

## Summary--The Centaurian Bud Vase

**Chapter 1: The Centaurian Bud Vase.** Pierre Bordeaux, skink-like keeper of an antique shop in the city of Panjandrum, revives a female skink (skinqui) that he finds nearly dead in the snow outside his shop. She gives him "The Centaurian Bud Vase," tells him that it is "The Key," then disappears out his door while he fetches her some food. He is caught in a terrific explosion as he goes out after her.

**Chapter 2: The Duck and Doughnut.** As Pierre recovers from the explosion, he hears the siren of an approaching police floater. Suspicious of their rapid response, Pierre hides the Bud Vase, then tells the two policemen, Aiton and Feynman, only part of the story about the skinqui. Then Pierre goes to The Duck and Doughnut tavern, looking for his friend, the six-limbed bear-like Syringee, Baroo, a con man that Pierre has learned has just arrived in Panjandrum. Baroo tells Pierre about The Turquoise Band, a musical group from Pierre's home planet of Waxon, who have been singing songs promoting the restoration of the Waxonian monarchy. Except for the skinqui that led the band, they were arrested while performing on Panjandrum the previous night. Baroo and Pierre escape the tavern after a disgruntled patron sets the place on fire.

**Chapter 3: The Butler Did It.** As the skinqui runs from the antique shop she is confused to find herself floating in darkness. We flash back to a few weeks earlier when this all begins... The first concert of The Turquoise Band is not a success, and Princess Milda returns home, dejected, and rushes to her room, ignoring her father and mother. The royal family's butler, Baroo, volunteers to try to calm her. He places an elzbieta flower bud into a vase (which he has been hoping to steal) and explains to her that The Turquoise Band will also flower, especially if their music advocates the restoration of the monarchy, since people in all cultures like stories about royalty. He convinces Princess Milda and her parents to allow his friend, the famous promoter, Gareth Gareth, to manage The Turquoise band. Gareth sends them on an interstellar tour, but when the Band gets to the planet Syringo, Gareth and the Band barely escape the Waxonian Secret Police and an attempt to arrest them for subversion.

**Chapter 4: Teasing the Geese.** Gareth drives Milda and the Band to the small seaside town where he and Baroo live. He borrows Baroo's fishing boat from Baroo's wife and takes the Band out to sea to escape the Waxonian Secret Police. Gareth sends subspace messages to his other musical groups to masquerade as The Turquoise Band on the planets where they are working in order to mislead and confuse the Secret Police. Before returning to shore, he rendezvous with a starship which teleports the Band onboard to take them to another friend of Gareth's on the planet Panjandrum.

**Chapter 5: Don't Cross the Ls in Tortilla.** After returning to Pierre's shop, Baroo confesses his plan to steal the Centaurian Bud Vase, which he believes is some sort of key to an ancient Waxonian treasure. He has temporarily given up his quest for the bud vase and come to Panjandrum to try to get Milda and the Band out of the trouble which he inadvertently started. But the Band, like Milda, has disappeared. Pierre finds that Milda was abducted from in front of his shop with a loose teleportation net and taken to the basement of a Mexican restaurant. After casing the restaurant, Pierre, Baroo, and Baroo's partner, Pepaa, return after closing time to rescue Milda and the Band. They find someone trying to break out of the basement dungeon and water flowing from under its door when they arrive.

**Chapter 6: Someday My Prints Will Come.** Pierre, Baroo, and Pepaa rescue the Band but find that Princess Milda has already been taken by Aiton and Feynman and are ready to depart on the starship White Owl for the Triko A star system. Pierre attempts to take the place of the ship's new Security Ace.

**Chapter 7: Green Jacket, Red Cap.** Pierre takes the place of the ship's Security Ace and spends most of the next three weeks vaporizing supernova slag with the laser canon for the ship's astrophysicists' research. Several days before reaching their destination, the pirate ship Ruche fires on them and demands that the White Owl surrender Princess Milda to them. Pierre disables the Ruche but is recognized by Aiton when he tries to contact Milda.

