

BRIGHTER THAN OTHERS

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

GRONK	Chairman of the Board. If not smarter than the rest of the board, he is at least less stupid.
GRUNK	Brother of Gronk, and actually the most sensible of the board, which is why he is the Parliamentarian.
GRUB	Member of the board. Not too bright, but makes up for it by being difficult and nasty.
UGGUMS	Member of the board. Not much smarter than a fourth grade desk, but enthusiastic.
MONGUM	Aspires to be not too bright. Can sometimes manage a stalemate when arguing with driftwood.
WALTER	If cavemen had CPAs, he'd be one. Self-appointed defender of truth, everything must be very precise to satisfy Walter.
HARRUMP	Bright, enthusiastic, and soon to be very disillusioned with the way bureaucracy works.

SETTING

A forest glen at night.

TIME

Long before recorded history.

SCENE

*(Lights come up on forest glen. There are people in animal skins gathered about, sitting on logs and rocks. It is clearly prehistoric times. Walter wears something that might be like a necktie.)*

GRONK

*(Banging a rock on his head.)*

Order. I would like to call the board meeting to order. *(No one pays attention. He turns to the parliamentarian.)* Grunk?

*(Grunk makes a loud whistling or grunting sound, and everyone immediately quiets down. Grunk makes a “there you go” gesture to Gronk, who continues.)*

Thank you. Now we have several items on the agenda, and I would like to get through them as quickly as possible. First, we shall review the minutes from—

GRUB

Point of order!

GRONK

*(Heavy sigh. Grub is always interrupting.)*

What is it, Grub?

GRUB

Ruggum’s Rules of Order dictate that all meetings shall start with a roll call.

GRONK

We all know each other.

GRUB

It’s the rules. We have to ensure there is a quorum in order to carry out business.

GRONK

The whole board has only fist and one finger members. We have fist and one finger members present. That’s all of us. Now, let’s proceed with a review of—

GRUB

Point of order!

What!?

GRONK

GRUB

Ruggum's Rules of Order dictate that all meetings shall start—

Fine! Grunk?

GRONK

Present.

GRUNK

GRUB  
*(Correcting...)*

Present *and accounted for.*

*(Everyone shakes their heads at him.)*

GRONK

Mongum. *(No one says anything.)* Mongum.

*(Again, silence. Gronk motions to Grunk, who walks over and whispers something to Mongum. Mongum makes a "Me?" gesture. Grunk nods. Then...)*

Here.

MONGUM

Uggums?

GRONK

Here.

UGGUMS

Annnnd Walter.

GRONK

Here.

WALTER

Okay, I think—

GRONK

You didn't call my name. GRUB

GRONK  
*(With great patience...)*  
Grub.

GRUB  
Present and accounted for.

GRONK  
Alright, that's everyone accounted for. Now we can move to the review—

GRUB  
That's only fist.

GRONK  
What?

GRUB  
That's only fist, not fist and finger.

GRONK  
That's because I didn't call... *(He realizes they are never going to get past this unless...)* Gronk? *(Beat, then he raises his hand and says...)* Here. Satisfied? *(Grub nods, and Gronk continues.)* Now, let's move to a review of the minutes from our last meeting.

*(Grunk takes out a big stone bound notebook. With great ceremony, he opens it, and it is empty. He stands up, looks like he is about to say something, then just nods.)*

Any amendments or corrections? *(No one has any.)* Alright then. Do we have a motion to approve?

UGGUMS  
So moved.

WALTER  
Second.

GRONK  
All in favor?

ALL BUT GRUB

Ugh.

GRONK

Opposed? (*Silence. He and one or two others give a dirty look at Grub, and in a "I can't believe I have to ask" voice...*) Abstain?

GRUB

Ugh.

UGGEMS

How come you never just vote like a normal person?

GRUB

I vote my conscience.

WALTER

Whatever that means.

GRONK

Alright. First order of new business... (*he turns to look at Grunk.*)

GRUNK

There has been a request to address the board.

MONGUM

What board?

UGGUMS

This board.

MONGUM

(*Looking around...*)

I don't see a board.

GRUB

We're the board, Mongum. (*He still looks confused, so Grub points to the members. The light still does not come on.*) All fist and one finger of us.

(*Mungum attempts to count up to six on his fingers, but struggles to get to six because that means he can't use the finger on one hand to count on the other. Eventually he gives up.*)

GRUNK  
Shall I show him in?

GRUB  
Not without a motion!

