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Rumo & His Miraculous Adventures

Walter Moers

Book One

OVERWORLD

I

The Silver Thread

RUMO was good at fighting.

At the beginning of his story, however, he still had no inkling of this, nor did he know that he was a Wolperting and would one day become Zamonia's most illustrious hero. He had no name, nor did he have the faintest recollection of his parents. He didn't know where he came from or where he would go. All he knew was that the farmyard where he grew up was his kingdom.

For Rumo, each day began when the farmer's entire family, seven Hackonian dwarfs, formed a doting circle around the sleeping puppy's basket and woke him with a melodious Hackonian song. Then they showered him with caresses. They tickled him behind the ears, rocked him in their arms, stroked his fur and kissed his tiny horns - marks of affection which he acknowledged with a pleasurable grunt. Wherever Rumo tottered on his four clumsy little legs, he instantly became the centre of attention. All his activities were applauded. He was even fondled and tickled for tripping over his own paws. The Hackonians set aside the freshest milk for him, barbecued him the most succulent sausages, reserved him the coolest place in the shade and the warmest place beside the stove. They went around on tiptoe when he was having his afternoon rest and regaled him with apple pie and whipped cream when he yawningly awoke. There were always volunteers ready to romp with Rumo or allow him to bite them with his toothless gums. And at night, when he had tired himself out with play, they groomed his fur

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with a soft brush and sang him to sleep. Yes, Rumo was the uncrowned king of the farmyard.

There were many other animals on the farm. The dairy cows, horses and pigs were all much bigger and stronger and more useful than Rumo, but none enjoyed the same popularity. The only creature that failed to acknowledge his supremacy was a black, long-necked goose twice his size, which hissed malevolently whenever he ventured too close, so he gave her as wide a berth as possible.

One morning Rumo was awakened in his basket, not by the Hackonians' melodious singing but by a sharp pain. There was a strange sensation in his mouth. The interior normally felt like a wet, slimy cave in which his tongue glided over soft, smooth, rounded shapes, but it had now acquired a new and alarming feature. In his upper jaw, just inside the upper lip, the gum had gone taut and something sharp seemed to be growing beneath it. This was the source of the throbbing pain Rumo found so disagreeable. He decided to invite due sympathy and caresses by informing a wider public of his condition.

But there was no one around. He would have to toil across to the barn, where the Hackonians were usually engaged at this hour - for reasons Rumo found unfathomable - in tossing hay around with pitchforks. Experience had taught him that the route to the barn was fraught with difficulty. Through the kitchen, across the veranda with its menacing splinters, down the steps, across the muddy farmyard, past the stupid goose, round the drinking trough, which was always surrounded by pig dung - it was a wearisome trip, and Rumo preferred to undertake it in the arms of one of the farmer's children. If only he didn't have to go down on all fours and trip over his own paws in the process! How lovely it would be if he could walk on two legs like the Hackonians!

Rumo climbed out of his basket, planted his hind legs on the floor and straightened up with a groan. He swayed first to the right, then to the left, and finally stood straight as an arrow. Hey, it was easy!

He set off, striding along like a grown-up Hackonian. He was filled with pride, a novel and inspiring sensation. Without stumbling once, he plodded all the way across the kitchen, pushed open the door, which was ajar, and even managed to descend the four veranda steps. Then he marched off across the farmyard. The morning sun warmed his fur, the air felt cool and refreshing. Rumo drew a deep breath, put his forepaws on his hips and walked past the black goose, which he now matched in height. She backed away, staring at him in astonishment, and started to hiss something nasty, but she was too flabbergasted to get it out. Rumo didn't spare the bird a glance; he simply strode on, feeling bigger and more pleased with himself than ever before.

Rumo paused to enjoy the warmth of the sunlight on his fur. He blinked in the dazzling glare and shut his eyes, and there it was again, the world he saw whenever he did this. It was a world of smells that floated and flickered before his inner eye in hundreds of different colours: thin, fluttering wisps of

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red, yellow, green and blue light. The green light was given off by the luxuriant rosemary bush growing right beside him, the yellow by the delicious lemon cakes being baked in the kitchen, the red by the smoke of the smouldering compost heap, the blue by the cool morning breeze, which was laden with the tangy scent of the nearby ocean. And there were many, many more colours, some of them dirty and ugly like the brown of the dung in which the pig was wallowing. What really astonished Rumo, however, was a colour he had never smelt before. High above all these terrestrial scents floated a silver ribbon. It was thin and delicate - no more than a thread, in fact - but he could clearly see it with his inner eye.

