

A month had gone by since I Vern Lukas had departed for the South Pole; during that month many adventures happened to me on the way to evil Divipatreus that scoundrel Diviciacus

But none of us expected what we found, a city?

At that time we did not know that Divipatreus and Diviciacus were one and the same.

Mingo had not passed this information onto us; it was personal between him and that monster.

Any scores to settle would be done with Law that famous sword that sang to Mingo's spirit.

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Daniel Odo tried very hard to pull his superior rank over Captain Roger Peacock but failed.

Peacock's boss was the dictator.

And Major Odo was no fool although the affairs of the heart had made him act like one. He knew as Roger did that he had been handed a death sentence, but one could hope for life as long as one breathed.

Then later that day they set off on the trail of Hart Woo.

"He was a conspirator, I killed him for the dictator," Odo said showing Roger the body of Hamon Ma.

Roger began to belief in Odo's innocence.

"I'll send a report," and he did so by watch phone.

Bird man

But at the other end the dictator tossed it into a waste bin. He didn't have any respect for men who set up home with Bird women.

"So it was then, the hunter's were on their way.

Wookey Hole was after Mingo.

Roger and Odo after Hart Woo.

Major Vernpatgus after Divipatreus.

I Vern sought Diviciacus.

Mingo sought Vernpatgus.

Reeman Black Hair, Diviciacus.

The Emperor Conchobhar sought an empire of his own.

The Empress Oona the same.

The War Lord Tzu Strath the death of the dictator.

The Dictator Cedric Henry his own survival.

And somewhere amongst this entire scheming lot ordinary folk like Vern Lukas wanting ordinary things. A safe place for my woman and Ena to make a home and be myself.

What a hope?

"The silken strands of the spiders web had been laid and all it needed was the flies to enter," Vern Lukas.

And in the meantime hostiles raided at will and Mingo raised a new phalanx of army ants and he wrote his thoughts upon a new sandstone monolith edifice.

"I dream of pitched battles and pushing the

Human/aliens from my world.

If they want peace, they can have it on my terms.

Bird man

They must learn that we must co-exist.

Or not at all.”

And the battle came and Mingo Drum Vercingetorix was defeated, again and again and each time he brought his warriors into the wilderness and dispersed them till the next time.

Outnumbered ten thousand to one and they still came to fight and die free.

And one day he was standing alone atop a lonely wind swept red sandstone monolith.

“The gods have deserted me,” he complained to the sky, “I cannot bring Boudicca home, all is lost. As soon as I take the field my surprise attacks are successful until the hated dictator sends in the jets with their neutron bombs.

Killing all in their path, beast and man.

For each dictatorial army I destroy I lose one of my own. The supply of Bird men warriors is running out whereas the dictator draws fresh men from other planets.

It is true, we are the last of the free for that is the way of things for soon there will be no more of us,” and Mingo Drum thought of throwing himself upon his sword Law.

“Don’t,” the voice belonged to the long absent Vate.

Mingo turned and grinned.

“My ghostly friend,” he said.

Vate smiled joining Mingo looking across the wilderness.

“You are bleeding Henry, don’t throw away the hopes and dreams of your nation, victory will come soon enough,” Vate said.

Now Mingo laughed, “Bleeding him?”

INCRECULOUS.

Bird man

“Yes and now Tzu Strath has landed an invading army and taken the imperial capital so numbering Cedric Henry’s days.

Soon the Golden Age will come with the boy Arthur.

BELIEVE ME MINGO.”

Now Mingo was hurt for the Vate had not used the name ‘Verica.’

And Mingo thought of those he loved.

“I must see Boudicca,” he said.

“That would be nice Mingo.”

SILENCE.

Now Tincommius and the others will keep the standards high.

AGAIN SILENCE.

You will get your peace Mingo, Tzu Strath is of Arthur’s blood.

You will get your peace,” the Vate repeated and vanished.

And Mingo again looked over the wilderness he loved and a cold shiver crossed his soul.

His his peace was death and hearing the wind screaming down a distant gully, “yes he would add his call to the wind.”

And it was time to go south and find out what had happened to Boudicca.

Tincommius will keep the standards high.

*

“Divipatreus,” I remember asking the butler who welcomed us into his palace. That is all I can remember of the shaman’s priest’s abode in the South Pole.

