

Bird man

The Greatest Gift

“It is said that Boudicca still lives.

That she didn’t die.

And is still Mingo’s woman.

And he her man,” Vern Lukas.

Tzu Strath was forced to come back to Tara 6 because of the hostiles after Mingo’s escape.

With him came the Empress Oona.

He was not a happy man at what he saw and learned and the desolation caused by the Bird men enforced Oona’s preconception that Tara 6 wasn’t a fit place for an empress.

“Boudicca is dead?” Tzu could not believe.

The dictator stood some distance from his supposed master with a small personal escort that had not gone unnoticed either by his new emperor or his bulging wife.

Tzu was angry and listened to Henry’s report that it was all Mingo’s doing.

That Boudicca would still be here on the base and Arthur as well if Mingo hadn’t caused trouble.

Now Tzu saw the last few years rolled out like a carpet and saw his mistakes.

He had treated his daughter very badly, forgotten the Golden Age Prophecies of ‘The writings of Vern Lukas’ as he called them.

## Bird man

But he was still Tzu, the great warlord and as such thought as one and life was a game of chess and knew Henry was telling him by the presence of the escort that Tara 6 was his.

And had driven Boudicca to her death; the man would pay!

He would return with a vast conquering army and impale Henry on one of his own sticks and put weights to his bowels so they would unravel.

Even then he would keep the traitor alive for further pain for Boudicca was dead.

And the dictator knew this and knew he must prepare his defenses but these *bloody* Bird men were like a third element destroying his fortifications, his bases, his empire from within.

The only thing Henry could rely on was the new settlers looked to him for their land titles and would enlist to protect them.

And Tzu saw all and knew he did be very lucky to get off this planet. He also wished he had Arthur for he did declare the boy King of Maponos and stop the hostiles.

But the pawn was not present in this game of chess.

He was indeed a warlord and conqueror of planets.

And was pleased his old enemy Mingo Drum Vercingetorix was out there slowly bleeding Henry to death for as soon as Tzu got away a blockade would be set up and Henry would be made an example to any other aspiring military governors.

“There was much to be said of the old empire and the word *stability*, is there not?” Tzu asked.

## Bird man

SILENCE.

Henry understood, there had been a thing called loyalty, now it was the time of planet barons to seize thrones for themselves.

“The dark ages are upon us,” Henry answered.

“The phoenix always rises out of the ashes to bring in a golden age,” Tzu and Henry understood Arthur was coming; none could change the path of time, what had been set before a man was born.

Henry felt a shadow cross him, if he had been more sensitive he would have seen the Vate.

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Diviciacus had found a Temple of Spirit in one of the most deserted places on Tara 6. Almost at the South Pole where ice caps a hundred feet thick floated upon rough seas.

As part of this agreement with the dictator he still broadcast to Madrawts calling upon them to topple Ce-Ra, then their beloved shaman priest of Huitzilopitchli would return to save them from this god's vengeance.

He had built about him an extensive private hospital and had a clone growing; insurance in case he should meet an untimely end.

Master pills kept you alive and virile, but they had previously unknown side effects. It was rumoured that the very aged who had taken them had suddenly grown duplicate organs.

A bonus if you found a buyer in need of one, but most died of complications.

But Glen Zowanski was covered, from the start he warned the old not to take this pill; it was for the young to stay young, not the old to become young.

## Bird man

But he still made sales, money was money and *lovely*.

And Colonel Horatio Nelson because of his rank knew of Diviciacus's hospital.

*And why is this so important?*

"She's alive, by the gods she is alive," Horatio said feeling a weak pulse in Boudicca's left wrist.

And I Vern Lukas who tells you this should know, for I was there with Cartimandua and my little Ena.

"Where can I take her?" Mingo asked meaning he needed modern medical equipment.

NO ONE ANSWERED FOR THERE WAS NOWHERE TO TAKE HER.

"To Diviciacus," and Nelson quickly explained so removed from their faces the shock he put there.

"I will take her, I have a score to settle with Divipatreus otherwise known as Diviciacus," Mingo said in such a way all wondered what story was hidden behind those words.