Rumo was overcome by a strangely restless feeling, a vague and unprecedented yearning to leave everything behind and set off into the blue on his own. He involuntarily drew a deep breath and shivered, so strong and splendid was the feeling that arose within him. Deep in his childish little heart Rumo sensed that, if he used this silver thread of scent as a guide and followed it to its source, happiness would await him there.

But first he must go into the barn and make a fuss. He opened his eyes and strode on. When he was standing in front of the big red curtains that kept the sunlight from parching the straw in the barn and setting it ablaze, he came to a halt. A strange new sensation had prompted him to interrupt his triumphal progress: his knees went weak and he had to fight off an urge to go down on all fours again. The blood shot to his head, his forepaws trembled and sweat broke out on his forehead.

Rumo didn't realise that the curtains marked a new chapter in his life and that he was about to slough off his animal heritage. He didn't know, either, that if he walked into the barn on his hind legs he would be regarded quite differently, because a Wolperting walking upright was treated with considerably more respect than a wild Wolperting. All he did sense was that his entry into the barn would be an event of importance. Bewildered and intimidated by his own audacity, he felt his little heart beat wildly: Rumo was suffering from stage fright.

He did what every actor does when afflicted by this form of nervous tension: he peeked through the curtains to check out the audience. Cautiously thrusting his head through the crack, he peered into the barn's interior.

It was dark inside and his sun-dazzled eyes took a moment to adapt themselves to the new conditions. All he made out at first were the shadowy shapes of wooden beams and bales of straw interspersed with shafts of sunlight slanting down through the barn windows. He blinked a couple of times, then saw that something wholly unexpected was going on in there. The Hackonians were not engaged in filling sacks with straw. On the contrary, they themselves were being stuffed into sacks by some huge, one-eyed creatures with horns and shaggy black fur.

Rumo didn't worry too much at first. He was used to mysterious things happening daily in the grown-up world. Only a few days ago a Camedary had been led into the farmyard. What a commotion! Everyone had scattered in different directions like hens before a thunderstorm and the Camedary had

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bleated for hours like a mad thing. Now it was tethered there, placidly munching the fodder in its nosebag, and had become a boring everyday sight. The giants didn't perturb Rumo either - Hackonian farmers kept animals just as hideous. For instance, the sight of an Ornian Swamp Hog was bearable only if one knew how delicious it tasted when stripped of its warty hide and roasted on a spit. But there was something about the horned giants that differentiated them from Marsh Hogs: the evil glint in their eyes. Rumo couldn't interpret it because he lacked experience. He didn't even know what evil was, so he parted the curtains and strode into the barn. His stage fright had evaporated, to be replaced by icy composure. For the first time ever, Rumo became aware of his ability to remain almost preternaturally calm in a tense situation. He took a step forward and announced his presence in the usual Wolpertingian manner: he gave two self-important sniffs.

No one took a scrap of notice, he had to admit. The giants continued to stuff the Hackonians into sacks, the Hackonians continued to wail and whimper. Rumo felt hurt. They were ignoring him - him, who could walk on his hind legs. Him, whose mouth was sore.

Suddenly he knew what to do: he would speak. He had learnt to walk straight off, so why shouldn't he speak as well? He decided to attract attention by uttering two sentences.

First: 'I can walk!'

Second: 'My mouth hurts!'

That would make everyone take notice - that would make them shower him with congratulations and expressions of sympathy. He opened his mouth, drew a deep breath and uttered his two sentences.

'Aa ha waa!'

'Ma ma haa!'

The words hadn't come out quite as he'd intended, but they'd emerged from his lips and sounded impressive. What was more, they worked. The shaggy black giants stopped stuffing Hackonians into sacks and the Hackonians stopped wailing and whimpering. Every eye turned in Rumo's direction.

All of a sudden his legs went trembly and his backside felt as heavy as lead. He struggled to retain his balance for a moment, then toppled over backwards into the dust. Rumo had chalked up a new experience: he'd made the first big blunder of his life. One of the giants stalked over to him, grabbed him by the ears and thrust him into a sack.