Not all hated Diviciacus and many still saw him as he who stands next to the imperial gods.

Bird man

And therefore wealth was no problem to him and with it he built a hotel complex to house the growing number of faithful; *who sought him for a change of luck.*

So I Vern did not recognise the well fed man in front of me with a double chin.

He also had had a cosmetic facial remake so none of us saw him as that evil Diviciacus; he had fooled us.

Only his eyes showed any emotion as he looked upon the still form of Boudicca, a twinkling promise of evil, but we missed that too.

He had such a gentle smile and his hands were folded in piousness?

Yes smiling he now had Mingo's woman whom he would violate even in the sate she was in and then offer her heart to his god Huitzilopitchli.

I Vern Lukas would have killed him there and then for his wicked thoughts,

But then his minions took Boudicca away and injected vials of this and that into her arms and was amazed at the sudden rosy cheeks that was the result; she would live definitely?

"I swear my life to you Divipatreus as will Mingo when he sees Boudicca again,"
"I promised this devil incarnate.

Foolish Vern Lukas.

And then the spider's web drew in the players around the South Pole home of evil Diviciacus.

First came the news that the Emperor Ce-Ra had been taken from his throne by his loyal palace guards and thrown across the alter of Huitzilopitchli.

And he still lives for they took his heart but rigged him up to an artificial one so that he can stare at the switch that Diviciacus has been invited back to planet Madrawt to switch off.

Bird man

And Tzu Strath made peace with the new senate of Planet Madrawt for he wanted all his resources brought against Dictator Henry.

Henry didn't know what was coming.

It takes one to make peace and then all, for all three human/aliens knew the final battle was amongst them.

Tzu Strath.

Conchobhar.

Cedric Henry.

So the Madrawt pilgrims arrived at Tara 6 seeking Diviciacus and the Dictator allowed the shaman priest to live for he was a potential Madrawt leader and ally against his own enemies.

And the Dictator Henry became the other fly seeking Diviciacus in the South Pole.

Behind him coming the wasp Tzu Strath as the dictator's forces, sick of their cruel leader deserted to Tzu whom they remembered as a fair man; *who incidentally had more men and ships.*

Thus Reeman Black Hair walked through the gates of Diviciacus's home to avenge his friend and master Ce-Ra.

And found Diviciacus in his splendid animal robes in front of a mosaic image of Huitzilopitchli behind a burning alter.

So Reeman Black Hair joined the queue of dutiful obedient worshipers.

Inside him an insane thirst for revenge.

Scanners prevented him from bringing weapons, but he had his hands and had grown long finger nails which he had filed to points.

In front of him the butcher's knife lying across the coals in the middle of the alter.

Bird man

Then it was his turn to be close too Diviciacus.

Who stood on a raised platform, something the Madrawt assassin hadn't noticed effectively putting Diviciacus out of reach..

For an instant Diviciacus and the Madrawt's eyes locked and the shaman smiled.

"Seize him," Diviciacus shouted in a deep voice.

Reeman Black Hair leapt for the alter knife but found Diviciacus's strong hands over his own.

Then temple guards hauled Reeman back to where Diviciacus wanted him, over the alter.

Poor Reeman found it painful to breath with his arms pulled down behind him so his chest was forced to open like a lobster cage.

What a big pointed cap you have on?

What a kind smile you have on?

What bright white teeth you have on?

What sharpened teeth you have on?

And Reeman noticed on the ceiling a mosaic of the god Huitzilopitchli and the knife he had tried to get hold of was descending slowly to his chest.

With terror filled bulging eyes he craned his neck to see.

Diviciacus wasn't in a hurry.

Reeman was forced to see his heart dangling in front of his eyes and saw it thrown upon the coals where he heard it sizzle then lost consciousness.

Diviciacus wasn't keeping him alive like Ce-Ra, he was a dangerous man Reeman Black Hair, a threat and Diviciacus knew how to deal with threats.

One less fly on the web.

Bird man

As for the corpse it was reduced to fertiliser as the religious palace of Diviciacus had many outhouses where he grew prize tomatoes, cabbages and other greenness.

The place was self sufficient.

Another fly came along and alone.

Mingo.

When Diviciacus was told he went and changed his blood stained clothes for those of the scarlet robes of a healer.

“My good friend,” *they greeted each other but their minds sent daggers.*

“I could not believe my change in good fortune when a human soldier called Colonel Nelson told me you were here and able to help Boudicca,” Mingo.

