

Bird man

The Hunt Begins

“Military prisoners Colonel Horatio Nelson and young Billy McNash were standing at the road side about three miles out of New Alexandria when the air erupted to the sound of wild beasts.

They looked at each other understanding and then at their four executioners who looked afraid.

They were waiting for the nearby monoliths to come alive with hostiles but had seen none here during their two years stay here, except in chains and cages.

It was said hostile Bird spirits roamed here seeking revenge.

Then a lone Bird man appeared in the sky coughing and grunting to his kind that was answering.

Behind him came a lone figure on a zoomer.

Behind him a group of FREAKS, troopers with WINGS, were they hostiles?

And behind them a darkening sky as it filled with Bird men following the one up front.

It was also obvious the leading Bird man had seen all for he was heading their way.

Which meant the horde also.

“Dung,” one of the executioners fleeing.

He was followed by the others who fired some shots at the prisoners but missed as his aim was off from fear.

Nelson and McNash didn’t run, it was as if this was their reward for not poisoning nature for they were watching a one off thing.

Bird man

Then the lead Bird man was upon them, he was looking at them, saw their hands were tied.

He landed; this Bird man had a lot of sympathy for prisoners of the dictator.

Wonder why?

“You are free, go,” he told them after cutting their bindings.

“I am Colonel Horatio Nelson,” one of the newly freed.

“I have heard of the name, you are a famous man but you are still free,” and with that Mingo flew away.

The two men recognized him from a thousand posters and ran after him.

Mingo today was in a generous mood, today he had given away freedom.

The four executioner’s ahead, well one was a goat and he stopped and aims his rifle at Mingo and the three sheep followed suit.

They would have lived if they had just kept running.

Now Mingo showed the true worth of aerial tactics that inspired Tzu Strath too admire this race.

At a speed he had slashed their faces with cutlass as a few feathers floated down to show where he had been.

Then shot them, didn’t matter if it was in the back, he was killing enemy.

Who tottered and fell like drunks.

Mingo flew away, he had a destination?

Nelson and McNash reached their executioners and armed themselves and followed Mingo again.

And contrary to Wookey Hole’s belief, Mingo did not go straight to Hart Woo’s.

Bird man

She was going to meet Mingo elsewhere and was waiting now for him.

She was there; he knew she was waiting for him.

“What about your husband?”

“We weren’t married legally anyway,” she replied, she was still the same person.

“I love another,” meaning Boudicca.

“Thanks to Vern Lukas we all know,” she replied and handed Mingo a shot gun, he was a better aim.

He pointed it at the closing zoomer and fired.

“A good gun, fires true and straight,” he said taking a bandoleer of shells from her.

Yes sir it was a good thing Mingo sent all those pellets at Theodosius Wookey Hole or he did never have swerved *and crashed amongst cacti*.

“*Bloody heck,*” *we can only imagine what he cursed* as he was thrown onto those thorns.

This accident made Wookey Hole realise he was alone, his men were some distance behind and swerving away, they had seen the hostiles already, now Wookey saw them, “*Bloody heck,*” *we can only imagine what he cursed* as he followed his men. He was always the last to notice things wasn't he?

“I left a note for him,” Hart Woo explaining.

Mingo didn’t smile or show disfavor, just allowed her onto his back, she would keep him warm tonight.

Bird man

Below the mass of hostiles Colonel Horatio Nelson with young McNash who gave the universal hitch hikers signals.

“I am Tincommius of the Artebrate,” a landed burly Bird man introduced himself to them.

The warrior was not alone, had McNash done the right thing bringing attention to themselves?

Tincommius had a short sword stuck in his belt; red blood was congealing upon it.

“We have joined Mingo to fight for freedom,” McNash hotly.

Was why Tincommius strode up to him and looked long and deep into the boy’s eyes.

Innocence, excitement, truth was seen so life was given.

In an instant Tincommius had got Nelson and McNash on the backs of big men and they were air born.

“We are the last of the free,

Behind us the polar ice caps.

In front the enemy.

Better to die free than a slave,” McNash sang.

Colonel Horatio Nelson was smiling; the boy did have a certain innocence and likability about him.

Tincommius was also smiling; it was great to be free.