MUNGUM  
*(Suddenly excited, thinking he's caught up with everyone...)*  
Happiness!

GRUNK  
What?

UGGUMS  
Where!?!

MONGUM  
Happiness is an emotion!

GRUB  
*(In utter disgust...)*  
Not emotion. *A... motion.* We need to make *a* motion.

*(Mongum starts to wave his arms around.)*

No. No. What idiot voted him onto the board?!

WALTER  
Us. We all did.

GRUB  
I didn't.

WALTER  
We all voted—

GRUB  
I abstained.

GRONK  
*Anyway...* Do we have a motion to—

GRUNK  
So moved—



Second— WALTER

Bring him. GRONK

*(Grunk goes offstage for a moment, and comes back in with Harrump.)*

State your name. GRONK

Harrump. HARRUMP

No kidding. Any relation to Haroompa? UGGUMS

HARRUMP  
*(With the hesitance of one who is talking to your boss's boss's boss, and realizing he is so stupid that your world is doomed...)*

No. *(Then...)* Sir.

What brings you before us today? GRONK

Ah, sir, I have made a most amazing discovery, and I wish to register it formally. HARRUMP

He's a discovererer. Er... discov... er... er... er? UGGUMS

A scientist. GRONK

ALL  
*(In dismay, they all make various sounds of mild revulsion – eww, ugh, and so forth)*

And what is this great discovery? GRONK

HARRUMP

I call them... stars!

ALL

*(Trying out the word, they all make various mutterings of the word 'stars' with different pronunciations and emphasis.)*

GRONK

I see. And what are these... *(struggling with the word...)* staaarrss.

HARRUMP

They are little dots of light.

GRUB

We know about those. That's fire.

HARRUMP

No, they aren't hot.

WALTER

Like sparkles on the water!

HARRUMP

Sort of, but they appear at night.

GRUB

Impossible! The sun gets pushed into the ground at night.

HARRUMP

Right. It's not the sun.

UGGUMS

Not the sun? *(Harrump nods 'no')* And not fire?

HARRUMP

Right.

GRUB

This is madness! Madness, I tell you! Throw him off the cliff!

HARRUMP

No! Wait! Wait! I can prove it! *(They all stare at him suspiciously.)* Really.

Prooovvvee... MONGUM

What? GRUNK

Proooovvee. That is an emotion. MONGUM

N- No it's not. WALTER

Then it is *like* an emotion. MONGUM

No. It's not. WALTER

Then it's a palindrome. MONGUM

No. It's n— What's a palindrome? WALTER

It's a big fish. UGGUMS

*(Gronk bangs the rock on his head once again to restore order. Once everyone is silent...)*

Alright, Hurroop— GRONK

Harrump— HARRUMP

GRONK  
*(Continuing, unphased...)*

Show us these... staarrss.

HARRUMP  
Of course. Everyone... look... up.

*(No one does. They just stare at Harrump. After a moment, they start staring at each other. After a few moments...)*

Up. That way (*pointing up*).

*(They all look up, and it is the first time they have seen the night sky. There is a lot of oows and ahhs.)*

UGGUMS

Hey! Hey, everyone! I think I've made a discovery! (*They all stare at him, until...*)  
I see little points of light!

HARRUMP

Yes, that's what I'm talking about!

UGGUMS

No. These are different. They twinkle!

HARRUMP

Those are the same ones that I'm—

GRUNK

Order! Order!

GRONK

The chair recognizes Harrumba—

HARRUMP

Harrump.

GRONK

Whatever.

HARRUMP

Those points of light. The ones that twinkle. Those are my discovery, and I have named them 'stars'.

GRONK

Very pretty.

WALTER

Yes. Very nice. That one looks like a little point of light.

GRUB

They *all* look like little points of light!

WALTER

*(Suddenly made aware of that fact...)*

Well, what do you know? So they do.

UGGUMS

I want that one.

GRONK

Okay, Uggums. You can have that one.

WALTER

What do they taste like?

HARRUMP

I don't know. I can't reach them.

GRUB

Then what's the point?

HARRUMP

Well, they're v—

GRUB

I mean, honestly, Harroomp. If you can't eat them, then what's the point?!

HARRUMP

You can make things from them.

MONGUM

Emotion!!

HARRUMP

What?

MONGUM

I want to make emotion from the stars.

HARRUMP

You want to make... a motion?