“When I found out she was the famous Boudicca how could I refuse to treat her?”

Diviciacus would use the beautiful Boudicca to draw Mingo into his sticky web and be devoured.

Evil rotten Diviciacus?

“Stay with your friends,” Diviciacus told Mingo who grunted satisfaction and asked to see Boudicca.

“She will not remember you,” Diviciacus warned.

None knew at that time that Boudicca had been induced to forget Mingo and to remember Diviciacus, only him, as her lover.

This evil Diviciacus?

He wanted Boudicca’s beauty to himself.

In his drug induced mind his god had rewarded him with her,

For all time.

Or until his dreams demanded otherwise.

Bird man

Then another fly arrived.

Bigger, more juicy than the Madrawt variety.

Wookey Hole and his mutant platoon.

Wookey refused to disarm himself.

He did not know that Mingo had been allowed in with arms or Vern Lukas. *But here the spider Diviciacus did not want to alarm these favoured meals, Wookey Hole had trouble branded across his forehead.*

“Like bull and pigs too you priest. I am coming in the way I am,” Wookey Hole and entered the palace gates.

In no time at all armed zealot retainers of Diviciacus attacked.

“Blooming heck,” Wookey as he took refuge in a green house with half his men.

Diviciacus viewed them through a camera placed in a flower; he was smiling.

He knew the only thing to eat in there was garlic bulbs.

And Mingo hearing battle sought Diviciacus.

But Diviciacus assured Mingo all was in order, bandits at the door and his guards had dealt with them.

Bullets Diviciacus hated, especially in his direction, so blamed Mingo for drawing all the scum to him.

But asked Mingo for help to deal with those in the greenhouse, the casualties amongst his guards had been many and all knew of the prowess of Mingo Drum Vercingetorix whom a part of him hoped would get killed.

What he didn't tell Mingo was that sleeping gas had been arranged to fill the green house.

Bird man

The humour of watching Wookey Hole and his men survive on garlic was wearing thin?

Only Huitzilopitchli knew who else was coming to the South Pole.

The dictator himself?

Mingo had to go to the alter now.

Not tomorrow.

Now Diviciacus hated to bring his amusing game to an end.

He had a sense of humour.

Yes he did.

*

“On the orders of the dictator himself let us in,” Captain Roger Peacock demanded as he saw smoke billowing from the greenhouse.

“I don’t like this,” Major Odo added.

Peacock looked at him with an obvious answer.

Diviciacus himself attended to their needs.

“What dictator?” Diviciacus, they had not heard that Tzu Strath had landed.

And Diviciacus took great pleasure in telling them.

“Now what can I do for you?” The evil man’s sense of humour was coming back.

“We ask permission to wait here and see events out,” Peacock asked HUMBLY.

He didn’t like the odds; they were surrounded by armed zealots.

That’s why they allowed themselves to be disarmed.

Diviciacus had decided to use them in his GREAT GAME.

He allowed them life on the promise that they attack the Bird men in the rear.

*

Bird man

Diviciacus watched the three way battle from his screen; he was highly amused and had placed bets on Mingo for there was none like him.

That is when the dictator arrived.

This time Diviciacus found himself playing the role of the humble willing servant of his master.

Cedric Henry had brought a small army with him.

Diviciacus saw his GREAT GAME ENDING.

“There is your enemy, Mingo King of the Bird people.

See how I have aided you my dictator?” Diviciacus bowing.

The dictator saw that the bow was mock and borrowed from a pantomime.

He was not amused.

Even as Cedric Henry addressed Mingo ordering him to surrender, Tzu Strath arrived also at Diviciacus’s spider’s web.

“We are the last of the free.

To the north are the polar ice caps.

To the south our enemy.

Better to die free men than slave,” Mingo Drum Vercingetorix the King of the Bird people replied.

So battle commenced.

Even Diviciacus was pleased, “Such a man as Mingo might have changed the course I followed, and these were his exact words as testified by witnesses.

*

“Bird man, I too am a bird like you. Your speech has touched our hearts,”

Wookey Hole in the note he passed to Mingo.

Bird man

Mingo read on.

“We wish to join you for the dictator only has death awaiting us. We would like a chance to die as free men.

Theodosius Wookey Hole.

