

THE LANGUAGE OF A DREAM

By Jerry Rabushka

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ISBN 1-60003-565-5

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Cast: 1M (Harold), a high school student (at least at first).

Nobody likes it. The scary story that ends “he woke up and it was all a dream.” *The Wizard of Oz* got away with it because of Technicolor. But what if Dorothy never woke up? What if she just fell asleep and lived the rest of her life in the Land of Oz?

I was worried because I had to write a paper on some war that happened back in 1300 or something. Like a Hundred Years War. Sixty, thirty... whatever, it was a long war. “Condense the highlights into two pages.” I hadn’t read enough about it yet, so it worried me. It recycled itself into a dream.

The problem with history is you can’t change it. You *think* you can’t, at least—and if you’re a survivor of the losing side, you live with that loss day after day. You live among the winners, usually, telling you it happened a long time ago so you should get over it. The winners always say get over it. The losers try to reinterpret. That’s history.

I worried about all that, and then fell asleep, and the dream came—Technicolor is so much more vivid than what passes for color these days.

(Recounting his dream) I needed an army. I inherited the throne because my father the king was killed in battle. I was older than I am. I thought I was a high school guy but I was more like 22. Still with no useful brains, and I’m sitting there and they’re putting a crown on my head, and everyone’s celebrating to music I never heard before. *(It’s still confusing to him)*

I don’t remember my father the king, and I don’t remember living in this country. But we were in trouble and my coronation was dark and foreboding. I could see the battlefield. I had never been on it, but I could see it, and the music... the music played behind it like I was watching a movie. I saw the past and feared the future, much more so now, because it was up to me to change it.

I gotta get out of here, I gotta wake up and go to school!

I heard a deep voice. *(The wizard is a very old man who is well respected, yet incompetent.)* “Our lives—our people, are in your hands.”

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It was a much older man, he was the court wizard or something like that. Unsuccessful. Or we wouldn't be here losing and dying.

They had chosen a queen for me. (*She is young and enthusiastic, yet speaks as if she fears she is not up to the king's standards*) "It will be my duty and pleasure to please you, my lord."

(*Confused, but agreeable*) "Okay."

I had to map out a military strategy, but I didn't know how. I didn't live in 1300. I'd never been to battle. All the training I needed for the dream, I didn't have in real life. I couldn't take my experience from one world to the next. All I could do was wake up and leave them stranded.

The history professor was sarcastic. (*As an older professor who is tired of his students' lack of interest*) "With 100 years of blood, gore, and death—" he thought we'd all be turned on by that—"With 100 years of all that at your fingertips, you can certainly find two pages to write about in a well researched analysis. (*Rubbing his hands with glee*) Or should I make it... five pages?"

"We can't do this." Some sassy student thought he was a lot funnier than he really was. "We weren't there for it."

A voice came out of my head. "I was."

The next day—or the next night, who knows... The queen woke me up. Back then. Or... now. Or... whenever... the king didn't sleep in the same room as the queen. "My lord, you must wake up. The advisors are waiting for you."

I was tired. I'd been up all night re-writing that paper. Looks like I was going to get another chance to revise it.

(*Annoyed, and wielding kingly power*) "I thought your duty and pleasure was to please me, and this pleases me not."

"Please get up if it pleases you, or not." She changed, as the woman of your dreams can change—she required me to take her seriously. "My lord, we are in grave danger."

It was *my* dream. So I knew more than they did. They could not, in fact, tell me what I did not know. I waited for them to advise me, but they couldn't. We all shared my same ignorant brain.

I *could* have looked back—from over 700 years later. If only I'd read the book, I'd know what was going to happen. I could trump the wizard and his lack of foresight. I spoke as a king speaks. "Tomorrow I shall bring you an answer!"

He stated the obvious. "They are approaching rapidly. We will soon be under siege if we can't stop them—our forces do not match theirs. We must win by cunning."

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