

# *Umph*

*by*

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“In the beginning,” Grandpa said as he got me all settled in on his soft lap, “In the very very very beginning of time; there was only the Umph. There were in fact, many and many and many Umph. They were called this because as they floated around in the nothingness occasionally they would bump into each other and make an Umph noise.”

Grandpa Rabbit stopped to clear his throat and take a sip of the medicinal that Grandmother had poured for him from the brown earthen jug she kept hidden away. I was just a babe and as it was for Rabbits, my parents had fallen victim not more than a fortnight before to something hungry for the taste of Rabbit flesh. When we failed to arrive for our happy visit my grandparents came looking and found me hidden away in the bushes. It was dark night and there was nothing left of my parents to even morn over. Grandmother told me later that it was probably better this way.

If I had not been hungry myself and cried so loudly I might not have been found at all... or at least this is what my Grandfather told me.

“Where was I?” the old Rabbit asked.

“Umph,” I responded bouncing on his lap which caused him to make the same noise.

“Oh yes; and that’s exactly how they sounded; ‘umph, umph, umph, umph’.”

He repositioned me to a more comfortable position making sure I rotated around before the fire so I wouldn’t overheat my young parts. “It’s also kinda like how I sound when I pick up a certain youngster I know’d”

The wind blew and a pile of leaves washed past the small window of their hutch, burying the front porch with their dried out crackly sound.

“And so the Umph were all alone,” Grandfather continued, “Until the Crackle showed up. The Umph, not ever seeing a Crackle before, was hesitant at first to have anything to do with them.”

I snorted and then went, “Umph.”

“That’s right. That’s exactly what they said, though they had no mouths and breathed no air cuz there wasn’t any in the nothingness.”

“Where did they come from Grandpa?”

“I don’t know. No one knows. But they’d been there forever just floating around and there you have it... or there you had it until the Crackle showed up and no one knows where they came from either. The two sides didn’t get along well at all.”

That’s when Grandmother rattled the pots in her sink, taking them out one at a time to dry them. We had boiled carrots for dinner and I looked forward to mashed carrots for breakfast and maybe some pickled cabbage for lunch.

“Then one day,” Grandpa says, “A Crackle accidently bumped into one of the Umph and the collision made an amazing ‘bonk’ just like one of your grandmother’s pots being clonked with a spoon.”

Grandma came out of the kitchen holding a pot and struck it with a big wooden spoon. She smiled at me and looked so loving and comfy in her autumn colored apron which covered her girth nicely.

“Well sir, that Umph and Crackle not only stuck fast to each other but they bonded to create a brand new thing which was thereafter called a Bonk. More Umphs and Crackles liking what they saw, even though they didn’t have any eyes, bumped into each other making a treemendous racket the likes of which nothingness had ever before witnessed.”

The wind blew again making the leaves outside the window crackle and I began an Umph chant while Grandma beat upon her pot. Grandpa clapped his paws in time and our noise became music in a bonding of family. When we stopped and finally got our wind back from all the giggling, Grandma told me, “And you know what came next?”

I shook my head.

“Bedtime.”

I protested of course, as all children will do. but my eyes were now past trying to stay open.

“Grandma,” I asked as she tucked me in, “Will I ever see Mother and Father again?”

She kissed me on the forehead. “Yes,” she replied. “They’re waiting for you out there in the nothingness with the Umphs, the Crackles, and the Bonks.”

“Will they bump into each other?”

She smiled and the smile was both sad and kindly. “They already did Little Rabbit,” she told me, “And their bond created you.”

“Tomorrow I shall make a new noise for them then,” I told her sleepily.

“Carrots,” she replied, blowing out my night lamp.

“Carrots,” I managed; and then was fast asleep.

In my dreams that night I heard all of the wonderful noises of the nothingness and I danced to it holding the paws of my parents.