

A Very Strange New Years Eve

It was one of those strange years in the 70's; I forget exactly which. I was living in Minneapolis and often spent time wandering the lakes near my home even in the cold cold winter. It was December 31 and 7PM and I again had no plans for the new year; no party or celebration. Just stay home with my wife and young children.

I took my usual after dinner walk with my dog Roger. This time I became fascinated with the cloud of my breath in front of me. I would breathe out forcefully and then walk through the fog. It seemed to help to utter a sound like "Harum" because it made the cloud a little denser. Just for fun I made my sounds into a little meaningless ditty: "Harum dum dum and a dum dum harum." I was at the small lake now and walking around it as I often did. The distance between lights was quite large so I often walked in almost complete darkness. But I knew my way and trusted Roger who also knew the way very well.

Roger got a little too far in front of me, so I called to him right after uttering one of my ditties. "Harum dum dum and a dum dum harum, "Hey Roger." And unbelievably I heard a voice through the fog say "Yes, what?" About then Roger came back at my side healing. I stopped, and the fog of my breath disappeared. I looked around but saw nothing. I started walking again and said the same thing as before. The dense fog of my voice appeared and I again heard a high-pitched voice say "Yes, what do you want?" I stopped again and looked around but saw nothing and became a little afraid. "Down here." said the voice so I looked down but saw nothing. "You idiot!" said the whiney little voice, "Don't you know we are in a hurry? That we must close up and restart in just 4 and half hours? What is the matter with you?" I did my "Harum" thing again and followed it with "I still can't see you."

Roger whimpered a little so I looked down at him and nearly fainted because straddled on Roger's head was little man like an elf glaring up at me while hanging onto Roger's fur. "C'mon!" the little man said. "Let's go." He reached out with a little stick or maybe it was a long pin and touched my knee. I could barely feel it, but a very comfortable warmth enveloped me and I felt as light as a feather with no pressure on my feet. The fog of my voice had grown huge and enveloped Roger and me so I couldn't see anything clearly. "Don't look down!" the little man yelled

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and so of course I glanced down and nearly threw up I was so scared. We were soaring hundreds of feet over the lake. "I told you not to look down." he said, and we picked up speed.

Thus began the true adventure of how I saved New Years with the help of a tiny man and my dog, Roger. My mind whirled faster than the wind and lost any sense of time and place. I heard a strange sound through the turbulence of the wind. It sounded a little like a drum but more like someone trying to sound like a drum. Sort of a "dum dum da dum dum." "What?" I said as I looked down and saw that there were now two little men on Roger's head. "Da dum dum" the one little man said. I heard it clearly now. "Are we going to sing?" I questioned but the other little man threw his hands down in disgust and said, "we are entering Hrumland and you must revert to that language as you did before. Anything else will land you in the room of no return." It occurred to me that those sounds I made when walking must be what he was talking about, so I said, "Hrum de dum dum." They both nodded solemnly and repeated that back to me.

Roger whimpered and pushed his head against my leg. They had a questioning look on their faces as if they expected me to say something, so I coughed and hooted loudly. "Dum dadum day, dat, dat hrum." I must have become a little insane because I was getting into the mood of the whole thing and enjoying myself. They both laughed hilariously and clapped their hands. The sounds of their clap echoed and grew till my ears hurt and the whole world lit up with a super bright flash of light that blinded me.

A thousand choruses of women's sweet voices caressed my ears as I felt myself falling slowly. Blinded, I felt myself drift into a very comfortable stuffed chair. One little man sat on each of the arms of the chair facing me and smiling. The room had luxurious curtains all around instead of walls so that the space seemed to flow and undulate in a very pleasant way. In front of me was a shiny pole about an inch in diameter that reached just to my knees. On top of the pole was what looked like a white billiard ball. I couldn't make out where the pole started or what supported it. Everything in that room was rather blurry and indistinct.

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The little man on my right said, "Harum?" His voice sounded exactly like my voice which startled me. It was like a recording. Still in the mood of the place I smiled and said, "dum dum" and was even more shocked because my voice sounded high and tinny like the men's voices. Frustrated and confused I decided to once and for all find out what in the world was going on. I said, "What in the world is going on? I don't understand any of this nonsense."

The two men stared at each other a little while. The man on my left jumped up on my left arm and shoulder so his mouth was near my ear. He whispered very quietly, "You ARE the Wizard, Dumpty the great, aren't you?" I frowned and said, "the only dumpty I know is humpty dumpty. Obviously, I'm not related." I chuckled a little when I said that.

The men murmured a long streak of "hrums" and "dum dums" and so on. The other man said, "You have deceived and harrumphed us. The nasty year must now be repeated. But you, you deceiving Harumph dumph, must be painted with bright red so all will know of your perfidy."

I was thrown to the floor, or in the air, I forget which, and the two men began painting my face with huge paint brushes. "No" I screamed, "I don't want to be red." I fought the brushes pushing them away and yelled for my loyal dog, Roger. "Help me Roger" I screamed, "Help me, help me." But the brushes kept wiping my face and neck. I pushed back and felt something furry on my hand and suddenly realized it was Roger. Opening my eyes, I saw Roger panting over me then he licked my face. I realized it was Roger licking my face not the two little men painting me.