**Chapter 8: Superb Owl Sunday.** Pierre convinces Aiton that he was the steward on the ship that brought Aiton to Panjandrum. Aiton claims that he and Feynman are returning Milda, a Waxonian diplomat, to Triko A after she had been kidnapped. Pierre, with the aid of the White Owl's computer, Bessie, gives Milda a pair of boots with a hidden subspace tracking device before Aiton and Feynman take her off the ship at Triko A. Pierre follows them from the spaceport through the bush before he finds them encamped in the foothills of Airy Mountain. But Pierre is taken prisoner in his sleeping bag and knocked unconscious while waiting for Aiton and Feynman to break camp the next morning.

**Chapter 9: Down the Rushy Glen.** Pierre regains consciousness to find himself among six juvenile skinks. They guard the Sanctuary of Ramunus from treasure hunters while they await the return of a silver skink of royal blood. This skink will open the Sanctuary, remove its ancient contents, and reinstate the golden age of the Waxonians. Pierre convinces them that he is not the prince and asks them to help him rescue the real skink of royal blood, Princess Milda. They find Milda hanging unconscious from a tree just outside a cave which Aiton and Feynman have entered thinking they had found the Sanctuary. One of the young skinks

fires a metal-tipped arrow, causing an explosion which seals the cave.

**Chapter 10: The Blue Bird of Harpiness.** Milda is unconscious and bruised, so a blanket is made from rushes to use in returning her to the skinks' cave. On the way back, a huge blue Mountain Harpy bird carries Kenney off.

**Chapter 11: The Breeze and Eye.** Pierre rescues Kenney and the group returns to the cave. Milda has regained consciousness and is able to walk back with the rest. She wants to go on to see the Sanctuary of Ramunus. They are about to depart when Kenney is shot by Aiton, who forces the survivors to lead him and Feynman to the Sanctuary. Pierre uses the Key to unlock the doors to the Sanctuary. They discover a grotto containing the Robe of Ramunus, accessible only by crossing a narrow timber across a bottomless pit. Aiton sends the young skinks and Pierre across to retrieve the robe, then knocks the timber from beneath Pierre and Milda. Pierre's last sight is of an arrow through Aiton's up stretched palm and the bud vase tumbling into the abyss after him and Milda.

**Chapter 12: A Friend in Need.** Feynman bandages the wounded Aiton and they escape with the robe of Ramunus across the volcanic shield formation rock to the bush where they have a Hitchhiker spacecraft hidden. While stopped to allow Aiton to rest, Feynman is knocked down by an explosion. After he catches his breath, Feynman discovers that Aiton has vanished.

**Chapter 13: In the Hole of the Mountain King.** The fall of Pierre, Milda, the bud vase, and the timber is stopped by a net stretched across the pit but far enough down as to be unseen. Feynman and the wounded Aiton, thinking that Pierre and Milda are dead, make their escape with the robe. Kenny, whose argon-glass cloak protected him from Aiton's laser fire, Baroo and Belle arrive soon after and rescue Pierre and Milda by lowering a tree on a rope just as the ancient net gives way. After Pierre reveals that he can track Aiton and Feynman via the subspace beacon that he attached to the robe, they all return to the skink kids' cave. Spud calls his grandfather, Mr. Walker from Belgeum Outdoors, to have Aiton and Feynman captured by a loose teleportation net sent from a prison satellite in orbit around Svajone's planet, Millicent. But the net captures only one man and the signal from the subspace beacon ends before a second try can be made.

**Chapter 14: Jake and the Fratman.** After finding that Aiton has vanished, Feynman concludes that Aiton has been taken by a loose teleportation net. He finds the subspace beacon that Pierre had hidden on the robe and attempts to destroy it. But the beacon is destroyed first by Jake Carmichael, the first mate of the White Owl, who takes Feynman prisoner. With Aiton gone, Feynman

convinces Carmichael to hire him to help in Carmichael's plan to find the Sword and crown of Ramunus and have himself declared King of Waxon. When they get to the Hitchhiker's hiding place, they can't find it.

**Chapter 15: Zero to Sixty in Seven Minutes.** Pierre asks Walker for a police craft to go after Feynman. But in order to keep the loss of the Robe secret, Spud takes Pierre up in the Guardians' emergency copter. Just as the copter emerges from the volcanic chimney where it is hidden, it runs out of fuel. Pierre takes control and makes an emergency landing back in the chimney. After refueling, they take off again, the pursuit starting off slowly at first while the copter's batteries are recharged. Spud flies the copter to the last known location of Aiton and Feynman. They find that Feynman and a third person are still traveling in the northeast direction. As Spud and Pierre are about to catch up with them, Spud sees smoke ahead. Walker reports that a subspace jump has also occurred just ahead of them and advises them to proceed with caution.

