

Bird man

I am Mingo Drum Vercingetorix

“Mingo Drum found the human woman with Little Drum amongst the mushroom fields because no one could fail not to notice her from a distance. Some mushrooms grew to sixteen feet high; some were brown others white with red spots.

Toadstools grew in many colors and spots also.

All for food and medicine.

So Mingo on the way to Boudicca passed a three foot ant picking off mold and another collecting spores.

He bid them good day and went his way.

But the ants became excited and started running about because of his presence.

“Why what is that clicking noise,” Boudicca asked.

“Ants,” Little Drum replied.

So Boudicca for a moment took her seriously then reminded herself it must be human/alien machines captured and put to work.

Again she suffered from an imperialistic superiority complex.

Nothing below humans could invent how to serve?

Then an ant appeared, she jumped and screamed loud.

Something she was doing a lot these days.

As for Little Drum, she patted the ant and fed it honey cubes from a pocket to reassure the insect the woman was not dangerous, just different, a crazy human.

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“They are coming to see Mingo Drum,” Little Drum explained, “that clicking is their way of spreading the news he is here.”

“**So do I,**” Boudicca wanting to see the Bird man King at last.

Then the Bird man with the scar appeared.

Why Boudicca challenged him with her eyes looking him up and down *like he had done to her*.

And ants appeared and lowered their antennae in respect to him.

Why Boudicca decided to keep her distance; those mandibles the Bird man and Little Drum were standing between could snap you in half.

“I must leave, they want me,” he apologized and left with the ants.

“Let’s follow,” Little Drum prompted, “I don’t like being kept in the dark.”

“Either do I?” Boudicca and followed too as she wanted to see Mingo Drum her father’s foe.

Now eventually they entered a forest and she saw a large clearing under a false canopy of vegetation.

Camouflage against aerial recon.

And Boudicca froze at what she saw.

Phalanx upon phalanx of ants in body armour.

You are not supposed to be here, you will be in big trouble if you are caught, sneak away now, hurry.

But she smelt differently and turning to sneak away looked into the big brown eyes of a lion creature.

She was at a lose what to do?

She had no weapons.

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Then it yawned and licked its lips.

It was bored.

Also hungry, maybe yes just thirsty. Do lions lick their lips when they are bored?

Someone was tugging her to follow; it was Little Drum who was throwing insults at the lion creature.

And the further she got from the beast, like a few feet she felt safer and noticed the stitches and bandages and recognised the creature as the Maponosian Griffin Lion that had defended her against the Rock Dwellers.

Another few feet from its mouth and more fear left her.

People are allowed to have fear, even brave Comet Fighters?

“All because he thinks he is the king’s best friend he is better than any of us, I too am the king’s best friend and know I am better than anyone,” Little Drum complained.

Boudicca wondered if she was in Alice and Wonderland?

HORROR upon horrors the Griffin was moving, following Little Drum’s insults.

Gad shut up monkey!

“Rag what do you want?” Little Drum asked standing still and Boudicca found that wide mouth was a foot away from her head.

A dribble of sweat appeared and ran down her back.

“Gee up old Rag,” Little Drum who had in one go landed on the Griffon’s back and Rag meant door mat so was another insult.

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“One day I will eat you in one go monkey,” Rag.

And Boudicca picked up the thought; it was like picture talk, symbols, ESP.

No I have an imperial implant that transmits feelings and changes them into pictures, Boudicca held onto sanity desperately.

But Rag or the monkey Little Drum didn’t have any of these modern things in their head.

And Rag and Little Drum passed her.

Boudicca was not tempted to escape, there were multi coloured mushrooms and worse, giant ants all about her.

So followed and was really tempted to grasp the Griffon’s tail for good measure.

And as if it could read her mind, its tail extended back just for that purpose.



Illustration 36: It beat walking

Bird man

There must be a renegade imperial surgeon loose here; they *must* have implants like I do.

But some girlish part of her was really amazed with Bird land and she looked for the Bird man with the scar.

Another part of that girlish mind!

“Now you gave me a promise,” the voice belonged to the Bird man with the scar that was a vivid purple from anger directed at Little Drum.

Not her.

But she was smart enough to realise she was involved, she had seen too much.

“I guess I won’t be leaving then,” Boudicca looking at the ants.

He said nothing.

And a boyish part of him was glad she couldn’t leave, *he could see more of her*.

And the purple of anger turned to the redness of embarrassment.

Nor did he return her to her own chambers but to his and to do so entered the giant trunk of a tree that was hollow.

It was an elevator to the upper levels of that tree.

Boudicca was sure it went sideways and down, not just UP to other trees!

And the lift opened to show a large throne room that appeared to be wider than the tree itself.

Illusion girl, all tricks.

But what was real was the diorama in front of the throne.

“Here is Planet Maponos as concerns us, Tara 6 sorry,” he said it with bile, “as you

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can see the Madrawt's have a third and the imperialists another third, which leaves us a third.

