

“Five and a half years went by since that day. A four and a half year old lean little boy whose tummy protruded with his latest meal ran out of the bushes in front of the red ant Mingo rode; masses of blond curls hung from the boy’s head.

He also wore the harness of a warrior, small size of course.

Now Mingo at first was annoyed the boy was allowed in the marshalling area until the child ran to him shouting “Daddy.”

“How can I be angry with a child?” He said to his aids.

“Colour stripes hand him up.”

Colour stripes Kenala did so breaking the stern wrinkles to wink at the lad as he picked him up.

“Where is your mummy?” Mingo asked.

The boy jerked a finger towards a pile of rocks.

“Nanny, take the boy to Castle Artebrate, I will see him shortly, “and allowed the lad to open a leather pouch on his thick waist belt and take one, two, three and when told enough, four more dried fruits covered in wild honey in panic he would get no more, was greed and only got off when promised his daddy would bring him back a toy.

Mingo looked at Colour Stripes Kenala; the man was nearing retirement if Bird men warriors were lucky enough to reach that age these centuries past.

Bird man

Kenala had served him well.

He was the Manticore standard bearer sand it was a personal honour as the standard was a rallying point and the enemy knew it.

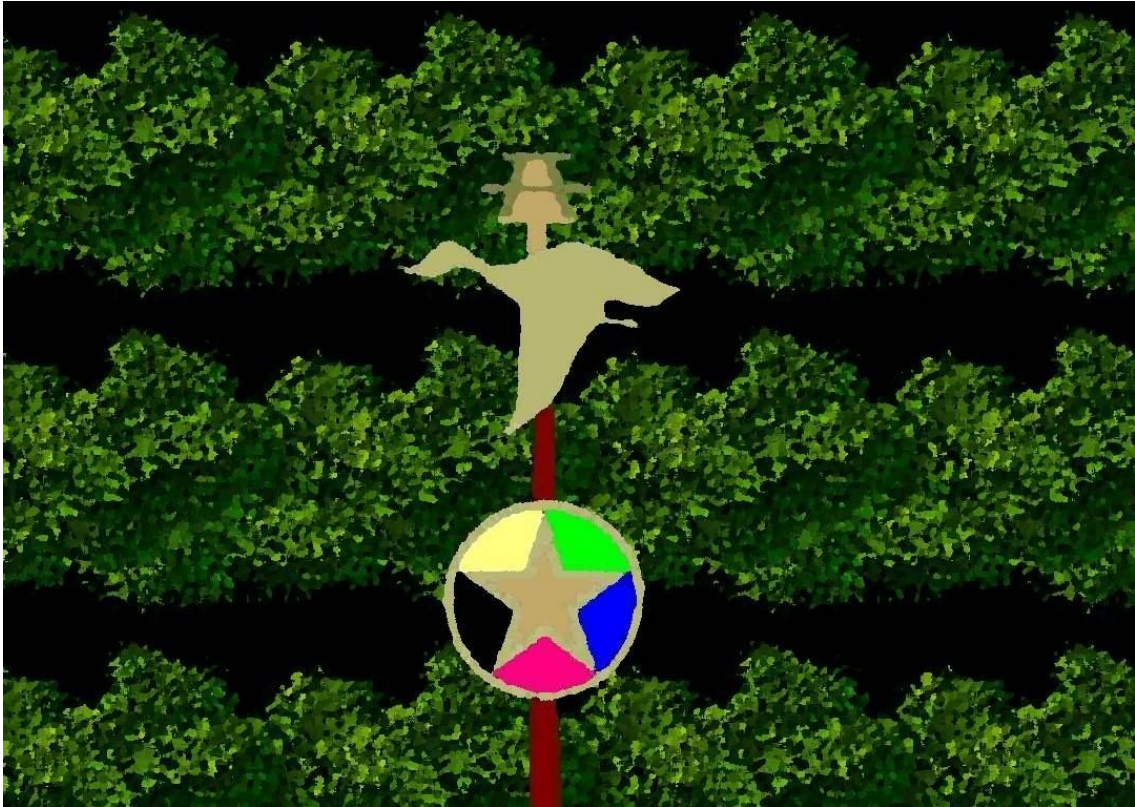


Illustration 58: A standard

And all knew Manticore meant Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.

