



*NUM BY WILL FULLER*

The meaning of life was clear at last. It was going to make New-UM.

But now UM was going to have to wait for all the scattered UM-like life-fragments to fit themselves together in the right pattern to be able to make NUM. But first, unless It wanted the universe to end up with *two* UMs – which would create all *kinds* of complications – UM was also going to have to Renounce Its Own UM-ness. Start taking life a bit more seriously; get on down there and become just another part of life.

Except.

It was a sunny day about twenty years later, sitting in the café in the park, that UM remembered the *second* meaning of life: that life wasn't just going to *make* New-UM, it was going to evolve into It. The whole thing was going to take years – millennia; but the funny thing was, UM found it didn't really mind waiting.

Because that, of course, was the real reason why It had invented the universe. So that one day It could sit here with Its café-latte, watching all the little UM-lets playing on the swings. Because when life *did* eventually succeed in evolving into New-UM, the first thing NUM would do would be to use that old space-time-curvature-wormhole wheeze to go back to the Beginning, and start again.

Because really, sometimes life wasn't so bad, after all.