

Bird man

They wished each other dead and bloated

“They are dropping like flies,” Tzu Strath examining the medical reports.

Tribune Henry felt guilty because he deep down was a dirty alien also..

“At least we know from the friendly Bird men that the mosquitoes carry it,” Tzu Strath.

Tribune Henry built up his courage to spit out his next words.

“I hear the plague has broken out amongst our Artebrate enemies.”

Tzu Strath straightened; he knew and pitied their children. The emperors could die; the advisers and corrupt officials, but the children were the future.

“The Madrawts are more badly affected,” Tribune Henry continued.

That made Tzu smile.

The only good Madrawt was a dead one.

He saw Madrawt children as some sort of weed blown about on the hot winds needing weed killer, lots.

Madrawts weren't aliens, an alien you could feel for, have pity, have sex with, even kids after gene compatibility therapy.

And Tzu had to admit, a Madrawt was exactly that, a Madrawt, even lower than well those blasted Bird men.

And this made him worry about his grand child Little Arthur and the tales of Vern Lukas (Lorn Lukas), that Arthur would herald the return of a golden age for the empire and the stories had become **prophecies**.

For aliens as well as humans.

But not Bird men.

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If the prophecies were true, the boy would survive! But Vern was making up the stories wasn't he? Tzu even believed them! And because Vern was making them up Arthur could die just as a normal child could?

"I am assured our genetic scientists have come up with an experimental vaccine of sorts," Tzu said aloud believing in them rather than the gods and prophecies "Send me Nostradamus also," he added.

And Tribune Henry still felt guilty as he was an alien and so were the Madrawts; even Bird people and they were dying of this plague; unlike Tzu he felt guilt that Tzu was gloating that so many of this planet's non imperial inhabitants *were dying out*.

Nostradamus had changed since his encounter with the Bird man King Mingo Drum Vercingetorix. He no longer saw Bird men as just intelligent budgies, savages that even the imperial gods hated so turned a blind eye when you shot one down practicing clay pigeon shooting!

They were a persecuted alien humanoid people he knew now.

He had seen the wonders of The Flaming City of Mingo; knew everyone had it wrong about these people. Now he hated spying missions against them for he knew he was speeding up their cultural extinction.

But he loved his master Tzu, as he was one of the few people, human or alien that treated the hunchback as a person; but so had the Bird man Mingo and more so.

He liked the Bird man, identified with him; both had the same problems of wanting acceptance by the norm. Both were ugly and Nostradamus hated his body.

Why take a razor to your wrists or legs? By doing that he was admitting defeat, allowing the disgust shown to him by his supposed betters to reach him, pervert him,

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and fester hate in his heart.

A heart that was bursting to love and laugh.

So told himself there was nothing wrong with his body, it was his, so he was deformed; he was never lonely as he could buy physical love.

If he was feeling revengeful for the way he was born he would suddenly turn the lights on to fill the working woman with revulsion and enjoy seeing it on her face.

Making her feel dirty as if she had just been *with a Bird man*.

He was just plain ugly like the misunderstood Bird men.

Like Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.



Illustration 73: Nostradamus stunk like the animal skins he wore, a master spy for alien worlds were who knows what had antennae sticking out of their heads.

Ugly.

So shouldn't punish himself for his body.

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Sometimes he wished he was on the Bird man side and fly with them, but when they found he was the illusive imperial spy they had wanted to catch for years; they did give him the Triple Death for sure.

“We are what we are,” he comforted himself.

Loneliness the great killer and Nostradamus was lonely.

None of this marriage nonsense for him. He was free to drink and buy sex when he felt the urge for Tzu paid well.

He ate what he liked.

Slept when he wanted.

He was Nostradamus and proud of it, just like Mingo the Bird man warrior was a proud being; you had to love yourself first to be proud?

Yes he and Mingo had much in common.

THEY WERE BOTH LIERS.

Now a moral conflict raged in him.

“Ah Nostradamus,” Tzu Strath greeted him, offering him a seat and ordering Tribune Henry to bring refreshments.

Now if he wasn't the hunchback Nostradamus he wouldn't be mingling with such great company, helping to shape history.

It was worth being made this way, it was his purpose in life to be a spy and help spread human imperial culture to the far limits of known charted space.

And thanked the imperial syndic judge for sentencing him to always be a hunchback for raping, well in his eyes he saw it as revenge against the girls and boys who had taunted him for years over his deformity. The punishment had done him well, the imperial branding iron on both bottom palms to remind all he was a convict and

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death await those that tried altering his deformity.

He thanked his unknown deceased parents that had left him an orphan and penniless as other dads and mums would have paid a handsome fee for a cosmetic medic to sort him out.

He was the hunchback and best spy known.

He fitted in with alien cultures for he looked alien as he shuffled amongst their cities.

And knew the Tribune didn't like him being here as it gave an impression he and his master kept the company of vagabond beggars.

But they served the same master and that's what counted.

If Nostradamus had thought for a second Tribune Henry was plotting against Tzu he did cut the alien's gizzards so they plopped on the floor.

"Bring me Arthur as soon as you can please Nostradamus," Tzu and the please made him feel good.

And made Nostradamus look up with a crooked smile, "So the old goat loves the kid after all, just like he loves Nostradamus."

Why doesn't he tell the boy more often? The old fool ignoring his own blood line all because Mingo's blood was thrown in by fate.

