

Bird man

Swamp Dragon

“The grandeur of the Gododdin capital Torrs was their giant temple that Boudicca had once seen from the air. Only once for these Bird men domains were riddled with anti fighter missiles. No one in their right mind flew outside the imperial sector on uncharted imperial maps without support.

The rest of Torrs was made up of swamp Islands in a huge estuary of a wide river.

The land ship docked at the bottom of a road that led into the temple. Quickly the Gododdin warriors and slaves covered the vessel in swamp greenery so that it could not be seen from the air.

The Gododdin like all Bird men took no chances as they had been driven into the most inhabitable lands on their own planet.

“Behind us are the polar ices,

In front our enemies.

We are the last of the free,

Do we fight and die for liberty.”

Was a common saying by the Bird men before they went into battle?

Anyway' Queen Cartimandua was very beautiful yet muscular Boudicca decided, akin to a woman who did weight lifting. But she could fly and here the muscles worked hard and so developed.

The queen's hair was long and black and her grey eyes shone intelligence. Like all Bird people she wore light clothes; so showed her tanned bosoms as if she had come out of a Restoration Charles ii painting.

A tinge of jealousy swept Boudicca.

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“I wonder why my Bird man king never married her and got himself two kingdoms in the bargain.

Soon Boudicca found the answer!

Her audience room had the same picture writing, but it did not depict rural or battle scenes, but scenes of sacrifice.

Polished enemy skulls had been fused into a throne and the empty eye sockets set with red gems.

Standards of her fallen foes adorned the roof and a large smoking pit was in front of the throne.

All about stood nobles and warriors with grim faces.

In this Boudicca found her answer why her Bird man king had not married the beautiful queen Cartimandua.

“Boudicca Tzu welcome,” the queen said toneless.

Boudicca was no fool and knew she was welcome only as a prisoner and hostage.

“So this is little Arthur the boy king who will bring the golden age,” she purred, “our golden age,” and her warriors laughed.

Boudicca knew she meant a golden ransom.

“Harm the boy Verica and Mingo will kill you,” Bran Llyr shouted.

“Yes, Little Drum will want revenge,” Little Drum boasted.

SILENCE.

A ROAR OF LAUGHTER.

“The loyal friend Bran Llyr, I have heard much of your exploits, even seen you in Mingo’s court.

And this your lover Branwan?” Queen Cartimandua hissed, exaggerating her hip

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movements as she walked amongst them, stroking Bran Llyr's long golden hair.

"A champion of Mingo's," she added looking about her court.

FORCED laughter.

"What would Mingo give for you? One cauldron full of gold?" She asked squeezing his cheeks so that his mouth opened and he met her gaze defiantly.

To Branwan's annoyance she kissed the manacled Bran Llyr.

Bran spat the kiss out.

Why Queen Cartimandua's eyes briefly flared hateful anger towards the Artebrate.

She Hated Mingo Drum Vercingetorix who had spurned her affections centuries past.

She hated Mingo for being War Chief and King of the Bird People when it should be her job.

She hated all Mingo's friends.

She was forcing alliances with tribes further north whose borders were not under pressure from the Madrawts and human aliens. Those who were tired of sending gold and warriors to help Mingo fight their supposed enemies who only threatened Mingo's domains.

Mingo had defeated the Madrawts with his ants so were no longer a threat; now time to settle old wounds!

The Northern Tribes were looking at her for leadership; well Queen Cartimandua would lead them.

"Bring forth the sacred dragon," she said loudly.

"Nooooo," Branwan.

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Boudicca had no idea what the sacred dragon was? Mingo had never mentioned it too her.

Warriors now hurried to wind down a plank on chains from the roof so that the plank dipped into the steaming pit.

Shaman priests with skins and headdresses of alligators and dorsal fins on their backs appeared.

