

UNCLE FRED

Fred was known as 'Uncle Fred' to most of the kids in the town, and a fair number of their mums as well, or so we are told. Uncle Fred was a man of habit. He would leave work at the local factory as soon as the bell sounded (shows you how long ago it was). Factories! Bells! Anyway, he left work and was soon in the Red Lion with his first pint.

He became aware of something different as he noticed two heads and only one body at the bar – perhaps a second pint was called for. "Do you know?" he said to Doris, a barmaid of buxom proportions, "I could have sworn that the tall chap at the bar had two heads."

"He has, or they have", said Doris, "they or he has been making short work of our best bitter all evening. They landed up in the hills in a spaceship apparently last night. Trouble with the electrics. George from the garage has sent young Sid up there with a new battery to see if he can fix it."

Uncle Fred took a closer look at the stranger. "Can I talk to him?" he queried. "Of course you can," said a voice, "what is it you wish to know."

For once in his life Uncle Fred could not think of what to say. The voice continued as to how they got stranded in the hills with electrical trouble and someone was now trying to fix it.

"How is it?" asked Uncle Fred, having got his voice back, "you speak with no mouth but I can understand you" "Funny you should say that," said the voice, "a long time ago, before your tiny planet was formed, we were like you – one of each sex. Then it was decided that it was inefficient, so we combined together as you see us now. It doesn't always work though."

"You can say that again," said a quite different voice, "he makes me drink this bitter instead of a gin and tonic."

"That's his trouble", said head number one.

Uncle Fred by now had worked out which voice belonged to which head.

"Keep this to yourself," said head number one, "but I have great doubts as to his gender, male or female."

Head number two burst into tears and head number one said, "Now the crying has started it might go on for ages." Sure enough, the bar area was soon ankle deep in water, but stopped as Uncle Fred questioned again, "How do you know what I am thinking?"

We do not need your old fashioned means of communication by mouth anymore. We communicate by thought, so we pick up language very quickly." Uncle Fred was aware that he was being answered in perfect English.

Head number two, having wiped his eyes, sighed and said, "You see, we are not a backward

lot like you.”

Uncle Fred started to get angry. “I’ll have you know we are very aware of events and have opinions that are listened to.” Fred’s anger subsided as a further pint slid across the bar.

“We didn’t mean to be rude but, we have also been talking, as you call it, to our friends on Venus. One nation of your race, Americans, I think, sent a DIY gadget to us, very crude but probably the best they could do. We have installed it in our museum.”

At this point, it was announced over the hubbub of the bar that the spacecraft was fixed, and everyone went to the hillside to see the take-off. Goodbyes were said and the machine burst into life and took off with a roar.

The crowd on the ground were silent until someone said, “Where’s Sid? I did not see him get off the spacecraft.”

Again a silence and then a voice enquired, “Who’s going to tell his Mum?”

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