"But first we can take her to an army field hospital, I have a friend in charge there, come with me and bring lots of your men Mingo, lots, and my friend can stabilise her till we take her south," Horatio Nelson asked of the Bird man.

And Mingo accented and brought with him a cohort of his famed Manticore Legion.

So it was done, and Boudicca was taken to an imperial army field hospital and because the Bird men outnumbered the humans Boudicca was admitted.

The surgeons worked quickly and in their eyes we saw little hope, but again this was not the hospital of Diviciacus was it?

## Bird man

And Mingo worried, a lot of gyro machines and military craft was building up on the horizon, his presence was known,

he thought of Verica (Arthur),

he thought of Cuchulain,

he thought of the Bird man nation he must rebuild,

he became fretful,

he was in a difficult situation.

He was needed by his new army that was leaderless without him.

That is why I Vern Lukas offered with Cartimandua and the others to take Boudicca to Diviciacus and get specialized treatment.

“Why was I born a mortal?” Mingo asked.

“Why was I born a king?

All I want is my family.

Of all the women I have had, she is the one who tormented my dreams,” he said and I looked at Cartimandua and saw a dour sour face. *Would her jealousy allow me to keep my promise to Mingo?*

In front of her the yellow hard eyes of Mingo, the mantle of responsibility had become a second skin to him.

He was Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.

He was the King of the Bird men.

The struggle to live must go on.

“Life’s a bitch then you die,” he said.

## Bird man

“At the moment I fear brain damage, the longer you wait the greater the chance she will remain totally vegetated, understand?” The human army doctor said and added, “You can take one of our ambulances for safety, and hopefully our soldiers will just think there is a normal casualty inside!”

“Why do this extra for me?” Mingo asked.

“I took an oath that the first doctors on earth took thousands of years ago. I haven’t broken it and I don’t intend too,” of course he was referring to the Hippocratic Oath.

Here was a good man and that is what is required of us, to be good, I think I have learnt that much from the Bird man wars, *Vern*.

“We are all not like the dictator, I have seen many life forms so don’t anyone tell me man is the center of the universe!” The doctor.

Now Mingo extended his hand human fashion, his hand was so big and fingers open the doctor hesitated and don’t blame him for it looked like he was to hold a giant sea urchin.

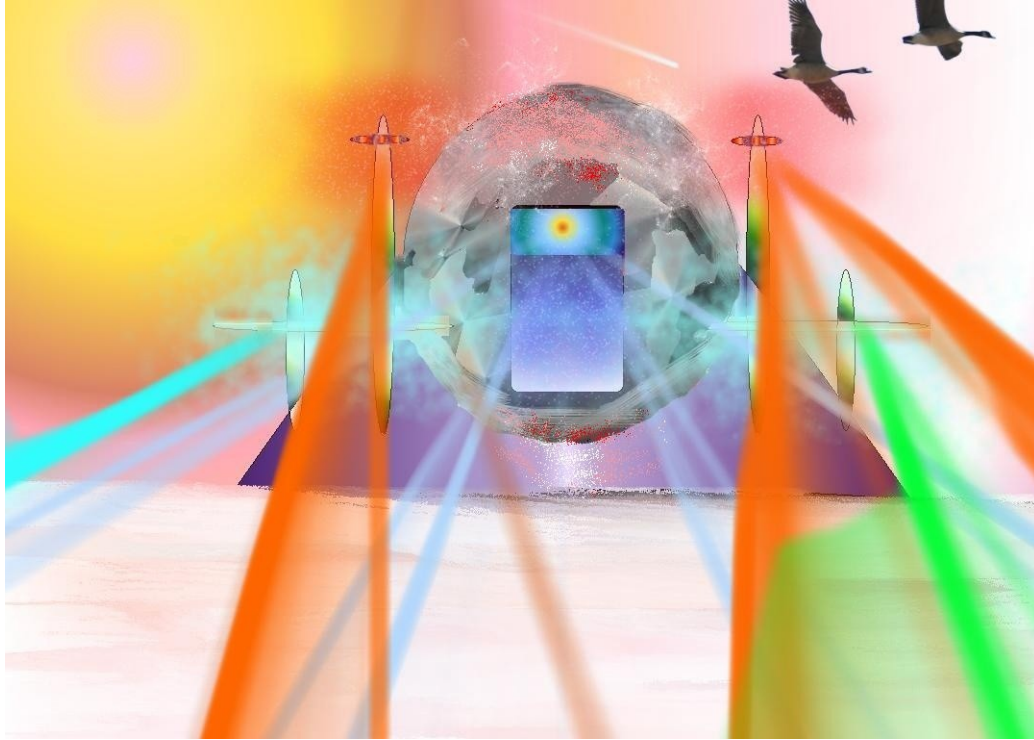
But he did and they shook.