Emotion. Make emotion. MONGUM

I don't know what that means. HARRUMP

Don't mind Mongum. He's... uh... he thinks outside the... *(wants to say box, but then) cave.* GRONK

Oookay. HARRUMP

So what can you make? GRONK

HARRUMP  
*(Very proudly...)*

Pictures!

GRUB  
This is madness, I tell you! Madness! Throw him from the cliff!

GRONK  
What kind of pictures? Like unrequited love?

HARRUMP  
*(Not sure how to answer that, he tries to figure out if there is a way that doesn't make Gronk look like an idiot. Eventually he concludes that there isn't such a way, and decides to ignore the statement altogether.)*

I call them constellations.

UGGUMS  
Constipations?

HARRUMP  
Constellations. They are like pictures in the sky. Patterns, if you will. And they can tell stories.

UGGUMS  
Patterns?

Stories? WALTER

Goats? MONGUM

Show me an example. GRONK

HARRUMP  
Sure. Okay. Do you see that really bright star? It looks kind of yellowish? Now look to the left and a little do—

UGGUMS  
I see one! I see a consternation!

WALTER  
Where?!

UGGUMS  
Right there! There! (*Grabs Walter's head and points it.*) There!

WALTER  
Wow! You should give it a name.

UGGUMS  
Good idea. What should I call it?

WALTER  
How about... dot?

UGGUMS  
Yeah. That's a great name. I'll call it dot!

GRUB  
I see one. There! Look! Do you see it?!

WALTER  
I see it!

GRUB  
I'm going to call it 'speck'! (*To Harrump*) Do you see it?

HARRUMP

*(Wondering how these buffoons came to be in charge...)*

Yes. Very nice. But the patterns that I was talking about are bigger. They involve lots of—

WALTER

I see one! I see a new constellation! Right there! I'm going to call it... 'period'!

HARRUMP

Umm... Again, very nice, but—

UGGUMS

I see another one. I think I'm going to call it 'mote'!

HARRUMP

Great, but—

GRONK

Alright! Alright. Everyone just stop for a moment. *(Everyone stops to look at him, then he points, and...)* Is that one right there?

GRUNK

Very nice. What are you going to call it?

GRONK

*(Considers, then...)*

Spot. I think I'll call it 'spot'.

HARRUMP

Please! Please!

GRUB

You're out of order!

HARRUMP

What?

GRUB

You're out of order. You can only speak when recognized by the chair.

HARRUMP

What chair?



I'm the chair. GRONK

You're... a chair? HARRUMP

*The chair.* GRUNK

Oh. That's better. So can I speak now? HARRUMP

The chair recognizes Hurroof— GRONK

Harrump HARRUMP

Is that all you had to say? GRONK

HARRUMP  
No. No. Alright, now, listen. You're all (*He desperately wants to say 'idiots', but then realizes that that could get him thrown off the cliff, and so he goes with...*) doing a great job spotting constellations, but constellations are supposed to be pictures in the stars. Not just individual dots.

I named min— WALTER

HARRUMP  
Or mote or speck or spot or whatever. You need to think bigger. Patterns. Look at lots of stars together, and see if you can—

Oh oh oh!! I see one! UGGUMS

HARRUMP  
(*Muttering to himself...*)  
Oh no...

UGGUMS

Right there. See the star that looks like a little twinkly light? (*Everyone but Harrump makes 'ooh, yeah, I didn't see that before' expressions and noises.*) Now look right above it. See that one!

*(More appreciative oohs and aahs, from everyone, then Walter says...)*

WALTER

You mean both of them? Like one constellation with two stars in it?

UGGUMS

Right! I'm going to name them... 'colon'.

HARRUMP

*(Muttering...)*

Just kill me—

GRUB

*(Picking up on that instantly...)*

What—

HARRUMP

Nothing! Nothing!

MONGUM

I see it!!

*(All turn to stare at him.)*

GRONK

What do you see?

MONGUM

The 'nothing' constellation. Is that it? Right between those two stars?

GRONK

There's nothing between those two stars.

*(Mongum makes a 'you know it, I'm the man!' look of pride at having found the 'nothing' constellation, and then quickly gets fascinated by a stick.)*

HARRUMP

The whole point here is that we can use the stars to tell stories. For example, look up at that bright sta—

MONGUM

Tell stories?

UGGUMS

Like reading a stone tablet?

HARRUMP

Well, sort of like—

WALTER

With punctuation? Like my ‘period’ constellation?