Equal shares.

No, this is our planet, remember," he was reading her mind.

Saw in her eyes he was cheating, taking advantage of her vulnerability.

He shook his head and left her mind alone.

"You are seeing our last chance to drive the Madrawt's out," he was telling her and she was wondering who he was, he must be close to his Mingo Drum to be allowed to show her this diorama?

"I can't free you now until peace has been made with Tzu Strath my enemy," he told her.

It was 'my enemy' that alerted her to his identity.

"Tzu Strath put a scar across the traitor Mingo Drum," she deliberately for a reaction.

She got one.

"What do you know about Tzu Strath and me?" He asked, "Nothing but his lies for he is a human void of the warrior code," he venomously as he sat upon

His throne.

"That in the heat of battle against the Madrawt's you took your fighters and fled," she replied firmly," she knew he wasn't going to kill her because: she lived

She had seen his lust.

He wanted her but his warrior code had stopped his advances so far. So he was the dreaded king. All this time she had been in the company of the monster himself.

But she had no fear of him.

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He was just the scard Bird man.

She should have guessed from his bravery.

Only Mingo Drum Vercingetorix would have rescued her in that fashion.

Let us pity Mingo Drum Vercingetorix for he was in the hands of one of the empire's most beautiful desirable young women.

Poor old Mingo.

Hadn't a chance.

"I was told that if we were victorious Tzu Strath would declare war upon my people.

Why then should I fight with my real foe? Are we Bird people, snakes that meekly wait the pot? No for even the snake fights back.

And I follow logic and yes, Tzu Strath put this scar here when I tried to leave," he ranted.

"As you crippled his left leg?"

"He deserved it, we are enemies," he offered.

"He was told you were going to lead your warriors against him in a surprise attack while he was fighting the Madrawt's," this had been told her by her father.

"I know," he replied, "the work of Reeman Black Hair and he believed them rather than Mingo Drum Vercingetorix."

"You are his enemy," she replied after a pause.

"As are the Madrawt's," he answered.

Now she knew the truth for she didn't think this proud warrior would lie to her or to anyone.

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She also knew her father hadn't told her everything about The Battle of Treason. She had taken it for granted that Mingo Drum had betrayed her father and the victory had been taken over by the media to foster expansionist imperial policies.

"The Bird men are treacherous savages that practice human sacrifice and need conquering," and she had lapped it all up but now that she was seeing them first hand she wasn't so sure about anything she had been told on the subject 'Bird men.'

But there was still a nagging doubt that Mingo Drum knew her identity, deliberately brainwashing her to weaken her.

"Why don't you talk to Tzu Strath, I am sure he will abide by any honourable peace that is made," she tendered.

"A hundred peace treaties have been broken," he replied and this is the result, "where are the Bird People?" He asked as he waved a hand across the diorama.

"Those were peace treaties with the Emperor Caesar Alexander Vortigern not him," she defended.

"And Tzu Strath is his servant," he told her.

"Tzu Strath is his own man, imperial policies are changing, and he will not obey his emperor so loyally again." She defended her father, she would like to say more but that would give away her identity and she did not want to do that in case she became a hostage and was never freed.

"And he gives his own woman to Madrawt's, why?" He pointed out meaning Tzu Strath *was the true beast*.

PAUSE.

Then she answered.

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“I was to arrange a peace with Ce-Ra,” half truth so she felt she hadn’t exactly lied to him. Somehow she felt he hated liars and *she didn’t want him to hate her*.

“United front against us, how wonderful? What one expects of a man who gives his own kind to Ce-Ra too play with,” he accused and she felt a cold shiver at ‘to play with’ and she felt bitterness towards her own father.

“The stability of the empire and the lives of billions depend upon this marriage,” her father had weakly defended himself. When she asked all the time that if his emperor said blow your brains out, that is an order, would he do it?

And here stood the noble savage Mingo Drum who would never give any woman to Ce-Ra.

She was ashamed of the human/alien races of the empire that had lost what the Bird men hadn’t, honour and valour.

“Tzu Strath is a worthy enemy, a good man loyal to his emperor. I wish I had so many minor kings and queens as loyal to me as Caesar Alexander Vortigern has?” Mingo saddened, defending his enemy.

She was taken aback by this defense and wondered if he had read her mind the way Old Rag had sent his emotions into her?

“I don’t read minds, I read body talk,” he explained, “One day I hope you will tell me the truth why Tzu Strath gives a woman like you to Ce-Ra?”

He left her to think about that.

She wanted to, but she still didn’t trust him and she didn’t blame her father, orders were orders. But it was time her father played his own cards against her emperor who did not deserve the loyalty of brave men.

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But the Bird man came back to say:

“Tzu Strath is not his own man, I am. A peace treaty with him would not be broken while he stood up to his emperor,” then left again and she did not see him for a while, and for good reasons.”

As Boudicca told Vern Lukas

The scribe.