**Chapter 16: The Galaxy's Guide to the Hitchhiker.** Carmichael uses the beam from his laser pistol to find the missing Hitchhiker in a nearby grove. Once inside the ship, Feynman turns the controls over to Carmichael and takes a nap. Instead of flying the ship into space, Carmichael makes a subspace jump from their hiding place, then several others to hide their route, before going into warp to rendezvous with a larger spaceship, then goes to sleep himself. When Feynman wakes up he decides to research the White Owl's movements to see if it really came to Svajone more often than might have been expected. Carmichael finds him at the computer and, when Feynman explains, Carmichael just says "Knock yourself out." before going back to sleep.

**Chapter 17: The Elzbieta Bud.** Spud and Pierre investigate the burning grove and find trees damaged by something the size of a Hitchhiker. Spud finds a footprint which Pierre identifies as belonging to White Owl First Mate, Jake Carmichael. They return to the cave of the Guardians for the rest of the night. The next morning, everyone returns to Belgium. Milda is taken to the hospital for observation. The others gather at Belgium Outdoors with Spud's Grandfather, Norm Walker, for lunch and a strategy session. Spud recites the Elzbieta Bud Haiku, an ancient poem whose words encode the locations of the Treasures of Ramunus. Pierre reveals that the poem was actually written by one of his ancestors and they conclude that an AI computer should be able to decipher the code. At that moment, Norm's daughter, Ilona, arrives with news that the Ancient Keep on Waxon has been destroyed by rioters.

**Chapter 18: Three Enchilada Dinners, To Go.** Milda, Pierre and Baroo leave Svajone aboard the White Owl and are transferred to the Sophomoric, which delivers them to Waxon. They find that the

prisoners in the destroyed Keep have been moved to another prison in West Rorrstip Province. They ride floater bikes to the prison, only to find that Milda's parents are not being held there. They see a truck with provisions leave the Keep along a road which seems to go nowhere except to the Fort of Ewanuick, an ancient ruin located on an island in the middle of a river just before the river goes over the falls at the rim of the West Rorrstip Plateau. They stop the truck, intending to use it to get into the Fort, and discover that it is driven by Juozas, the percussionist of Milda's Turquoise Band.

**Chapter 19: The White Crow.** Pierre takes Juozas' truck into the Fort and finds that Milda's parents are indeed being held there. He devises a plan to rescue Milda's folks in the same way that legend says the Robin Hood-like outlaw, Ewanuick, was rescued--with a huge kite. The residents of a farming town below the falls help to construct the kite and, in the darkness, they rescue Milda's parents. As he leaves the fortress on the kite, Pierre sees The White Crow, a constellation, which gives him an epiphany.

**Chapter 20: Split Personality.** Pierre and the others return to The Landing to spend the night at Kalvis' home. Pierre instructs Juozas to return to Ramunus City, instead of coming to The Landing, to find Carson, a friend of Pierre's, who will find them a starship for going after the Sword and Crown. Milda and her parents remain with Kalvis at The Landing while Pierre and Baroo return to join Juozas and meet with Carson. On the way to the rendezvous with someone who will provide their starship, Carson stops at a storage building and his body begins to split open.

**Chapter 21: Do-Si-Do.** Carson's body splits open to reveal that "he" is a "she"--a skinqui who has been wearing a Holographic Quantum Dot (HQD) Suit which enables her to have greater size and strength. Without the suit to draw attention to them as they move through the city, Carson leads them to a restaurant for a take-out lunch with Linas, a skink who sells starships. Within hours, Pierre, Baroo, and Juozas are on their way, apparently to Syringo, since they have not yet figured out their next destination. Pierre has concluded that the Treasures of Ramunus had been hidden on planets of stars in the constellation, The White Crow, and that Aryla Fitvet's rolling haiku will tell them where to go. Just as they tease out that the destination planet must circle "dancing stars"--a binary star system--they discover that they are being followed by another starship.