Demonocles were a vicious type of one-eyed giant found only on Roaming Rock. It was regarded as scientifically inaccurate to classify these monsters as members of the Zamonian pirate fraternity, since pirates only sail the seas in ships, strictly speaking, and do at least obey the rules of navigation. Demonocles, on the other hand, sailed the seas on a natural phenomenon,

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the legendary Roaming Rock, a buoyant amalgam of oxygen and minerals the size of a city block, and obeyed no rules except the laws of nature. They drifted around at random on their hollow rock, spreading panic and terror wherever the tides happened to wash them ashore.

If asked what fate he hoped to avoid at all costs, the average Zamonian tended to reply: Being captured by the Demonocles. There were captains who scuttled their own ships merely because they had sighted Roaming Rock on the horizon. They preferred to drown themselves and their crews rather than fall prey to these monsters. No coastal region was safe from them and few of Zamonia's seaside towns had not been raided by them in the course of the centuries.

Roaming Rock was originally a huge mass of lava vomited into the ocean by a subterranean volcano many thousands of years ago. There it cooled and rose to the surface because of the oxygen trapped inside it. From sea level it resembled a group of steeply jutting rocky islands, but it was really a composite structure, like an iceberg whose jagged extremities are visible while most of it is underwater. We do not know how and when the Demonocles settled on their floating island, but accounts in town archives of raids by vandals of Demonoclean origin suggest that it must have been several centuries ago. Presumably, one of their raiding parties sighted the great rock stranded off the coast of Zamonia, climbed aboard it and was unexpectedly swept out to sea when the tide turned.

It seems that the Demonocles abandoned themselves to their fate and made no attempt to influence the direction taken by their floating island. They were too uninventive to equip their bizarre vessel with sails, rudders or anchors, so it was left to the tides and ocean currents to determine which ill-starred stretch of coast they landed on. If washed up somewhere by a favourable current, the Demonocles immediately went ashore, raiding towns and villages, and taking prisoners until the waves bore them and their floating island away again.

Broadly speaking, such was the not particularly heart-warming story of the Demonocles and this time they had been stranded on the coast of Hackonia.

Rumo still had no forebodings, even when he was put into the sack. All grown-ups looked like giants to him, and he was used to them picking him up and carrying him around for unfathomable reasons. The sack seemed merely a new variation of an old game.

But his toothache was really bothering him. Persistent pain was something that conflicted with his cosy picture of the world. He had occasionally had to endure pain, but never for long: a tumble on the nose, a splinter from the veranda in his paw. Far from subsiding, however, this new pain was steadily becoming more intense. Worse still, another place in his mouth had started to hurt in the same way. Even so, he lay there quietly and scarcely moved.

For some days, now, the Demonocles left behind on Roaming Rock had noticed how the rising waves were tugging at their floating home. Only another few hours and they would be back on the high seas once more.

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Nervously, they scanned the cliffs surrounding the muddy tongue of land on which they were stranded. Nearly all the other raiders had returned from their forays, but a dozen were still missing.

A spine-chilling sound, almost like a cry, pierced the mist that floated between the sea and the mainland. It was the note of a seashell horn, which sounded to the Demonocles' ears like music. The dozen stragglers were returning at last.

The one-eyed vandals appeared on the clifftop, triumphantly holding aloft the bulging sacks in which their prey were still - they registered this with satisfaction - struggling and kicking violently.

What is the worst thing one living creature can do to another? Those brave enough to pursue that question to its logical conclusion might answer it as follows: Eating a fellow creature alive. It was quite all right to kill an Ornian Marsh Hog as quickly and painlessly as possible, strip off its hideous, warty hide, stuff it with rosemary and roast it on a spit; on that point all Zamonians - except the vegetarians among them - were agreed. But to cut the beating heart out of a live pig and devour it raw was quite beyond the pale - indeed, there were laws against it. Of course, not everyone obeyed those laws - werewolves, for example, and one or two other less sensitive life forms. However, no one could more blatantly have contravened the general agreement not to eat things alive than the Demonocles. Those one-eyed demons enjoyed their food only if what they devoured was still moving.

When on the high seas they ate live fish. If they captured a ship they wolfed its entire contents alive: captain, crew, passengers - even the last rat, cockroach and weevil in its hold. If they became stranded somewhere they ate the local inhabitants. It mattered little what form of prey they ate - Demonocles weren't choosy. They would even have devoured a Spiderwitch provided it was still twitching nicely. Liveliness was the main criterion by which the one-eyed giants judged the quality of their fare.