Hit the standard, hit Mingo Drum, wipe out the Manticore Legion, you wipe out the heart of the Bird men Nation.

It was Mingo Drum; it personified everything in Bird man culture.

“There are many Madrawts on the lose Kenala,” Mingo mused. Mingo had been pressing Kenala to retire for years but continual war had demanded Kenala’s experienced

Now Mingo ordered Kenala to personally escort his son home and guard him always. In effect he was getting his retirement orders, away from the front line, go and

Bird man

live his life out behind the lines growing melons.

Kenala was too much the warrior to argue with his king in front of the Manticore Legion.

So picking up the little person he walked away.

Someone in the ranks drew his short sword and beat his reflector shield.

In the passing of a second the air was filled with the hiss of unsheathing metal and the beat of the sword.

Kenala could not stop the tears.

This was a great homage the Manticore Legion was paying him.

Now he was to be the child's guardian he did do it well and the child was hitting his helmet with his own blunt toy sword in imitation of the warriors.

Colour Stripes Kenala knew he had joined a new battle that would tax his strength to the limits.

He would not fail his elected war chief who held the title of king. He would take the child back to his mother who waited for him at the human border.

Also Kenala wished Boudicca for the sake of the child would see his king not as a beast but as a husband.

Five and a half years to the day that Mingo Drum Vercingetorix had agreed to set Boudicca and all humans free.

Five and a half years to the day that Mingo had triumphed over the Madrawts driving them almost off their planet for good.

And Kenala wondered when the wars would end?

Peace would allow life to return to inter tribal warfare. Of course Mingo would no longer be War Chief of all Bird men.

Bird man

Just King of the Artebrate.

It had been a long time since they had fought the Gododdin Bird men. Kenala had personal grievances against them dating back almost a thousand years.

If he only knew?

The human empire was now split in two.

Conchobhar, Emperor of the east sat on his red throne in his palace upon the Planet New Alexandrius. Emperor of half known human space, was that enough for a man? He knew the answer, it was not.

His father still ruled as emperor of the west from New York, Planet Earth.

And he blamed Lady Boudicca Tzu and Planet Maonos for his curtailed ambitions.

Five and a half years had passed since the great victory over the Madrawts on Maonos and the Lady Boudicca had fallen with child to a Bird man beast king.

She should have got rid the worm inside her instead of building it up into a life within her womb.

Now the child could claim the Bird man throne.

Also heir to Tzu Strath's Guardian army.

A united threat to his ambitions.

Five and a half years since Tzu Strath had declared his army guardians to the empire with the promise to the populace that the guardians would restore the rightful emperor and bring in a golden age.

And the Emperor Alexander Caesar Conchobhar knew that the little boy Arthur Tzu as well as everyone else did in the empire and beyond, would be the restored one;

Boudicca's son.

Bird man

“There is much in a name master?” Lorn Lukas his First Minister of Sate said dreamily.

Conchobhar knew he was right.

Arthur and the round table taken from Earth’s legends.

“He must die,” Conchobhar quietly.

“Yes my Lord, he must die,” Lorn replied not clarifying who must die.

Anyway Lorn Lukas sought out a quite spot in the royal gardens. Then he plugged in his lead from his personal PCW to the socket behind his left ear.

He continued his writings on the History of Vercingetorix and the early Arthurian Myths.

Lorn Lukas was quite a remarkable man.

He was honest, open and incorruptible.

Born on the Planet Tara 6 AD 41568 he had grown up with the heroic legends of King Mingo Drum Vercingetorix and the Great War Lord Tzu Strath.

His father had been Chief Librarian of Tara 6 and his mother an archaeologist. Together they molded their son Lorn well for he had an inquiring mind, respected the past and dreamed of a Utopian future for all human/aliens.

So Lorn Lukas wrote many books under the ghost name Vern Lukas then published on Tara 6 and **illegally** distributed throughout the empire of the west and east.

They were all about a future golden age ruled by the Emperor Arthur.

He was planting the seeds of the golden age.

His books were cheap and more popular than the Emperor Alexander Caesar Conchobhar.

Bird man

Cloning was no longer a requirement for longevity. Medical researchers had prolonged life further by the development of the Master Pill.

One pill that had to be taken daily that stabilized the body protein hormone levels to those of a thirty year old man allowing the body to repair itself.

The Master Pill was very expensive.