**Chapter 22: The Hiss.** Pierre changes course and increases their speed. To hide themselves, he drops out of warp, makes several random subspace jumps, and then allows the ship to drift in deep space. But the mysterious starship continues on its original course until out of scanner range. Pierre changes course to the planet which Baroo had identified, Patience, a planet which had

been colonized by and abandoned by both the humans and the Waxonians because of a mysterious disease, "The Hiss." Now under quarantine by the SEC, Pierre feels that this may well be The Kindred's way of hiding Ramunus' Sword. Pierre recalls another of Grandma Fitvet's haikus which suggests that the Sword might be found in "a stronghold" protected by guardians "dressed in black and white." They land on Patience and make their way out of the abandoned space port only to find a flock of birds circling lower and lower overhead.

**Chapter 23: Grimace.** A flock of crows lands on the buildings along the street where Pierre, Baroo, and Juozas are standing. A dozen of the birds land in the street and one, Berkyl, asks why they are in El Dorado. Pierre realizes that they are speaking telepathically, which Baroo cannot "hear" and asks them to speak Skinque. The birds, some of which are white crows, are the Guardians of Ramunus for Patience but Berkyl refuses to help Pierre find and protect the Sword. Pierre and the others find that there are seventeen locations for the "First Patience Bank of El Dorado" in town by consulting the High Plane Database. When they find one of these decoys is accompanied by black feathers and bird droppings, Berkyl returns to guide them safely to the Stronghold. They go to the basement where Baroo opens a combination lock to the safety deposit vault and then Pierre uses the bud vase to open the thixotropic lock to the enclosure holding Grimace, the Sword of Ramunus. Before they can do more, the building is rocked by an explosion and Berkyl realizes that Carmichael and Feynman have arrived undetected.

**Chapter 24: Chuck a Yewy.** Carmichael and Feynman enter the vault, laser pistols pulled. Feynman grabs the Sword of Ramunus from Pierre. Juozas pulls a pistol and fires but misses Feynman, who escapes. Carmichael's pistol fires into the ceiling as Baroo knocks him down. Timbers fall, hitting Juozas, pinning him to the floor, and breaking his leg. The timbers are too heavy for Baroo and Pierre to move, so Pierre cuts them away with Juozas' laser pistol. Feynman's subspace jump to escape causes the bank to collapse more, sealing the stairs out of the basement. Pierre finds a subspace beacon in Juozas' pistol, the one given to Pierre and discarded at the Fort of Ewanuick. Berkyl informs them that rescue is on the way, so Pierre escapes up through the solar pipe.

**Chapter 25: Blue Suede Shoes.** Having realized that Grandma Fitvet's haiku said that the Crown of Ramunus was on Waxon, Pierre takes the Toldon Bose back to Waxon. He finds Carson at the beach, shaking the daylights out of Gareth

**Chapter 26: Supper at Juan's.** Gareth says he was captured by the Waxonian Secret Police when he returned Baroo's fishing boat to the dock, and the map for finding the Waxonian Treasury was ruined when he jumped into the water in a failed attempt to

escape. He was returned to Waxon and imprisoned, but escaped when the Ancient Keep was attacked. Over supper, Pierre explains his failures with the Robe and Sword and explains that Gareth's map was a decoy to prevent people from finding the Crown. Carson suggests that an ancient group of songs, the 'Aukos Odyssey,' might help them find the actual location of the crown. Although Gareth's offer to help in the search is suspect because of his past trickery, Pierre tells him that he can help - by dying.

**Chapter 27: One Potato, Two Potato.** Pierre explains that, in his plan, Gareth only needs to appear to die. After asking the waitress for an unbaked potato and a bottle of jodas juice take-out, Pierre programs his eslate to create a map showing the paths of the tax collectors described in the ancient song, "Aykos Odyssey." The paths extrapolate to the Kalnas Mountains, northwest of Ramunus City. After leaving the restaurant, Pierre has Gareth purchase an argon-glass hunting outfit. He sends Carson, after putting on his HQD Suit, to meet with The Kindred to start their coup to depose the President and make ready for a new regime after the return of the Treasures of Ramunus. Pierre, now ready for a fight with Feynman, and Gareth rent an off-road runabout for the journey into the mountains. Gareth is surprised when Pierre drives the runabout north instead of toward the Kalnas Mountains.

Sorry, but this is it. Rather than give away the ending, no more chapters after Chapter 27 will be posted. For readers, if you know an editor or agent that might be interested in my story, please have them contact me. If you are an editor or agent, please do the same: you can get the rest from me.