They had developed some ingenious ways of keeping their victims alive for as long as possible while gobbling them up. They saved vital organs such as the heart, brain and lungs till last, but eventually devoured those too, together with toenails, bones, scales, claws, eyelashes and tentacles. The Demonocles thought it particularly important to keep any sound-producing organs and innards intact to the end: the tongue, larynx and vocal cords were regarded as special delicacies to be reserved for the culmination of a meal. Screams, groans or whimpers took the place of a pinch of salt, a hint of garlic, or the scent of a bay leaf. The Demonocles were gourmets of the ear as well as the eye.

They divided their food into three grades. The lowest of these, acceptable only in an emergency, comprised creatures that were alive but barely moved and couldn't make sounds, for instance mussels, oysters, snails and jellyfish. In the medium grade were creatures which, although unable to scream, could twitch or wriggle: fish of all kinds, octopuses, lobsters, crabs and marine spiders. The highest category included creatures capable of speaking, screaming, yelling, screeching, crowing, twittering, bleating, or

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making noises of some other kind. The Demonocles didn't care what their victims were - Norselanders or Hackonians, Gargylls or Wolpertings, coastal dwarfs, seagulls or chimpanzees - as long as they made a frightful din while being eaten.

If the Hackonians had only known how effectively they were whetting the Demonocles' appetite by moaning and struggling inside their sacks, they would all have kept as quiet as Rumo, who was still wondering when this curious grown-up game would come to an end.

What surprised Rumo most, when he was finally released from his stuffy prison, was that he was no longer in the farmyard. He noticed to his astonishment that the ground beneath him kept rocking to and fro. However, he was quickly reassured to find that his family were all there too. Although the ground was unsteady, uneven and slippery, he managed to stand up on his hind legs, but he couldn't grasp why everyone failed to notice this feat and congratulate him on it. Even his family were ignoring him, and their behaviour was very odd in general. Their usually amiable faces had turned into tragic masks and some of them had water trickling from their eyes. Rumo wondered where his basket was. Surely they hadn't left his basket behind? No, that was impossible. He was sick of this game. He wanted something nice to eat, a Hackonian lullaby and a little nap.

The Hackonians took a different view of the situation. They had heard the rumours about Roaming Rock, and some of them had had grandparents or other relations abducted by the Demonocles. They knew what awaited them unless some miracle occurred.

To the Demonocles, on the other hand, the situation was neither mysterious nor tragic but simply satisfactory: they had just restocked their larder after a successful raid ashore. Now they were heading out to sea again, bound for a life of glorious freedom on the ocean waves.

Rumo and the Hackonians were herded into a big cave in the heart of Roaming Rock - in the Demonocles' opinion the finest place on their island. This was where they stored their food, where they went first thing each morning to get their breakfast and last thing at night to get their supper. Many of them even visited the cave in the small hours, half asleep but eager for an unwholesome little midnight snack.

Embedded in the walls of the vast cave were iron rings to which the Hackonians were secured with chains round their necks, wrists or ankles. Basins hewn out of the rocky floor teemed with plump fish and octopuses. Wild animals - lynxes, bears and lions - were imprisoned in cages. Domesticated animals such as hens, pigs, horses or cows roamed around freely behind the sliding wooden grille with which the Demonocles shut off the mouth of the cave. Lobsters and crayfish crawled over and under each other in stone tubs and earthenware jars filled with sea water, which also contained oysters. The one thing Roaming Rock wasn't short of was live food.

Like most of the other inmates of the cave, Rumo didn't sleep a wink that night. What with the incessant motion, the puddles of sea water sloshing to

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and fro, and the sobs and whimpers, grunts and cackles, whinnies and roars of his fellow captives, he had never before had to endure such uncomfortable conditions. The Demonocles hadn't troubled to chain him up because they obviously rated him a harmless domesticated animal. What he found most shocking of all was that the Hackonians hardly spared him a glance when he tried to snuggle up to them. Chained to the wall, they wept continuously.

Feeling hurt, Rumo went looking for affection elsewhere in the cave, but the same depressing atmosphere prevailed everywhere. Nobody wanted to play with him; everyone was self-absorbed; sobs and cries of despair filled the air.

Rumo eventually took refuge in a niche with a narrow entrance. Originally formed in the volcanic rock by a fat round air bubble, it afforded some protection from the sea water splashing around. He curled up and shut his eyes, but that only seemed to aggravate his seasickness, so he opened them again and simply lay there, as dejected and frightened as everyone else.