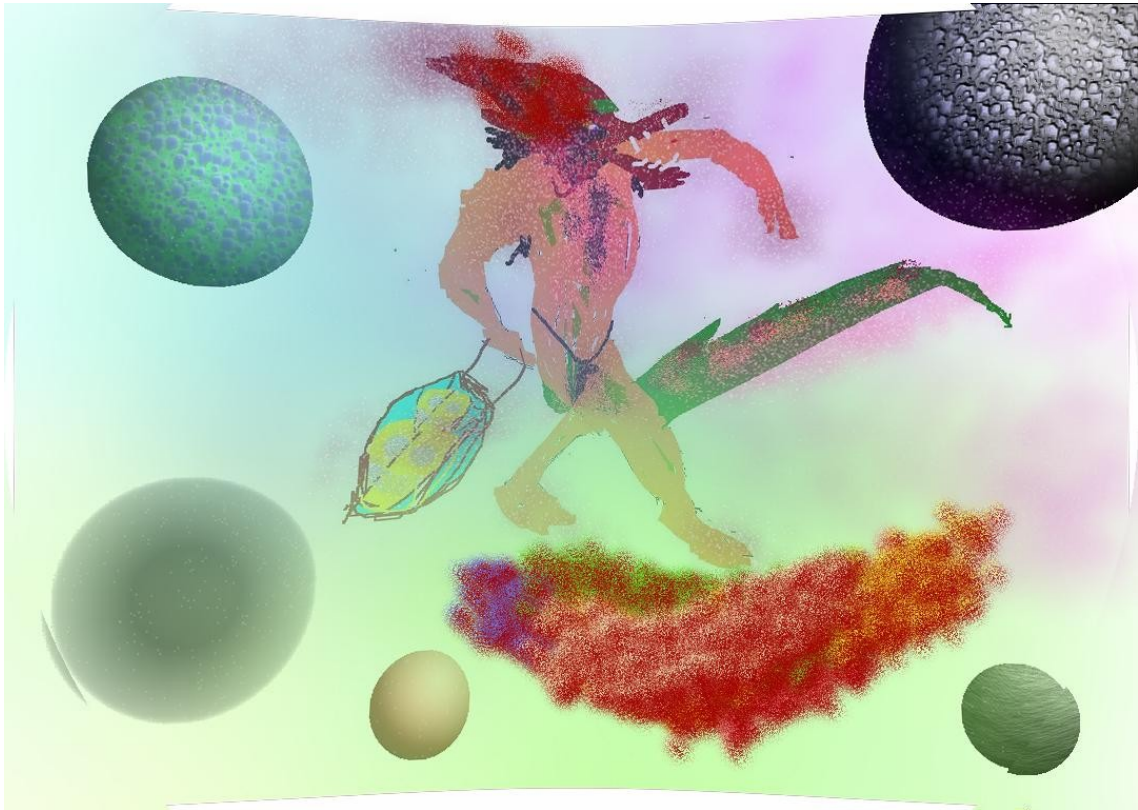


Illustration 62 : Crocodile teeth snap snap snap

They started throwing chub into the steaming pit and Branwan begged mercy for Bran.

Her panic spread to Boudicca who now pleaded for her son.

“Who, Verica or Arthur?” Queen Cartimandua’s irony.

Now Boudicca swore to herself that if they ever got out alive she would never

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leave the boy's side again. His home would be her home; she would not be secretly ashamed of his Bird man ancestry.

“An education for Verica, I understand he does have some Bird man blood in him? Not entirely an alien then?” *The queen asked referring to his human side.*

But were interrupted by the appearance of the sacred dragon as it lumbered up the plank.

So men appeared with long pikes whose tips gave out a nasty electric shock.

Queen Cartimandua took no chances.

She knew perfectly well there was nothing sacred about this swamp dragon. But she did know how to use religious power to support her rule.

Shamans backed her as a fertile reign.

She supported shamans back.

Both got what they wanted.

Power.

And the queen spoke to nobles beside her who gave orders for Bran Llyr to be separated from his friends.