This same doctor became the Head of the Medical School on Tara 6’s Capital University; Maponos or Tara after the wars.

A good choice, a wise choice and they even built a bronze statue of him in the Bird man quarter of New Alexandria.

If you are interested, his name was Dr. John Bates.

And as I Vern have included his name as it is about time we built more statues to our good people?



*Illustration 103: The Southern region where Diviciacus had built himself a home, and what a home?*

And Mingo thanked the gods for the lax laws regulating gene research in deep space for Boudicca may be repaired?

So we departed, Mingo promising to come south as soon as he secured a base for Boudicca's return. So he smiled turning and left for the City of Winds and the front lines.

Now before we left I hugged Ena and kissed Cartimandua thinking I sensed coldness on her lips. It was very difficult leaving Ena, her little hand slipped from my grasp and she waved repeatedly goodbye from her mother's back as Cartimandua looked towards the rays of the two purple suns and not me.

I had hoped my closeness to our daughter would have drawn Cartimandua to me and away from Mingo Drum Vercingetorix, but I was mistaken wasn't I?

## Bird man

I was following the footpaths of Mingo Drum and those steps were leading to oblivion were they not?

A warrior never at home with his family and in his heart the unknown graves of his children.

Now on the way to the southern polar ice caps a warrior pointed out to me one of Mingo's black obelisks where he had written that Bird men and human should not kill each other and live in peace.

I never knew it had existed before that day, of course I knew of the others, with his familiar words, but this asking his people to live in peace was new?

And was amazed it had survived the horrors of conquest as his other monoliths had been chiseled into garden mosaics.

I promised I did return and write beside it:

"We warriors fight evil where it exists,

## Bird man

Whether we are Bird men or human aliens.

Evil is strong and wicked.

It forces us to leave our homes.

Our loved ones.

The little people who trust us.

And we bury their tiny bodies.

So we lose hope and life itself.

But we must remember what we endure.

So in the end we become mighty beings.

## Bird man

For although evil destroyed us,

It could not destroy the goodness in our hearts.

Si we are victorious.

And defeat evil and all its kindred kind.”

Which explains why there is too this day a smaller red sandstone edifice next to the black stone of Mingo’s decree exists.

Some later historians went on to condemn Mingo for leaving the woman he loved in my care. Let me defend him, he was truly a king, a leader of his defeated people which put on him responsibility. If he had gone with us he would be telling the hostiles; ‘every man for himself.’

This was the Bird nation’s hour of peril.

Mingo was needed.

Friendlys left their own wife’s and children to join his cough. The hostiles were united under his name. They would have judged him, *woman or nation?*

Mingo Drum Vercingetorix was a living legend, he had the living to take care of, and it must have torn him apart to lead his warriors when all he wanted was to be with Boudicca and know she would live.

“I promise you, I will return soon,” he told me and I believed him because of whom he was.

Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.

So go to war my friend, I shall endeavor to make you wife well for you.

He must have felt the fates always dealt him a bad card.

## Bird man

Some mediums on far away planets told me once our paths are drawn before we are born, but to a degree or there did be no hope of change. We all have doors to open, one this way and the other that way, so choice exists, be strong of spirit and be careful.

And he choose and led his warriors.

In the City of Winds were his sons, Verica (Arthur) and Cuchulain and he feared fate would take them both as it had in the past his children under imperial bayonets.

Never to hold their small hands or look down into their trustful mischief eyes.

Children explore how far to push their parents and drive them mad in the process.

Children are intelligent, more so than their adults who lord it over them.

And so Mingo returned to the City of the Winds.