It was the longest and worst night of Rumo's life to date. Every now and then a Demonocle would visit the cave for something to eat: a hen, a lobster, a pig, or a Hackonian. The hens cackled, the pigs squealed, the Hackonians screamed - sleep was impossible under such circumstances.

The noise became really deafening when one Demonocle felt peckish for a lion. Rumo had never seen a lion before, but he sensed that the golden-maned creature in the biggest cage of all was a proud and dangerous beast. When the hungry Demonocle unbolted its cage the beast emitted a sound that made the other prisoners' blood run cold: a low growl that seemed to emanate from a natural disaster, not a living creature. Although anyone with any sense would have put as much distance as possible between himself and that sound, the Demonocle entered the cage without hesitation. The growl gave way to a roar that shook the walls of the cave. The Demonocle's hand shot out and grabbed the lion by the neck. Winding its tail round his other wrist, he slung the huge cat over his shoulder like a sack of coals and plodded out.

Rumo curled up again. What kept him awake, apart from the incessant din, was his sore mouth. The gum had swelled up in two new places and this perturbed him almost more than the goings-on in the cave. From one day to the next the world had become a hostile place - even his own body was turning against him. He whimpered for a bit and a few tears trickled down his nose. It was dawn by the time he fell into a brief, troubled sleep filled with wild and sinister dreams.

The first thing Rumo noticed when he awoke was that the ground wasn't swaying as much. His fur was sodden with water dripping from the roof. He badly needed a pee, so he relieved himself outside his niche. Then he went on a tour of inspection to see if the situation had taken a turn for the better. Perhaps someone would play with him at last.

To begin with it seemed unlikely. It was breakfast time, and grumpy, grunting Demonocles were stomping around the cave in search of ingredients for their first meal of the day. Most of them favoured pork for

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breakfast, so the squeals were ear-splitting. One Demonocle had decided on some octopus. He fished a huge, eight-armed specimen out of a pool and promptly got into a tangle, much to his companions' amusement. The octopus wound its tentacles round the one-eyed giant's body, neck and ankles, its suckers taking hold with a sound like someone smacking his lips. The Demonocle started to sway, lost his balance and crashed to the ground. His companions threw back their heads and emitted gurgling noises - their way of laughing, Rumo gathered. The fallen giant struggled to his feet, grabbed one of the tentacles and summarily tore it off. The octopus relaxed its grip, but it was too late for conciliatory gestures. The Demonocle gripped three more tentacles in both hands and swung the octopus round his head like a hammer thrower, then smashed it against the wall of the cave. It burst like a barrel of ink, spraying black liquid over everyone unlucky enough to be within range. Despite himself, Rumo vomited.

When the Demonocles left their larder at last, Rumo tottered over to a puddle on trembling legs and rinsed out his mouth. He was so frightened that he had gone back to walking on all fours - it seemed safer. The water was lukewarm and brackish, and tasted of fish. Rumo was just about to throw up again when he noticed a welcome development: one of the sore places in his mouth had stopped hurting, and something smooth and pointed had emerged there. He explored it with his tongue. It felt strange but somehow nice. Although the other places still hurt, they didn't worry him as much, now that one of them had undergone such a pleasant transformation.

He, too, was hungry. He found a trough full of gooey mush and ate some, reluctantly at first, then more and more greedily as he noticed that the hollow sensation in his tummy was subsiding. Then he crawled back into his little niche for a closer inspection of his first tooth, exploring it with his tongue again and again. He felt as if he had been given a present.

Cries of mortal agony drifted in from outside. The Demonocles were taking time over their breakfast and some of them were clearly eating it in the immediate vicinity of their larder. The Hackonians clung to each other, weeping and wailing even more loudly than before. Rumo noticed that the head of the family was missing, but that didn't surprise him. The farmer had often disappeared for days on end, only to return when he was least expected.

Rumo went on another tour of the cave, sniffing the air as he went. He was finding it hard to get used to the smells given off by the sea, which were so utterly different from those of the farmyard. Everything there had smelt of soil, herbs and life, whereas here the only scents were of rotting fish and death. He gave the cages containing wild animals a wide berth. Incredible how big and powerful many of them were! There was a red gorilla, a wild dog with two heads, another lion with only one eye, a huge polar bear with bloodstained fur. These beasts filled Rumo with a mixture of fear and wonder.

