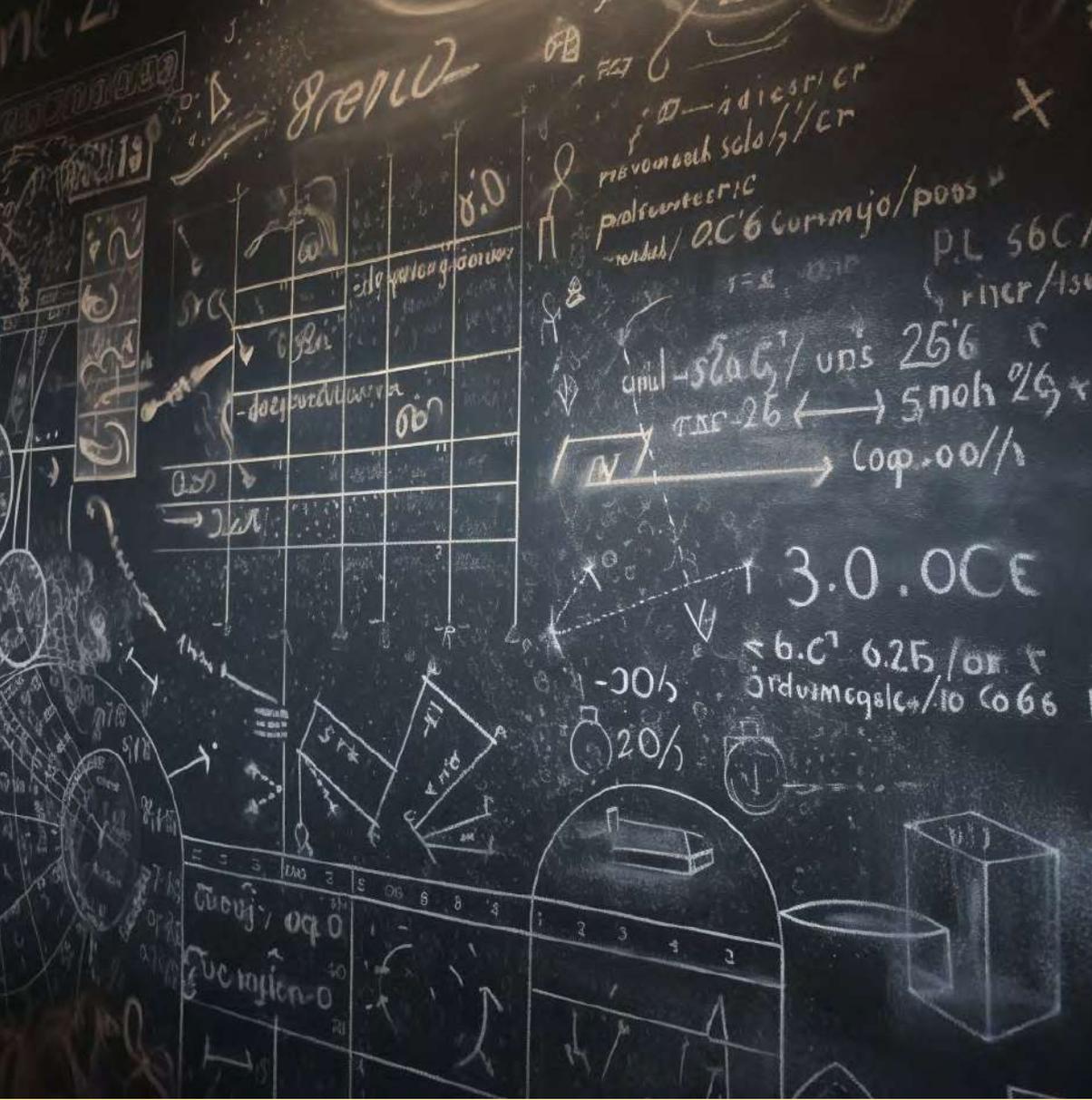
Later that night as we were all having pizza at Il Lupino, Kelly wanted to know why the chant worked as it did. He sensed that there was some rationale behind the apparent magic.





I told him and my other son Shaun about a famous mathematician from Cambridge University named J.E. Littlewood who studied the theory of large numbers.





By his study of large numbers he came upon a little known and little understood secret about the probabilities of a miracle occurring once every month.





Later I wanted to explain my own take on this subject, which I called **Desultory Decussation**, but I knew it was a little too complicated for Kelly.





So instead I said something slightly simpler, but nevertheless true: "Every once in a while, things happen in nature just by chance."





However, events appear so wondrous and so surprisingly that we think that it must be due to some supernatural intervention. But on closer inspection, it turns out to be due to just the odds of how things work.





Just as when we play the card game Crazy 8's or War, sometimes an unusual sequence occurs, such that they look to be part and parcel of some guiding intelligence.





But if we play enough card games we soon realize that it is just the nature of the game that has a set of ascending numbers or values.





Likewise, the ocean is, in this analogy, similar to a vast card game where all sorts of hands can be dealt.





Therefore, on occasion, the chanting surfer can be just plain lucky when his wishful mantra correlates with his or her object of desire—a set of waves.





What we tend to forget in this game of intended wishes is how many times it doesn't work. We only remember our "hits" and neglect how many misses there have been.





Most of what I said sailed over Kelly's head, and he very amusingly replied, "So, Littlewood and not Neptune is why we chant Voodoo Voodoo?"





Therefore, I replied, "Not exactly, but he was the guy who is responsible for our understanding of how unusual things can naturally occur."





Just as getting a **Royal Flush** is very rare when playing poker, but it becomes distinctly possible, nay probable, if you play enough hands."





It was right at this juncture that I realized that **Littlewood's Law** concerning large numbers could actually be the basis of a game, not played on a board but in life.





If the statistics are true then the more aware we become of desultory decussion (where two apparently random events intersect to form an X), the more often we should experience "synchronous" events.





I think the real reason the magical mantra
"Voodoo Voodoo" worked on occasion is
because it forced our little band of surfers
to open up to the ocean's innumerable
possibilities.





Indeed, maybe that is the secret behind all such magical rituals. By invoking them we consciously awaken to nature's underlying and never ceasing game of roulette.





Or, as Kelly (wise beyond his years) explained, "It isn't because King Neptune cannot hear us or is asleep, Papa. It is because **Voodoo Voodoo** wakes us up."