"He is in the Gododdin lands," Nostradamus replied wiping the remains of a cream tart from his big rubbery lips. He was very partial to cream tarts, "Have him back in no time."

The War Lord Tzu Strath showed him an open drawer. Nostradamus now filled his pouches full of imperial gold dollars of different values.

There was much to buy and many to buy and he had many bottomless pockets.

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Illustration 74: Henry was so full of himself

Equipment, tongues, women and drink, who said life as a hunchback was bad.

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And he left to get himself vaccinated and put his trust in the gods that the experimental medicine would work.

Much did he differ from his War Lord whose trust in gods had vanished?

Much did Nostradamus have in common with Mingo Drum Vercingetorix who believed in mystical gods who were the gods of magic and could be reached through spirit possession?

Thus the two of them had much in common with the High Shaman Diviciacus and the official religion of the empires, Dispaterism, spirit possession.

“You pay him too much,” Tribune Henry voiced.

“And we pay Queen Cartimandua much for her broken word. And she did the same to the Madrawts which means Tribune her Gododdin have become one of the most powerfully armed Bird man nations.

Thank Dispater for the Choking Death or they did be upon us now,” Tzu Strath.

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Diviciacus at this moment was many light years forward with his worried Western Emperor Caesar Alexander. The fleet he was leading was made up of mostly of Madrawt ships not under his command, but under the younger brother of Ce-Ra, Ce-Ammon who was a devout follower of his war god Huitzilopitchli.

He was after sacrifices.

Prisoners of war would do.

Allies also if shortages needed filled.

One heart a day he wanted and Diviciacus was in favour for he was High shaman to the new religious order. And the imperial soldiers feared the Madrawts for they outnumbered them and the imperialist army decided the lowest should chose amongst

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themselves, those in the guard house, men with bad records, kitchen porters, the cleaners.

There were enough of these types till they reached a small planet on the fringes of the Empire of the East of Conchobhar with a small holding garrison.

Here the Madrawts showed the times to come. The soldiers of the East fought bravely, accepting surrender terms from Vortigern, believing that they would be sent home disarmed; after all they were dealing with Western soldiers, humans.

Instead Diviciacus led an orgy of destruction.

Ten thousand human/alien soldiers had their hearts torn from their chests and given to Huitzilopitchli.

The rest of the colonial population was rounded up, most imprisoned to await their fate as slaves under their new Madrawt masters.

And the rest went to Diviciacus as a supply of hearts for the journey to earth and conquest.

And now all men and women hated the Emperor Caesar Alexander Vortigern and Diviciacus for their Madrawt friends.

Yes, the Emperor Caesar Alexander Vortigern was worried as he knew now the price of accepting Madrawt help to stay in wealth. And guessed that the Madrawts would soon not need him and planed his escape.

Orders were secretly given to fill a fast ship with as much wealth as possible. There were many alien worlds beyond deep space where the boundaries of chartered space ended.

His people hated him any way so he saw no moral reason to help against what he had given them, **Madrawts**.

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And Kernwy gloated and waited his chance to kill Diviciacus who in turn waited his chance to sacrifice Kernwy to Huitzilopitchli.

And a Madrawt supply ship had reached them on the captured planet with many sick men aboard.

One could say it was the revenge of the imperial gods for being deserted, for the sickness was the Choking Death;

Interplanetary Plague.

And the new Emperor and Lord of Madrawts Ce-Ra was afraid at last of something he could not see, and the Madrawt's who were more susceptible to the new plague died in their millions. For once again the mutant genes mutated producing new strains that could be spread by coughing and quickly killed down the scientists working to eradicate it.

And Ce-Ammon died the death, alone for his servants had already died.

And Ce-Ra left his court taking refuge in his battle wagon that floated just outside the atmosphere of the Planet Madrawt.

And it is said by Vern Lukas the Imperial Scribe and Historian "That the Madrawts had a poor health service for as such pored their wealth and resources into new weapons to the neglect of their common people. They were conquerors, invincible so forgot they were not invincible to disease.

The cost of a new battle wagon was the cost of twenty universities of knowledge and Madrawt leaders did not like knowledge, *it liberated*.

Knowledge made people think about those who led them.

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Knowledge changed tanks to irrigation schemes, why worry, vassal planet fed them.

Soldiers to students.

Soldiers obeyed, students didn't.

War rather than knowledge.

Shaman priests and their religion to freedom of thought.

And they were paying the price in death.

Madrawts had made a great error, if the creator didn't want us to have knowledge we wouldn't have it?

It is also written by Vern Lukas "That their whole civilisation was geared to the terrible War god Huitzilopitchli and woe Madrawts who challenged it for they found themselves denounced as devils and spread eagled on alters to be parted with their vital heart.

Then some bright spark mutated the virus so it affected Madrawts alone.

Now the Emperor Ce-Ra was really afraid.

And none shed a tear for him.

But wanted him dead and bloated.

Even his own people murmured against him.

Diviciacus and his kind were working overtime on them wanting their hearts to make Huitzilopitchli take the plague away.

It was religious genocide on a grand scale committed by Madrawts upon Madrawts.

But the plague was here.

Which meant Huitzilopitchli did not favour Ce-Ra.

The war gods were angry.

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All ignorant superstition.

And Ce-Ra was afraid of his religion.

For only the best hearts would appease Huitzilopitchli.

And people wanted Ce-Ra dead and bloated.