HARRUMP

No, not like—

UGGUMS

Say. What do you call it when you put three dots together?

WALTER

An ellipsis.

UGGUMS

*(Staring up...)*

I think I found that one.

WALTER

Where?

UGGUMS

*(Pointing...)*

There?

WALTER

Next to umlaut?

UGGUMS

Yeah!

HARRUMP

Stop! Everybody just stop!

UGGUMS

I think I see—

HARRUMP

Stop stop stop stop stop STOP!!!

*(They all turn to stare at Harrump like he's gone insane.)*

You're doing it all wrong. You need to see the stars like the points where lines come together.

*(Another long pause, and then...)*

GRONK

I have no idea what you're talking about.

HARRUMP

Imagine that there are lines that connect the stars. Then see what kinds of shapes you can make.

GRUB

Oh! Oh oh! I see one. Right there. Between those two stars. I am going to call it "line".

UGGUMS

You can't do that. Those two stars are already taken. *(Then explaining at their confusion...)* That's colon.

GRUB

Fine. Then how about those two?

WALTER

They're part of umlaut.

GRUB

Okay, what about—

UGGUMS

Ellipsis.

GRUB

Damn it. All the good stars are already taken.

HARRUMP

There are so many fists of stars up there, you must be able to find... (*Stopping as he realizes that he is actually helping an idiot make a "line" constellation.*) Never mind. The point is that—

WALTER

Oh, oh! Point. That's a great name. I am going to name the constellation for *that* star "point"!

GRUB

Point of order!

GRONK

Now what?

GRUB

I just think it's a great name.

GRONK

What?

GRUB

Point of Order. Way better than just Point.

WALTER

He's right. (*To Harrump...*) Can I change the name to Point of Order?

HARRUMP

(*Giving up.*)

Sure. Whatever.

MONGUM

(*Ominously...*)

Uh oh.

GRONK

What?

MONGUM

That one is broken (*points at a star*).

HARRUMP

What? What do you mean 'it's broken'?

It doesn't shine as much.

MONGUM

Yeeesss... None of th—

HARRUMP

Hey! That one doesn't shine as much either!

UGGUMS

Or that one!

WALTER

*(All but Harrump descend into a round of 'Or that one', 'There too', etc. During this Mongum should softly say "I see a spaceship" or "I think I see Cassiopia")*

Yes! Yes yes yes yes yes! They are all different.

HARRUMP

Why doesn't that one shine as much? Is it sad?

MONGUM

I don't know why. Some stars are just brighter than others. That's just the way it is.

HARRUMP

But the brightest ones are the most important.

GRUB

Apparently not.

HARRUMP

*(Fully meaning the double entendre...)*

Oh?

GRONK

*(Appearing to realize what he's implying, and with an edge to his voice...)*

Sometimes it seems like the important ones are pretty dim.

HARRUMP

*(Unable to believe that someone so stupid could actually follow the insult...)*

MONGUM

Are you saying that we shouldn't try to compare them? That we should look at each one on its own merits, and just appreciate it for what it is?

HARRUMP

Well...

GRONK

*(At Harrump...)*

What are you, an idiot?!

GRUB

Madness! Madness, I tell you! Throw him off the cliff!

HARRUMP

Uh, no. No no, that is not what I am saying! Not at all!

GRONK

Well then what?

HARRUMP

I was just agreeing that some stars are brighter than others. And sometimes the dim ones are... better positioned.

*(Gronk thinks about this for a moment, then dismisses the whole thing with a "well, whatever" shrug, just as...)*

GRUB

Hey, I see a constellation! I'm going to call that one "dot"!

WALTER

You can't do that. Uggums already named *that* one 'dot'!

GRUB

I can too!

WALTER

No you can't!

GRUB

Bite me, Walter!

*(Walter goes to bite him, but then is grabbed by Uggums to share in his next discovery...)*

Look! I see ‘Hyphen’!  
UGGUMS

That’s an em dash.  
WALTER

No, it’s not. It’s a—  
UGGUMS

Dash! I found Dash!  
GRUB

*(Harrump shakes his head in disgust and walks off to the following lines, which fade in volume as the lights fade out.)*

I think I see Shivering Twig!  
GRONK

I see Vibrant Cheeseburger!  
MONGUM

I keep telling you. There’s no such thing as cheeseburgers!  
WALTER

I see Slash. Oh, and the letter L!  
UGGUMS

You can’t use letters, stupid.  
GRUB

*(Lights have completely faded out by this point.)*