

## Halloween 🎃 Special 🧛

### The Ruff Bums fly in for breakfast, By Roy Webster.



The half- moon hung low in the sky, dimly penetrating the budding hedgerows and outlining the first spikes of early daffodils thrusting proudly upwards to bloom in time for Mothering Sunday. On this early March Morning there was hardly a whisper of wind and the day's washing hung limp and dank, the linen far from ready for the ironing board in the morning.

In the early hour of daybreak, this peaceful quietude beside the Canal where king cups were budding to turn the banks a mass of yellow, was rudely shattered by the sudden strangled howl of the family dog Danny who had left the comfort of warm straw bedding, to accompany the Boy Roy on an early morning fishing trip, its wrinkled muzzle now pointing to the stars.

The Boy turned towards the quivering red setter, usually a canine of placid, fearless nature. "Wassa matter, Danny? Wass going on?" he soothed, patting the animal that was now shivering violently as though gripped by sheer terror.

Suddenly, out of the half -light, a strange object spiralled down from the sky, focusing a beam of fluorescent green light on the very ground where The Boy stood, sending tremors of ominous fear down his rigid spine.

Like the whimpering dog that had already bolted down the lane for home, The Boy too was prepared to take flight to the house but he seemed transfixed by this throbbing luminous shaft that anchored his feet to the earth.

The source of the magnetic ray was a hovering object some 20 feet from the ground. He recognised this UFO from various illustrations and drawings. It was indeed A FLYING SAUCER from outer space.

The heat generated by the exhaust from an anti-gravity engine was scorching the turf, but then The Boy's attention was diverted to the whole structure that measured approximately 20ft in diameter and about 12ft in height. A door was opening, the vice like grip on The Boy's feet was suddenly released but he could not flee for now, stiff with fright, he was being tugged gently through the doorway by an unseen force.

Inside, the whine of automated synchromesh closed the aperture behind him and, sweating profusely, he took stock of what appeared to be the navigational cockpit of the alien vessel, in particular the array of control panels lining the walls.

"DSL ZIV BLG". The Boy swivelled his head swiftly towards the source of what he perceived to be a form of greeting, not at once realising it was English vocabulary reversed.

He was facing a live being that had entered quietly from an inner door. The creature was about 4ft high, head oval shaped covered by some form of spiky growth. It possessed a wide, gaping tooth formation in the right place for a mouth, located below two snake-like, slitty eyes level with two rudimentary ears. In addition, there was a third eye just below a flat chin working horizontally and vertically in a slotted cross arrangement.

The sturdy body, covered by shiny scales, was supported by two stocky legs, the thighs protected by a glittering loin cloth and the feet more ape than human.

This creature, obviously the male of the species, possessed four arms, hinged at the shoulder by a two-way swivel mechanism. The top pair each protruded five, multi-tasking

tentacles, topped by octopus-like suckers, and the lower pair each terminating with elephantine mini-trunks and accompanying probes.

“What did you say?” asked The Boy, whose confidence was now growing due to the friendly approach of the alien, who waved a tentacle apologetically while shuffling across to the control panels.

Two touches of the buttons lit up the screen, a translation image appeared and the line The Boy understood was MULTI-LINGUAL INTER-GALACTIC TRANSLATOR.

“So sorry, forgot to switch it on,” admitted the alien. “In your language my name is Gotta of the Ruffbum species, the only intelligent beings on our planet are called Sandaridae in the Andromeda galaxy. “I said who are you?” explained Gotta, shaking The Boy’s hand with a lukewarm tentacle in a gesture of non-aggression. “They call me Roy the Boy. Why are you here?” he asked nervously.

“Our leaders have been monitoring your galaxy, The Milky Way, for many years, more especially your planet Earth. In your terms we are prospectors,” Gotta explained

“But why have you visited us?” The Boy repeated.

“During your year 1947 we suffered a disastrous loss of one of our scout ships and the crew that crashed in Roswell, New Mexico all died. The truth and reason of the accident was kept a secret by your governments. Since then our leaders abandoned official surveys of this nature and, instead, invited families to take paid adventure holidays in space in order to carry on this vital search for the substance which we are desperately running short of on our planet.”

“Which is?” demanded The Boy.

“Sand. It is the main component of our diet and we are facing famine. You must understand that while you humans are living carbon units, we are silicon-based and actually breathe nitrogen. That reminds me, I must eat now. I shall summon my biological mate, in your language the wife, who is feeding our six children right now, to prepare our meal. What would you wish for?”