"Oh Roger, my dear friend. Thank God it's you" I screamed. I was lying on the cold ground with Roger over me frantically trying to wake me up. I glanced around and realized I was back to reality and the little men were gone. I got up and slowly walked home. I said, "Hrumph dumph" a few times and glanced around looking for little men but nothing happened.

My wife never believed a word of my adventure. Nor did any of my friends. But now you know, and I know that one of the years back in the 70's was repeated.

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I led a very boring but productive life after that rising slowly in the real-estate investment firm I worked for. I never mentioned the incident to my wife again fearing the ridicule she would throw at me. Every so often I would try the hrumf dumf language but nothing happened and I just forgot the whole thing and we moved to a new house that was no longer close to a lake to walk around.

Instead we lived near a large, lovely park with a few little ponds where I would walk with Roger as always. Roger, however, was getting old and stiff so our walks became shorter and shorter. During my evening walk when the sun was almost down the new neighborhood was kind of eerie because of the trees. Strange, moving shadows on the ground with whistling and rushing sounds high above. In the fall the leaves blew across my path and sometimes looked like little critters that startled me but no faithful old Roger who obviously could still smell there was no danger in those leaves running all over the place. That was until yesterday which is what I need to tell you all about.

It was nearer darkness than twilight and chilly and windy with a very light snow coming down. Roger was having a particularly hard time walking so we stopped often. Suddenly he stopped and a low growl emanated from him which is very rare. The wind in the brush sounded lower than usual like “uuuummm” and ruuummm” and so on. At the same time a feeling came over me of dread and excitement. My heart started pumping way to fast for no reason at all. I stopped next to Roger and patted his head but he flinched and nipped at me. That was NOT like Roger and now I was alarmed. Through the trees above I saw a very bright, full moon. Just as I thought it wasn't the right season for a big full moon that so-called moon jerked suddenly to the side and upwards a few feet while Roger growled again and pressed himself against me. “It's OK Roger” I mumbled as I looked up again but the so-called moon was now gone and my little fright turned almost into terror. What in the world was happening ere I thought and heard, from the underbrush a tiny squeaky sound like “dumm dumm dumm” and from the other side “runda run run” and it suddenly hit me that I was being visited again. I kneeled by Roger and held him tightly. Would we be taken together to hurumph land? Would they finish the job of painting me red?

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I felt a paw on my hand that was holding Roger and the blood rushed to my face as I realized it could NOT be Roger's paw as his were all on the ground. Roger went limp in my arms and the unknown paw pushed on mine seemingly helping me hold Roger up. "Roger" I said, "Roger, wake up boy" but out of his mouth burred those old, strange sounds of "hrums" and "dum dums." I was dizzy and very close to passing out. I startled awake, though, when I felt pin prick on my hand. "It must have been that damned paw" I thought but then instantly my thought became, "Oh My God," That moon, the thing I thought was that bizarre moon, was rolling down the path towards us. It was multicolored and glowing red, green, blue, white with sparks shooting out of it. "No" I yelled, "No, leave us alone rumda rum rum. Pleeese leave us alone." It sort of leaped into the air and came down on us as I screamed as loud as I could, "Argggg, not again!"

I must have fainted for a short time. We were inside that ball again engulfed in mist so thick I couldn't see. I still felt Roger under my arm, but I couldn't feel that I was sitting on anything. I was floating! And so was Roger. That weird voice I still remembered said, "Well Mr. Phony Wizard, Dumpy, we meet again and just in time." "Oh please little man" I said, "Please don't take us back to Hrumland. We are happy living right here on earth." "Wrong language you inscrutable little toad" said the voice, "Hrumde hrum de dum dum." For some reason I got into the mood again and answered some gibberish like "Bumpa Bumpa Hrumpa Hrumpa."

"Exactly" said the voice. We are here to heal and rejuvenate the most honored Prince Roger. Let him go." Stunned I released my grip on Roger, but he levitated out of my arms until all I could see through the mist was the paw of his hind leg. "Roger" I screamed but, with a pop, the paw disappeared and I was alone, floating in the mist. Self-pity overwhelmed me and I curled in on myself in despair believing I was going to be painted red and banished to Hrumland forever. I could just barely hear the busy little men uttering their strange sounds all around me. "I'm going to miss my wife" I thought just as a loud thunder clap roared through our little sphere and the mist cleared instantly revealing Roger by my side panting happily and suddenly giving me a huge dog kiss on my right ear.

The sphere also slowly disappeared and was completely gone just as I heard one of those men say, "Have a nice rest of the evening." I sat heavily on the ground,

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but Roger was prancing and bouncing around me happily like a young dog and when my eyes cleared, I saw that he really WAS a young dog like he used to be years ago. "What a nice surprise" I thought but then immediately thought, "I am NOT going to try and explain THIS to my wife."