

PROUD CHIEFTAINS

These are the Chronicles of the starship *Ra Sonsie Face*.

We come in peace from a planet far, far away. The Planet Uranus to be exact. Far enough that the Earthlings cannot disturb us. Near enough that we can explore the Planet of the Earthlings whenever we like. A comfortable arrangement.

This is what the Chronicles describe:

In the year ten thousand, three hundred and fifty-seven-and-three-halves and a little bit, our people, Ra Pudens, sent out a starship into the galaxy. The ship was destined to go where no Pudens had gone before and to bring back news of distant civilisations to Ra Pudens.

We are six in number. Our voyage continues, but it is important to keep in touch with our Mother Planet, so we have put together the Chronicle and beamed it back the many miles to Uranus. We stuck it on a First Class carrier beam. The carrier beams are sometimes shockingly slow, but it should arrive Tuesday after next, Wednesday morning at the latest. Or we will want to know why.

After six weeks on the journey, passing on the way the absolutely no-good planets of Jupiter, Saturn and similar stuff, the ship *Ra Sonsie Face* came at last to Planet Earth. We landed there in the back-yard of a Ruralian. Its name was Jean-Claude. It had a partner named Marie. Our arrival in the back-yard of Jean-Claude and Marie was not altogether successful. It was a Saturday night, Jean-Claude had been at the brandy and Marie was not happy. She had said so. Jean-Claude had come out into the back yard. He saw our miraculous craft that had come from a distant part of the sky. “*Bon Jovi!*” he exclaimed and “*Sack the Blur!*”, which phrases made us wonder whether had been to Uranus, where the exclamations are well-known amongst clubbing low-lives. No sooner had he made these observations than Marie came out. The Marie was a woman formidable. “Who are you?” she demanded. Our leader stepped forward. “My name is So-see, Son of So-See. We are Ra Pudens,” he began and got no further. Marie shrieked loudly and ran inside. Jean-Claude looked at us as if he cannot believe his pretty little eyes. A few minutes later, we were under arrest. Marie had called a gang of thugs known as *Lay Fleex*. They came in a van with a flashing blue light, much like the Chariot of State of our glorious leader, except without the Great Fish Head and the Birling Magic

Windmill.

Lay Fleex piled out of their van. “Pudens!” they cried, except it sounded more like ‘*Putangs*’, “you have contravened the Morality Code and are under arrest!” We were obliged to abandon our interplanetary craft to the care of Jean-Claude, who promised to look after it as long as we come back and see him when Marie is not there, if we know what he means. We agreed willingly, Marie being something of a tyrant, such as was overthrown in the Beloved Mother Planet in the year five thousand something and whatever.

At the headquarters of *Lay Fleex* we were cast into a dank dungeon, much like a larder, and left with the rats and creepy-crawlies. It was not a good night, one of the worst we had spent since leaving Uranus, apart maybe from that night above Jupiter when – well, whatever, never mind. We Pudens were pretty sore when the Earth Sun rose – a scientific curiosity: it rises in the east here – and we complained to *Lay Fleex*, who merely grinned and told us to wait for the Magistrate.

We did so. The Magistrate was not so bad. It was a she-Earthling and she said she was delighted to meet the Pudens from another Planet. She expressed a hope that we would get plump and juicy while here in France – which must be the name of the town. In the meantime, she said, we must get to know *Lay Mex* of the place.

The Magistrate set us free and *Lay Mex* crowded round – nice guys, even if they did drool a lot and get up a bit close and personal.

We headed back to Jean-Claude's place, and found *Ra Sonsie Face* safe and sound. Marie was prowling round with a long sharp knife; Jean-Claude was nowhere to be seen. We made our excuses and without further ado blasted off into the lower atmosphere of this place.

We touched down again in some other place. Earth seems to be full of different places. No wonder the Earthlings are confused. All kinds of places and some look the same and some look different. This place was called Dutchland. Something. Whatever. The inhabitants were a bit tougher than the last ones. But they were very pleased to see us. "Aah!" they said, "die *Pu-Dings*? You are most *willkommen*! We have *Ferkel* and *i-Aah* here just waiting for you!"

This welcome made us most suspicious. Why would *Ferkel*, the Manic Marauder of the Oort Cloud, be waiting for us? We huddled together a little, all six of us and prepared to battle for our lives. Our leader So-see, Son of So-See, introduced himself and the Earthlings seemed most polite. They invited us to a great house full of small Earthlings, and much was made of us there. The small Earthlings worshipped a number of

gods – one which they called *Ferkel* was, luckily, not the fierce tyrant from the Oort Cloud, but rather a small pathetic pink creature in a stripy T-shirt. There was another god named *Tigger-Tu*, but he was mostly harmless.

It became clear to us after a while that not all the Earthlings were so friendly. There was a large faction of rebels, rather rotund and beady-eyed, who gathered round us, shouting a word over and over again, no doubt one of their war-cries: '*Vürstchen! Vürstchen!*' and looking very hungry. Sal-Ammy, who is the Universal Translator assigned to the Expedition thought at first the Earthlings were talking of a Little Prince, but we revised his opinion for him when the fat ones suddenly produced sharp knives and jars of gherkins.

We ran at once for our starship, our faithful *Ra Sonsie Face* and blasted once more into the lower atmosphere. After a while, our Navigator, Ach'agiss, brought us down in a place full of large onions. We questioned Ach'agiss closely on this, but he assured us that the onions were not real, merely some architectural wonder which he had been asked to investigate by our glorious leaders back on the Mother Planet. We explored accordingly, but with some caution. We need not have worried, for the Earthlings here were very hospitable

indeed. We announced ourselves as usual and they were delighted to find that we were *Puteens*, for – they said – many of their great leaders have the same name. We asked which leaders they meant, and we were told of the wonderful deeds of *Vlad Puteen*, a much-lauded superhero of modern times, and of an ancient commander whom they called *Ras-Puteen*. We can find no trace of *Ras-Puteen* in our databanks, but we are very excited for surely this must be the leader of some earlier expotitionary force from Uranus? We refer this question back to the Mother Planet and would welcome any advice.

The peoples of this town were very friendly and made much of us. But at last we decided to leave. A cultural reference made by one of the local Puteen clan directed our attention to a cold and desolate place named Scotland. We took our leave amidst many tears of sorrow and gratitude, and blasted off for Scotland, land - it is said - of burns.

At length, after several wrong turnings, for which Ach'agiss received the warmth of our words, we arrived at the place known as Scotland. It is not much to speak of. We have sent images of the place on the second-class carrier-beam, and a postcard of Greyfriars' Bobby, an interesting god which is much worshipped. What is

most surprising about Scotland, and is now the subject of intense study by our expotitionary force, is that the people of Scotland seem entirely unconcerned about our arrival. In the town named France, and in Dutchland, we caused much consternation wherever we went. In the place of the Onions, we were made a fuss of. In Scotland, it seems that we are *quotidien*, a phrase that Sal-Ammy advised us is current in Scotland.

On our second day in the town of Scotland, we came across an important personage among them, named The Herring, also known to his friends as The Salmon, who praised our outward appearance very highly and invited us to a grand celebration. It was a celebration of a great poet who once walked the streets of this place. It is possible he is another member of an earlier expotition from the Mother Planet, for his name, as we understand it, is *Ra-Bi-burns*. We are of course excited to receive this invitation. The Great Feast takes place after twilight, and is known locally as *Ra-Bi-burns Night*. We are to be the guests of honour, says The Herring, as Proud Chieftains of Ra Pudén Race.

Upon our safe return from the Festival, we will continue writing in The Chronicles of the starship *Ra Sonsie Face*.

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