It was in great demand as you can expect.

And Kernwy knew Diviciacus had them and seethed in side himself for as long as Diviciacus remained High Shaman, the Temple of Light would remain departed from its true teachings.

Diviciacus the son of a peasant farmer from Neptune 12. A man gifted at birth with strong ESP. A man who used his talents of soothsaying and fork bending to his advantage. A man who as a boy ran away from home and asked the Christian Order of Piety to take him in as an orphan.

And he studied for the priesthood, then seeing that the Temple of Light was in favor after the Wars of Tara 6 so joined them, exclaiming the shamanistic values of the aborigines of Neptune 12 as a way of reaching the imperial God Dispater.

And he looked and did see that the High Priest Zarpod the alien was not in favour with the Emperor Caesar Alexander Vortigern because of his birth.

So befriended Zarpod and found himself at court and become the astrologer for the emperor, performing mind and healing tricks so that the emperor favoured him and Zarpod died of a new strain of chicken pox.

They said officially that it was because he was an alien who had come to Earth without body immunity against the disease.

Unofficially Diviciacus murdered him.

Bird man

And Diviciacus was no longer a poor peasant boy but rich and set about making the imperial religion the unifying force in the empire it was supposed to be.

And he ruled it like an emperor.

And Kernwy came from Anglo Indian stock and knew much about the Brahma teachings of spirit flight and joined the Temple of Light and Diviciacus was his father who had lain with his mother. The only contact Diviciacus had had with his mama.

And Diviciacus saw Kernwy as the perfect front of respectability that the Temple of Light needed.

Such was the state of the human empire.

Full of divisions.

And on Planet Maponos War Lord Tzu Strath ruled the human territories and galaxy like he was

A War Lord.

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Boudicca met colour sergeant Kenala at the well of Urd to take the boy to his human home for six months.

Shame for Mingo.

It wasn't much of a life for the lad some said, always being uprooted.

But he had some very good friends.

Mingo had given him Little Drum, Old Nag, Baldy, Bran Llyr, Branwan and Kenala.

What more could the lad ask for when he had such mythical companions as these?

His father and mother united.

Boudicca hardly saw Mingo if she could help it.

Bird man

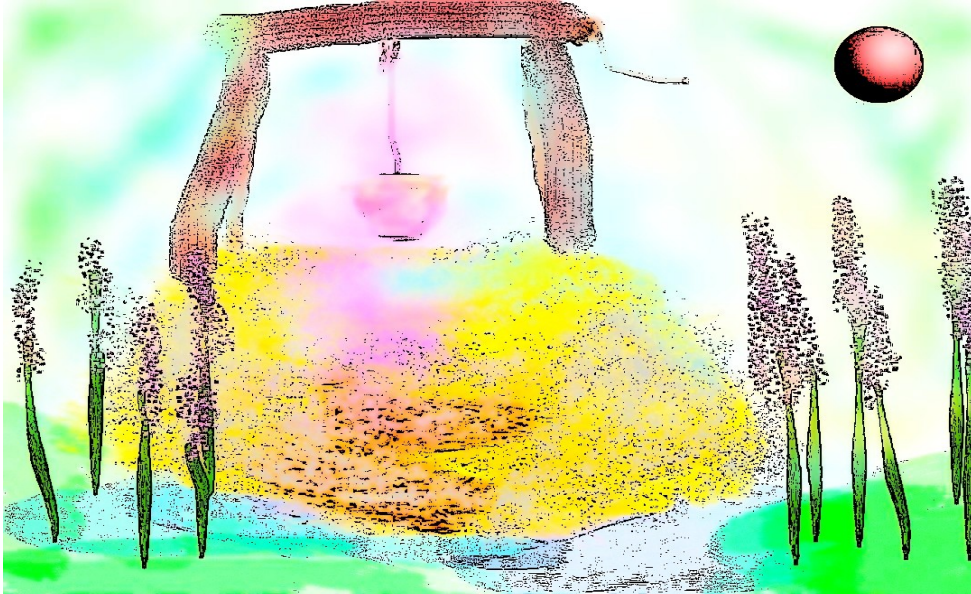


Illustration 59: It was just a well, nothing special.

She hated him for the BEAST he was.

He had deserted her.

He had never loved her, just talked his way into her bed.