But what he found really sinister were some deep, dark pools in a side chamber of the cave: eight circular basins, nearly all of which were filled with murky water. Kept in them with other sea creatures were giant squid,

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and the colour of the water came from the clouds of inky black fluid they excreted like a smokescreen when alarmed. Slimy tentacles, pointed horns, black dorsal fins and glowing eyes on stalks broke the surface by turns, and issuing from one of the pools was a plaintive, sing-song cry. During the night Rumo had seen an inquisitive goat venture too close to the edge of one such basin. Without warning, a yellow tentacle equipped with fat suckers had emerged from the black, soupy water, wrapped itself round the animal's neck at lightning speed and, with a low gurgle, dragged it into the depths before it could even bleat. Since then, Rumo had maintained a respectful distance from the pools.

Three of the artificial basins appeared to contain creatures which the Demonocles kept as iron rations for consumption when times were hard. Even they seemed to find them scary, because they kept well clear of the pools in question. They contained no squid, so the water in them was clearer. To his astonishment, Rumo sighted some small but awe-inspiring denizens of a dark world inhabited by creatures with heavily armoured scales and rows of fearsome teeth. They had grim faces with pugnaciously jutting lower jaws, and their eyes glowed and rolled wildly in their sockets as if they weren't entirely sane. Many of them had long antennae tipped with glowing balls like miniature lanterns. Rumo saw a puffer fish as transparent as glass, with a red heart pulsating inside it. He also spotted a long, thin oceanic worm that continually changed colour as it wove its way along below the surface. He kept returning for another look at these fascinating prodigies of the deep and studied their mysterious modes of behaviour, because they were the only things in the cave that helped him, for a moment or two at least, to forget his depressing surroundings.

Most mysterious of all, however, was the furthermost basin, which was situated a little apart from the others at the back of the cave. Its water was dark-green, unlike that of the blue-black pools, but just as cloudy. It struck Rumo that none of the Demonocles went near it and that the free-range animals also kept their distance - mainly, no doubt, because of the foul stench it gave off.

Rumo would dearly have liked to know what sort of creature the oily surface concealed. For the most part, however, all that protruded from the murky soup was a big grey dorsal fin or a broad back that might have belonged to a whale or a fat sea cow. The baleful eye that sometimes lurked beneath the surface resembled that of a marine predator.

What particularly attracted Rumo to the furthermost basin were some faint vibrations he had picked up during the night, while trying to sleep. In his mind's eye they had assumed the form of some concentric red ripples in the pool from which the dorsal fin occasionally protruded. The little Wolperting couldn't interpret these mental images, but he felt that they were trying to tell him something - indeed, it was almost as if he could sense that this mysterious subaquatic creature wanted to get in touch with him. On the other hand, perhaps it was simply trying to lure him close enough to catch him. Rumo had refrained from obeying its signals and remained in hiding all night.

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However, he felt braver now that everyone was awake and activity reigned throughout the cave. For a while he prowled around near the pool, but not so near that some slimy, sucker-studded tentacle could seize the opportunity to drag him into its murky depths. He gambolled around it on all fours. The eye beneath the surface revolved, observing his every movement, and when he had made two circuits the dorsal fin rose slowly out of the water. It rotated on the spot like the iron pointer of a sundial, following him as he made his third circuit.

This went on for quite a while. Sometimes the fin sank below the surface, sometimes it resurfaced. Rumo sauntered off and returned, sauntered off and returned, but he never took his eyes off the pool. Two creatures with no idea what to make of each other were engaged in covert mutual observation.

A small party of Demonocles entered the cave in search of a second helping of breakfast. Rumo always hid in his niche when the one-eyed giants visited their larder, so he scampered back there - only to find that it was already occupied by the black goose, the same bird that had given him such a hard time back on the farm.

With a roar, the leading Demonocle shooed away some hens while the others looked around enquiringly. One of them grinned when he caught sight of Rumo and came stomping towards the little Wolperting. Rumo growled at the goose, hoping to scare her away, but she stuck out her tongue and gave a menacing hiss. The Demonocle stopped short, distracted by a litter of piglets.

Rumo remembered the trick he'd tried before. He made himself as tall as the goose by rising on his hind legs. Then he growled again, louder and more menacingly than before, and bared his gums to display his solitary tooth. The bird did not hiss back this time, but waddled silently out of the niche so that Rumo could sneak inside. The Demonocle caught sight of the goose standing there at a loss. He licked his lips, reached her in three strides and seized her by the neck. 'Quaaa-' was the last Rumo heard of her.

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