The sacred dragon moved closer to the prisoner, its mouth open revealing rows upon rows of serrated dirty teeth from which hung past meals.

Like the Komondo dragon its mouth was full of septicemia bugs.

The past bits looked humanoid.

And Bran Llyr did what I would do too, kick his guards and put his manacled feet like a rocket into the dragon's nose.

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“This is murder, what contest is this? What sport? Where is the noble Bird man now compared to the human, who is better, who more evolved, who closer to the silly monkey?” Boudicca insulted.

That is why Queen Cartimandua waved pike men in, she was in deep thought, here was Mingo’s human fancy bit who had insulted her, and Bird people have a weakness, vanity.

“Arm Bran Llyr, we would have done so anyway,” Cartimandua.

And it was done.

And all apart from Boudicca knew she lied too.

Then the queen threw the keys to the manacles behind the swamp dragon; she still had murder on her mind.

Therefore Bran Llyr faced the dragon with a long sword.

And he had never fully recovered the use of his left arm from his wound after the Vern bite. But he was a warrior and as he said, “I fear nothing but the sky falling upon my head and the waves drowning me,” so attacked swinging the long sword which he had no faith in because it was not his own, and the magic that made a sword work for you belonged to another.

Worse, the sword’s magic being from an enemy would work against him.

But he was not afraid to die, so strong was his belief in an after life.

And the sword cut deep into the lips of the swamp dragon.

Purple blood splattered Boudicca.

And the swamp dragon hurt snapped back but Bran Llyr flew landing behind.

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And kicked the manacle keys towards Little Drum.

“Why me?” She asked.

“Use your tail to get the key,” Bran Llyr and Little Drum did so under protest, she might be the bravest warrior in the land, but when faced with a real threat became the household pet she really was.

The tail of the dragon swished and knocked Bran over so he rolled against pike men.

And the dragon followed.

“Why me oh why me?” Little Drum complained as she freed herself.

Now Bran swung his sword and kept hitting the dragon many times, but the dragon sought revenge for it was blinded by pain and pushed Bran back towards the steaming pit.

“Hurry Little Drum,” Branwan begged as she watched her lover Bran parry a snap of the jaws.

“I am I am,” Little Drum replied, then Branwan was free and unarmed she leapt past the pike men jumping onto the neck of the dragon her fingers reaching for the eyes.

Bran Llyr now thrust his sword deep into the beast’s soft throat scales.

Such a gush of blood when he withdrew his sword.

And the dragon snapped a last time, pinning his torso in its mouth.

Branwan found the eyes.

The dragon fell into the steaming pit.

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Branwan could be seen raising her head for air several times.

Boudicca ran to her child, hugging, shielding him.

“This can’t be happening, heroes always live,” she thought.

But the last she saw of Branwan was her body between the jaws of the blinded dragon as she went under the bubbling waters for the last time.

Queen Cartimandua knew Mingo Drum would come to avenge the deaths of his friends and meet his own.

Boudicca wished he would come to, she knew those who had died, they were not just birds but people.

And little Arthur being a little person cried.

Boudicca wept for him.

And a lone head broke the tepid smelly surface, it was Bran Llyr but no body hung from it, then it sank.

And Queen Cartimandua stood legs apart, hands braced on hips, her bosoms rising with the fast beat of her heart. The fight had been exciting; she would choose a lover soon from the nobles or warriors about her.

But she did not want a heir, that meant civil war and none here where up to giving the Gododdin a king.

None except one, and she hated him, Vercingetorix of the Artebrates. He who thought he was above everyone else but no one had asked him his opinion for he did reply, “I am the first into battle and the last to leave.”

Was this the reply of a king who thought servants were made to serve him and he not them?

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And Boudicca knew why Mingo had never married her.

Mingo was good.

Cartimandua was bad.”

What my wife Cartimandua told
me, Vern Lukas.