He had sent her the humans Hamon Ma who was now a cadet in a fighter squadron and Hart Woo now married to an officer and Thomas, adopted out.

BREWARE.

Yet none knew that Reeman Black Hair was also at the Well of Urd.

“Mama,” Boudicca’s son shouted pulling away from Kenala’s arms.

“Arthur Verica,” she answered running to pick him up, cuddle, hug and kiss and the boy smiled with pleasure.

”How is you daddy?”

“Playing with ants. When can I have an ant mama? Daddy says when I am a big boy but I am a big boy now. Please please please make him give me an ant for a pet,” Verica pleaded.

Bird man

Boudicca promised.

Then she allowed him with weak protests to empty out the shoulder bag Tribune Henry her escort was carrying.

Mama always had presents.

And he found some hover car models, wooden fighter gliders, some sweets and story books that he would get mama to read him while he snuggled up to her at bed time nice warm, cosy and safe with his teddy.

And he had plans for mama, he wanted six stories, the loo again, a milk drink, getting chased and threatened with a spank, the promise to sleep if she just read another story, then he would try to start the cycle again to stay up longer.

The little boy was too smart for his own good.

Reeman Black Hair grinned.

The family scene had not touched his heart. He smiled for he had them, there was brat Arthur, so called bringer of the Golden Age.

Why Reeman Black Hair gave the order and there was a disturbance of the air.

Colour Stripes Kenala jumped for the boy falling on top of him.

X L

A mortar

E P OD

ED.

Releasing blue gas that sent all to sleep.

See Reeman Black Hair took no chances with his precious hide. He feared the wild animals of this planet.

And some were in front of him.

Bird man

Tribune Henry jumped down an embankment, he didn't realise it dropped a hundred feet, but he was safe.

The lion creature and elephant would go to the arena, the flying ape be sold as a pet oddity.

The others captives.

The human imperial escorting platoon he had impaled and their vehicles set ablaze.

He wanted all to know who had ARTHUR.

Ten miles distant Mingo Drum Vercingetorix was sitting above one of his law menhirs made of black stone.