And now thousands of throats sang it in coughs and grunts so the song of Mingo went far and was heard.

It was an inhuman sound challenging human ways.

Bird man

As if nature was revolting?

Tincommius was glad he had brought the humans, the young one must be good to ignite all these beastly throats, the gods were with the man, luck would follow, and they needed lots of luck.

So it was then that Horatio Nelson and young Billy McNash got for free that Glen Zowanski and Dictator Henry must pay for:

FLIGHT.

The grimness that lined the jaw of the responsible officer left Nelson's face with the thrill of rushing air zooming away under his feet.

No one need tell young Billy McNash to enjoy. With a war yelp of his own making he thought not of the danger ahead but the great adventure embarked upon.

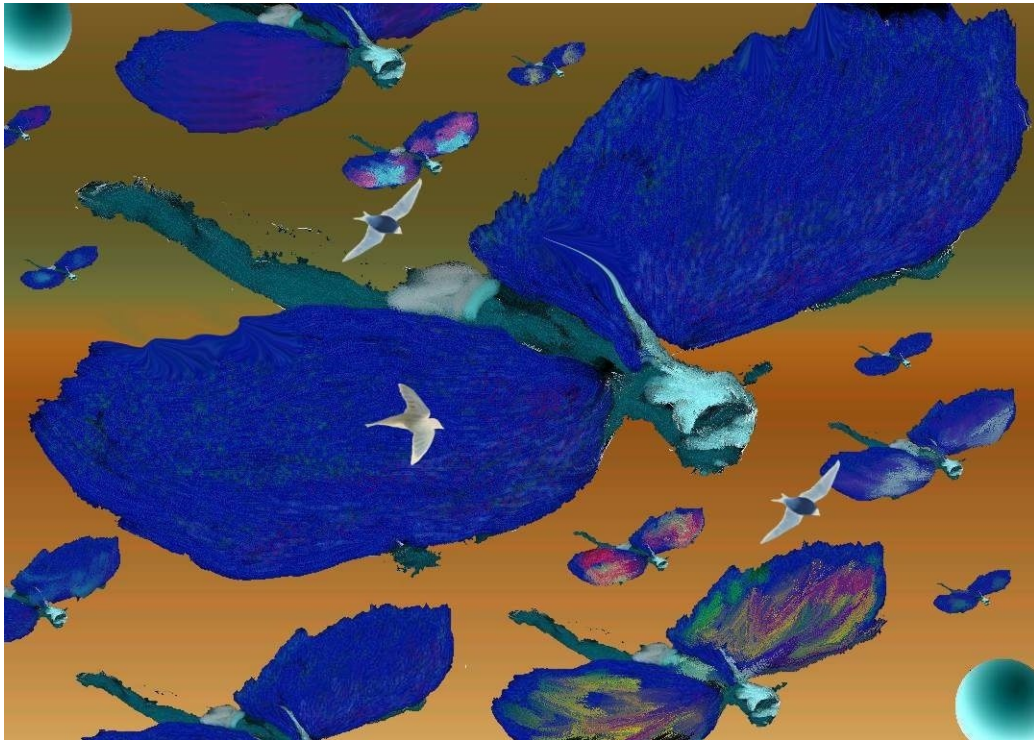


Illustration 102: They darkened the sky as swallows flew amongst them.

Bird man

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The Great Dictator Cedric Henry had left the front to return to his capital and was not amused by the damage done to commercial and residential establishments by the rioting hostiles.

Only the thought of thousands of dead hostiles lying in the streets cheered him, he ignored the thousands of citizens and troops they had killed.

The only good Bird man was a dead one.

Fires raged.

The air was thick with smoke and decay.

He cursed Theodosius Wookey Hole for his incompetence and for underestimating Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.

How could Dictator Cedric Henry blame himself?

A character flaw of society's captain's.

Now he made his way to the settler home of Hart Woo and found the note.

"Dear Daniel Odo,

I have left you and gone fight with Mingo against all that is rotten in society.

I don't think we should live together any the more as our past makes us strangers when you think about it.

Don't feel too let down as I had a great time with you while it lasted and think you were a terrific lover.

Maybe when this is all over we can get together again and have a swinging night.

Bird man

You friend Hart Woo.

