



HE THINKS IN COLOURS, SHE THINKS IN NUMBERS

By Jonathan Mantle

A SMITH SCRIPT

This script is protected by copyright laws.
No performance of this script – IN ANY MEDIA – may be undertaken without payment of the
appropriate fee and obtaining a licence.

For further information, please contact SMITH SCRIPTS at info@smithscripts.co.uk

HE THINKS IN COLOURS, SHE THINKS IN NUMBERS

By Jonathan Mantle

c Jonathan Mantle 2020

Author's Note

HE THINKS IN COLOURS, SHE THINKS IN NUMBERS

explores the phenomenon of synaesthesia and was triggered by participation in a healthy volunteer research programme into Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease.

No resemblance is intended to any person living or dead, except possibly myself.

Jonathan Mantle London 2020

Characters

Cooper: Mid-50s, control subject.

Sappho: Late-20s, researcher.

The action takes place over a few weeks.

Settings are minimal.

Synaesthesia

'A neurological phenomenon in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway.'

'Modern scientists have known about synaesthesia since 1880, when Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, published a paper in Nature on the phenomenon. But most have brushed it aside as fakery, an artefact of drug use (LSD and mescaline can produce similar effects) or a mere curiosity.'

'About four years ago, however, we and others began to uncover brain processes that could account for synaesthesia. Along the way, we also found new clues to some of the most mysterious aspects of the human mind, such as the emergence of abstract thought, metaphor and perhaps even language.'

Vilayanur S. Ramachandram and Edwin M. Hubbard,
Scientific American, 2003

Googol: *A number that is expressed as 10 followed by 100 zeros, supposedly larger than the number of elementary particles in the universe.*

1 *A consulting room. They are seating themselves across a table. She has a laptop. There is a packet of biscuits on the table.*

Sappho I'm sorry these rooms are rather small.

Cooper Sorry I had to reschedule.

Sappho Bother. *She is having trouble setting up her laptop and organising cards, a book etc.*

Cooper I was in LA.

Sappho That's better.

Cooper So here I am. Your lab rat.

Sappho Nearly ready.

Cooper Yellow.

Sappho Wait a minute.

Cooper That's not a number.

Sappho I'm not – oh all right.

Cooper Yellow.

Sappho You said that.

Cooper Seven.

Sappho Orange.

Cooper Eight.

Sappho Day of the week?

Cooper Tuesday morning and afternoon. Is it the sun?

Sappho The sun. No. That's billions. What are you thinking?

Cooper I thought it was bigger than that. Why should a billion always be even by the way? What about one billion? Surely that's odd and even? What about the big odd guys?

Sappho I do the numbers, you do the colours.

Cooper Mauve.

Sappho Googol.

Cooper Remind me.

Sappho Think of ten followed by a hundred zeros.

Cooper And then?

Sappho Then some more.

Cooper Brown.

Sappho Not nice.

Cooper Watery brown...

Sappho Okay, you've made your point. Two.

Cooper White.

Sappho Three.

Cooper Brown.

Sappho Four.

Cooper Red.

Sappho Red?

Cooper Blood in stool.

Sappho I said I was ready.

Cooper Grey blue.

Sappho 9 and a half.

Cooper Googol.

Sappho Blue.

Cooper Nine.

Sappho Interesting. Blue.

Cooper Nine.

Sappho Not ten?

Cooper Nine.

Sappho Very interesting. Going back to blue, nine.

Cooper Brown and white.

Sappho Brown and white?

Cooper Seven.

Sappho No, give me a moment.

Cooper Brown and white, seven, ten.

Sappho Ah! *They reach for the biscuits at the same time.*

Cooper After you.

She opens the packet and devours one. He follows suit.

Cooper Sorry, I was hungry. Don't you people factor that in? You know when you look at a biscuit. It's brown, right? When I look at a biscuit brown's only the beginning. I get red, I get green. Then it goes away.

Sappho Number? The biscuit?

Cooper No number. Colours yes.

Sappho Numbers?

Cooper You just said that.

Sappho I said number. Don't think. Breathe slowly.

Cooper Lots of numbers – any number of numbers - but none of them whole. If that makes any sense.

Sappho You mean fractions?

Cooper No. Not fractions.

Sappho How about decimals?

Cooper No.

Sappho Can you?/

Cooper A wall. /

Sappho Yes?

Cooper A wall of numbers next to each other, leaking into each other.

Sappho Please pay attention this is extremely important.

Cooper A wall...

Sappho Regarding the wall...

Cooper Yes.

Sappho Is it...

Cooper Yes. A wall of numbers.

Sappho Go on.

Cooper Sometimes they're vertical and sometimes they're horizontal.

Sappho Yes.

Cooper Sometimes they're both. Leaking into each other. So they're one number and lots of numbers all at the same time. Does that make sense?

Sappho Yes! Yes! Oh God, a cluster. *Types*. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Cooper Thank you for the biscuit.

Sappho You don't know what this means.

Cooper No.

Sappho I could go to Harvard.

Cooper Is that what this is about?

Sappho Not exactly.

Cooper Does it have a number?

Sappho What?

Cooper Harvard.

Sappho *writes*. Does Harvard have a number?

Cooper What day of the week is Harvard?