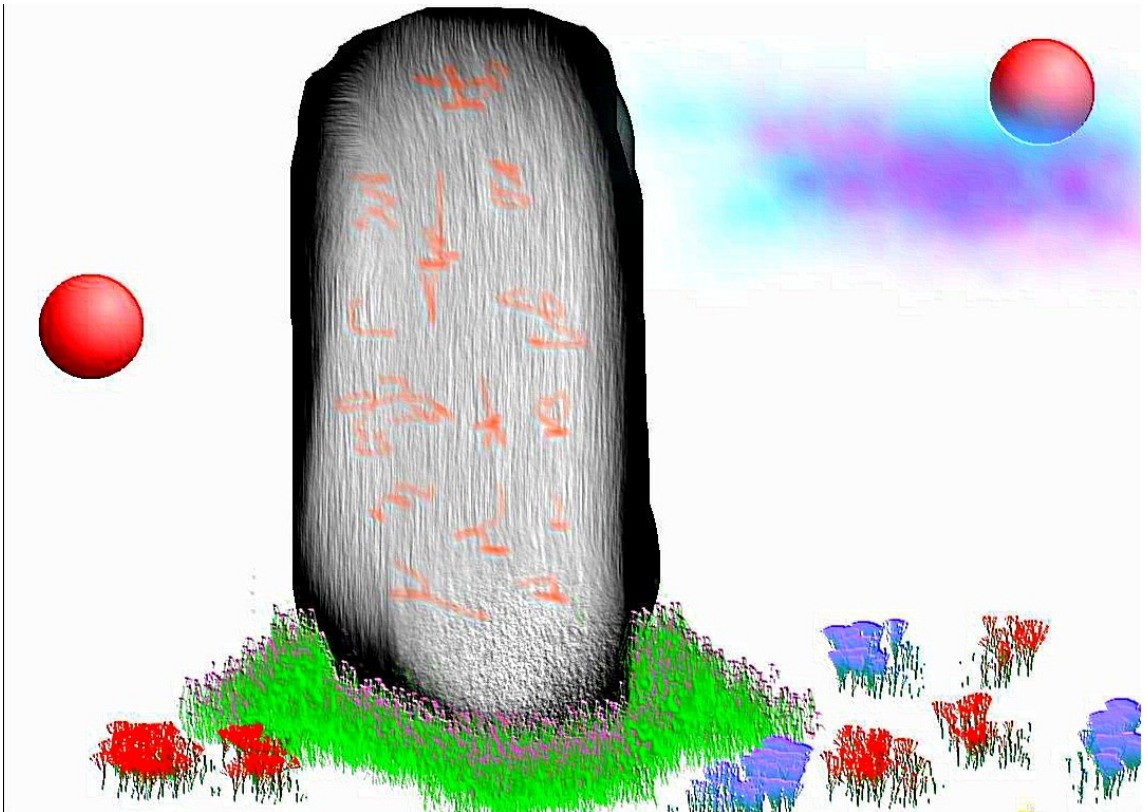


Illustration 60: A black law menhir

Below his craftsmen had just finished chiseling a new law.

It read

Bird man

“Let there be peace between Bird men and
Imperials in the land.”

He knew that his people would never have the whole planet to themselves again.

Times had changed.

He was not a fanatic; he had a family, the whole Bird Nation. The young warriors would rave and rant about no peace and shedding the last of their blood and would rather die than live next to imperialists. But he was king and knew many wanted normal ordinary lives, even if it meant surrender.

Peace had come.

This law was the start.

But Mingo saw the smoke, knew it was coming from the Well of Urd where his son Verica was meeting HER. Of all his sons, this one had survived the wars, this one was important, not that they weren't all important, but because of the imperial hereditary laws this young boy stood too gain much.

He had not slept with another female since taking the chastity oath.

FOR HER.

It was now common knowledge.

One doesn't refuse the most beautiful women that came to seduce him to populate the gene pool with his genes, the best in the population without good cause.

He was sure Boudicca would have heard by now. How it affected her he didn't know, but he had made sure the vow and his word was law.

So Mingo rose and rent the air with a coughing grunt. His word would be carried swiftly on the fast warm air currents to the Well of Urd.

Bird man

His craftsmen looked and saw their war leader glide towards the smoke.

Mingo Drum was not a happy man. His boy Verica was gone and he knew by the impalements the Madrawts had taken him.

Now the roar of motors and an imperial convoy came to a halt a safe distance away.

Mingo still called the humans imperialists. He had not come to terms yet that the empire had been fragmentised and that Tzu Strath was his own man now.

Humans were all humans and imperialists from Earth.

Mingo straightened his back and came to his full seven feet, his face drained of emotion, his scar thumped.

There getting out of a sand coloured armoured car was a man he disliked.

Tzu Strath had already seen him, had the advantage of knowing what he himself had to do.

He limped alone up to the Bird man king.

“Here is the beast that ruined my daughter’s life,” Tzu Strath.

“Here is the man whose daughter ruined my life,” Mingo Drum thought.

“The beast that mimics humans. The so called king who gave me a limp,” Tzu Strath thought and as for the limp he liked it that way, made his men see he had seen action, gave him an expression of an experienced war grizzled general.

“The new human emperor of Tara 6. The human male who ripped my face in two,” and Mingo liked his scar for it frightened his enemies and gave an air of ferocity. It was a good shield to hide the softness inside him.

“Here is the beast whose army I need against Conchobhar and others,” Tzu Strath.

“Here is the human whose army I need to remain king until my dreams of peace

become law,” Mingo thought.

“Here is the beast that gave me a bird as a grandson,” Tzu Strath badly.

“Here is the human seed that gave me a human she wolf as a woman and a human grandson,” Mingo also badly.

And Vern Lukas wrote, “Did these two ever stop and ask what life would be like without each other?

Whom would they hate?

Who would they fight?

The Madrawts had been pushed off the planet, for now?

Who would they love if Tzu’s daughter Boudicca did not exist or her son Arthur the Verica of Mingo Drum had not been born?

The Madrawts?

And Mingo Drum and Tzu Strath faced each other, like two beasts waiting to kill each other.

The Great War Lord Tzu Strath rested his right hand upon his ceremonial laser sword ‘Bright Hope.’

His soldiers had fanned out but not approached.

Mingo Drum’s hand rested upon his short sword ‘Law’s’ hilt.

In the skies above his Manticore Legion was forming, already young warriors eager to kill humans had answered his call, glad war had come again and flying like birds to his aid.

It was a poignant moment.”