Cedric Henry handed the note to an aid, Captain Roger Peacock.

By the note the major was innocent of involvement freeing Mingo.

“You will arrest this Major Odo and inform him if he wants a pardon he must find Hart Woo and kill her, you will accompany then kill him, take some good men, from the special services,” the dictator was not a forgiving man, he wanted someone punished.

To the dictator the major should never have set up home with a Bird, it was one thing seeking them after a night out with the boys. But living with one as if she was your wife?

Others must be discouraged following Odo’s behavior, Roger Peacock understood, *he was smiling*.

A life had just been judged and a man sentenced to die, *just like that, happens all the time*.

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Hart Woo was showing the way Hamon Ma and Major Odo had taken.

Now Major Vernpatgus wasn’t there when Mingo arrived, he was out on patrol; with his small troop.

But the five humans and two aliens who worked for the Star Dust Corporation were.

Boudicca heard the grunts and roars and knew through all that chatter, cat cawing and bird song one clear grunt was

Mingo’s personal call for her.

Bird man

She rose from her sitting position.

She gathered up her soiled clothes and held them close to her in an attempt to cover her nakedness.

She allowed herself to cry some, all the badness Vernpatgus had done was coming out.

She could go home now, there was no pistol in her mouth.

She didn't know where home was?

She knew even after all the years of separation and squabbling Mingo was the person she could lean against for support.

He was the one who made her belly swell.

He had awoken a passion in her in his presence.

He had left his face upon Arthur.

He always rescued her.

He still loved her.

He was Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.

He had made the Star Dust men afraid with his grunt added to the thousand other bird calls about him.

The din was terrific, Bird men were celebrating Mahbon returned, things would get better and they went plain crazy.

That day Wookey Hole ignited Tara 6 and should not be entirely held responsible for the wave of vengeance that swept through hostile and friendly hearts that one day.

Remember Wookey was a mutant, something not on display, a secret military project and would be dealt with according to the rules of war.

Bird man

That special day went on for weeks, refugees packed roads and flight ways streaming in from the wilderness and outlying areas, hostiles were back.

No Bird man was safe now; a friendly was a bird, so shoot it dead.

And Mingo knew he couldn't stop the vengeance with one word, "STOP." It needed an outlet for years of second class citizen treatment.

And before we go back to the story about what happened to the men at Star Dust some historians called those weeks the, 'Weeks of Bloody Revenge', but the dictator wrote of them, 'Weeks of Treachery.'

Bird men still took kids to bring up as their own.

Bird men still burned farmsteads down.

Bird men still took your woman.

Bird men still killed you or made slaves of you.

Bird men had not changed.

Bird men would not be forgiven this time.

Bird men would not exist either as friendlies or hostiles.

Anyway:

Those seven Star Dust employees didn't even try running because there was nowhere to run except hide under the dissecting tables and hope not to be found.

Their judger's had already saw the circling Vern and smelt the hormones released from the dead and dying Bird men on the pile outside.

Now Mingo Drum Vercingetorix stood looking at the heap, already those alive had been pulled off.

He had also found his good friend Kenala!

Hiding in a broom closet might have been better for the employees!

Bird man

News of the pile swept the ranks of Bird men and there were still lots of lonely imperial homesteads about.....WAS?

Tincommius stood just behind Mingo with Horatio Nelson and young Billy McNash.

“Let me execute those responsible to clean my soul of my race’s sin,” Horatio asked.

Was it because Bird men were not allowed to kill imperialist?

Mingo turned and saw who had spoken, he smiled, “What did you do wrong again to deserve execution?”

And Nelson told him what he had heard but in more detail.

The young Tincommius grunted, he was right about these humans; they were good men and as such would end up the friends of Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.

Then die as good men always do.

“These are Bird men, women and chicks they had been pulled apart for the secret of flight,” and now he wasn’t smiling and he looked at his assembled warriors.

A MINUTES SILENCE.

Then one young warrior gave grunted and they all went crazy.

Those seven employees were torn to shreds and silence only came back when red smudgy bits remained and there was nothing left to tear.

“Listen to me,

MINGO PAUSED FOR HIS MEN TO LISTEN.

We are the last of the free.

THE HOSTILES GRUNTED AGREEMENT.

Bird man

To the north are the polar ice caps.