The Boy thought for a moment. “I can’t eat sand but I could drop down on the canal bank and catch enough fish for all of us” he suggested optimistically. His proposal was rejected instantly. “We do not have aquatic creatures on our planet and consuming alien fish flesh would almost certainly prove toxic and kill us” responded the alien, “We have the means here of creating whatever food you may fancy. What is your choice?” “I would fancy two boiled eggs with soldiers, please, oh, and a bottle of dandelion and burdock.”

At that point, another swing door opened and the mother space traveller, followed by her brood, entered. Her head was covered by a silvery mane of pliable fibres. There was a faint growth of dark hair on her top lip beneath two bulging eyes and The Boy’s first impression reminded him of his English teacher, Emma Plumb, until that third eye swivelled in his direction.

Any resemblance to human form was ended below the neck where half a dozen well suckled porcine type nipples, glowed red following the feeding of her offspring, while her smooth skinned hips and legs were covered by a flexible, glasslike dress

“Please meet my mate Hadda Ruffbum,” announced the “husband”.

The two adult aliens pushed buttons on a device that turned out to be a replicator able to comply with instructions to create items of foodstuffs.

Two bowls of warm sand materialised.

“What did you want, egg and soldiers? The Boy was asked. “Soldiers, with or without guns or sabres?”

“No, no. Not those soldiers. I meant eggs with slices of buttered, toasted bread, and please don’t forget the bottle of drink as well.” More buttons were pressed,

The Boy’s refreshment duly arrived and the meal began.

With their children penned in and squabbling amid a tangle of tentacles, the two adult Ruffbums spooned sand into their mouths. At once pouches in their abdomen glowed white

hot as their digestive system got to work.

This was the vital heat treatment to extract all silicon nourishment and vitamins from the sand.

"We expel the residues," explained Gotta, ejecting solid glass balls into a stone container via a tube attached to his rear.

"Crikey, they're pooping marbles," mused the Boy. "Wait 'til my classmates in 4C hear about this. They'll all want some."

"Can you make coloured ones?" he asked Mrs Ruffbum.

She pressed more buttons and multi-coloured sand appeared. She devoured it and minutes later half a dozen variegated glass alleys rattled into the bin.

"I think I could do some business with you for a supply of these. What would you charge" questioned The Boy consumed by the prospect of profit.

"We require sand silicon containing organic and oil content. We have mastered warp drive and time travel that can transport us and material through sub space by forming plasma from combining matter with anti-matter and distance is no object at a speed of four billion miles per minute," responded Gotta. "What source of sand do you have in mind?"

"The Kalahari Desert," exclaimed The Boy enthusiastically It's mostly sand with some vegetation and small mammal life forms called Meerkats."

Meerkats? What do they do and live on?"

"They dig up and eat small lizards, worms and insects... and sell insurance", grinned The Boy. For him it was time to go.

"It's been lovely meeting you," said Mrs Ruffbum, rounding up her offspring who had escaped from their cage, their probing tentacles worryingly exploring every orifice within reach

"Yes, we shall contact you again," declared Gotta, opening the exit door .The Boy leapt some four feet to the ground and fell awkwardly. It was then he woke up. He had fallen out of bed.

All of it had been a wonderful, amazing dream.

But had it? .he pondered. For, as he pedalled his bicycle to school, he spotted a large circular area of burned grass on the water meadow. He had forgotten his Old Man had lit a huge bonfire of a mound of dehydrated water weed and reed dumped on that very spot following a fishing spot clearance operation a month earlier!

\*This light-hearted story from dreamland might seem trivial and far-fetched and quite beyond reality. However, backtrack 50,000 years. For centuries Humans travelled on foot and perhaps on the backs of animals or on floating logs. The wheel had not been invented, flying was for the birds, primitive mankind believed the moon was made of cheese and the Earth flat.

Since the first manned aerial flight in a steam-powered airship in 1852, we can now circumvent our home world by rocket jet propulsion in a few hours, walk on the moon and get a close-up view of our neighbouring planets.

Now fast-forward another 50,000 years. Is it beyond the realms of possibility that, by then, unimaginable advanced thrust engines and warp drive allowing inter-galactic time travel through "worm holes" in space will have been mastered?

It may well be discovered, as some believe, that God or Gods were in fact alien time travellers and that life on Planet Earth was a result of their seeding while escaping from a collapsing world of their own in faraway space. Perhaps doomed, as Earthlings will be when our own Sun and solar system burns out. Unless they are able to locate and travel huge distances to another accommodating hospitable planet a mind boggling distance in outer space.