

Merle's Headache

Merle woke up with one of those pounding headaches. Boom boom *bang!* –it felt like his head was being used as a drum-head. He tried to recall what he'd done the previous night to bring this on but the incessant throbbing overrode any attempt to concentrate. He groaned, gingerly opened his eyes and ... *thwap!* Ouch! A drumstick suddenly materialized out of nowhere and clobbered him on his left temple. What the ...? *Thwap! Om!* There it was again! He tried to fend off the stick with his arms but abruptly realized he *had* no arms! He was all – *thwap! Om!* – drum! That last wallop grazed his nose and he felt a trickle of blood seep from his left nostril. He braced himself for another whack, but it didn't come. Instead he started bouncing around like all get-out. He risked opening his eyes again. He saw the drumstick, all right, but that wasn't the worst of it. The drumstick was in the hand of a gaily dressed giant who was jumping up and down. In his other hand, the giant firmly held Merle. Or Merle the anthropomorphic drum, who was rapidly getting the worst case of motion sickness ever. Baba Yaga, it had to be the work of Baba Yaga! The old witch had lived scot-free in Merle's attic for twenty years, and he had tolerated her many idiosyncrasies. However for the last few months, she occasionally forgot to close her door when she went out. Ever since, Merle was finding newts and bats and all sorts of horrid little spidery creatures in the kitchen. So he asked her, very gently, if she would please remember to keep her door closed. But Baba Yaga snarled at him, told him to mind his own beeswax. Then she waved that wand of hers at him, and the next thing he knew– *thwap! Om!* – his headache was back. That did it! *Two* could play this game, and Merle had a little mojo of his own up his sleeve. Unfortunately, his sleeve was presently nowhere to be – *thwap! Om!* – found.