THE HOSTILES NODDED SILENTLY.

Before us the enemy.

Better to die freemen than slaves.

A GREAT ROAR OF APPROVAL RENT THE AIR.

Go to the City of Winds and wait for me there.

Tincommius, I know you from the Manticore Legion, show those who are not
Artebrate the hidden armories. I make you Colour Stripes, Manticore Legion
Standard Bearer.

I enlist you all as cohorts of the Legion.”

THE HOSTILES ROARED THEIR PLEASURE AND AGREEMENT.

Then the slight whiff of her scent came to him and his brain identified it was
hers, Boudicca’s.

He saw her standing alone on the edge of the cave, high above.

The way she stood, stripped and disheveled.

HE KNEW.

He rent the air with an anguished scream.

So even Tincommius who was giving orders for the assembled host to follow
him fell silent.

All looked and saw the human woman and knew by Mingo’s soul scream that
she had been violated.

They shared his grief, they had all suffered so shared each other’s painful
screams.

Bird man

And Boudicca seeing him not move but hearing him scream in pain knew
Major Vernpatgus the alien had soiled their love.

She felt broken and cheap.

She was unclean.

She knew Vernpatgus was still inside her.

She had gone through a lot of hell recently.

She threw herself off the cave ledge.

“Noooooooooooooooooooo,” Mingo shouted but was not quick enough to run
jump and fly to her aid.

Boudicca hit the ground with a hard thud.

Before he got to her he knew she was dead.

And he died there, inside, his world gone, his reason to live finished.

Tincommius led the host quietly away to the City of Winds leaving Mingo to
grieve.

Something Boudicca did in death she had not done alive, each Bird man there
swore revenge and to keep fighting as one till Maonos was their home again;
she had united them.

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Ten miles away Major Daniel Odo was arguing with Hamon Ma over Hart
Woo in the lorry as Arthur, recovered from his ordeal flew overhead.

He was Bat Wing again, leading the rescuers to save mummy.

Then the sky in front darkened with the host of freed hostiles and converted
friendlies.

Major Odo stopped the hover lorry.

Bird man

“We aren’t needed,” he said.

“We are,” Hamon Ma disagreed.

This led to them splitting up and Hamon Ma walking on ahead alone.

Because Hamon Ma’s attention was focused on the dark sky ahead and a feeling he was going home he never had any intuition the hover lorry was heading straight for him.

Major Daniel Odo had not forgotten the man he hit with the lorry had slept with his Hart Woo.

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Little Arthur arrived just as the hostiles under Tincommius took to the air. They saw the lone little figure land and Tincommius gave the order to circle.

To the south, some hundred miles away could be seen a large dust column.

Cedric Henry was coming.

The Bird men saw him and jet vapors.

They also knew who the little boy chick was?

Verica, whom the human/aliens called Arthur.

And Arthur landed beside his daddy.

Nelson tried to hold him away.

Mingo turned and held his hands out too his son.

Nelson let the boy go.

Father and son united at last over mummy’s still body.

That boy was so close to his mummy and now she was gone. He started screaming and hitting his daddy because he wanted mummy to stand up and hug him but she wouldn’t get up.

Bird man

He tried lifting her arms and putting her hands on his head, they just dropped off.

He tried waving his hands in front of her eyes but they didn't look at him or blink.

He tried calling her name but she didn't answer.

He tried hugging her hoping she would hug back.

He knew mummy was dead.

He didn't want to accept.

Then the first missile launched from an imperial jet a hundred miles away landed nearby blowing a chunk out of a sand stone monolith.

It was time to leave.

Now Mingo handed his son to his waiting escort and told two of them to take him to the City of Winds.

Little Arthur didn't want to leave his mummy.

He was all alone.

Daddy to him was a name; mummy was real, with arms to hug him, lips to kiss his bruises and fingers that slid through his mop of hair.

Now she wouldn't get up.

And so they dragged the boy away screaming.

And he hated his daddy for taking him away from his mummy.

Why why why had Boudicca thrown herself off the cave cliff; only someone who has been subjected to rape will ever understand the mental imbalance that results, the feeling of filth, of worthlessness. There was no councilor there for her, only her tortured disturbed mind,"

Vern Lukas.