“What do you think Vern?” Mingo asked.

“When Wookey Hole uses the forename he hates, he is serious,” I Vern Lukas told Mingo.

“So be it,” Mingo and coughed loudly.

And there stood Wookey Hole.

I can only presume that Wookey Hole was impressed by what he saw. Mingo was not your usual under starved friendly.

He was Mingo Drum Vercingetorix the Bird man King.

“I am all yours,” Wookey Hole told him and Mingo turned to face the new enemy and roared his grunting war cry and flew at the foe.

The defection of Wookey Hole brought much needed reserves to Mingo.

Time to live and die.

Then the fighting stopped.

What with all the din going on we never heard the real battle being fought between Cedric Henry and Tzu Strath.

“Quiet isn’t it?” Wookey Hole said peering through a gap in the shattered toughened glass of the green house and immediately ice crystals formed around his face from the chill air rushing in.

Bord man

And poisonous gas was all blown out, just in case you were wondering about that little detail! Blew back towards its sender.

And so Mingo grunted.

It wasn't bad manners, just the Bird man way.

"Mingo," the voice I swear made the king's face white.

There was death in that voice, the path round the circle of life had met where it had started.

"The Vate said I would find peace," Mingo aloud.

"Am I glad I changed sides, that's Tzu Strath himself," Wookey Hole laughed. He was going home a hero and not a villain.

I looked deep into that Bird man face and saw sadness, defeat, life had just got the better of him.

Tzu's voice had killed him.

Peace the Vate had said peace it would be but not the type Wookey Hole thought of?

THE PEACE OF THE COFFIN.

If Mingo would be lucky enough to get one.

"Tzu Strath," Mingo grunted back.

"Surrender now Mingo," Tzu ordered.

Wookey Hole stopped smiling, usually when he told some wanted person to do that he shot them as they walked out with their hands up. A bounty on a dead man was the same as on the living except you didn't need to feed him and escort her too the toilet and watch so no escape was possible, yes sir better dead...

"Guess we are going to die isn't we?" Wookey asked.

Bird man

“Guess so,” I Vern replied.

Mingo grunted.

“All I want is Mingo, the rest can go free,” Tzu Strath shouted.

Wookey Hole opened his mouth and closed it again.

“This isn’t your fight; you can go if you want?” Mingo told him.

Now Wookey Hole looked deep into that Bird man's eagle eyes.

Don’t forget Wookey Hole was half breed, Wookey certainly wasn’t looking into the eyes of a chicken going to the axe, he was looking into the eyes of a leader, an eagle’s eyes who knew the hunter had it snared good and would fly out, golden wings spread in all nature’s glory and get killed.

“I cannot speak for lads, but I staying,” and I guess Wookey Hole entered the Halls of Iowa Jima and the marines would have been proud.

John Wayne also.

The remains of his prototype platoon didn’t know what to do? They weren’t human any more; they had wings, the first prototypes of Glen Zowanski’s dream of

Flight.

And they elected to stay with those who had wings! They had found family, they didn’t feel they belonged nowhere else.

“You must live Vern; you must see that Boudicca is alright. Arthur and all the others need someone like you to tell the truth, go and write us all up as heroes so we can live forever in bardic songs,” Mingo told me.

Why me, why am I always the one who has to sneak away from battle like a cowardly dog? As if he read my mind, “Someone has to tell the story for the people back home, Tzu Strath fears your pen.”

Bird man

PREGANAT PAUSE.

It takes a brave man to walk away and leave his friends,” he added.

He was offering me a way out to live.

He was being selfish.

Vate’s promised peace was his and his alone.

I wanted some of that peace.

“Go and take care of the living,” he ordered now.

I held out my hand.

He grunted.

That was it, a grunt.

Damn him, we had come a long way together and he grunts.

Damn all Bird men and I left him real angry and crying.

The warrior Vern Lukas was human after all even he if had wings.

And reached Tzu Strath, behind him stood *the dictator manacled*.

So stared into the eyes of Tzu Strath and he gave me a good look up and down and he shook his head, “Bird lover,” he spat, guess I was for the chain gang?

Then the Vate appeared.

I don’t think anyone else saw him?

“You’re worth your weight in gold because you can write the truth,” he said to me.

Then Tzu smiled and said, “I will make Arthur King of Tara 6, of humans, aliens and what Bird men are still living. This should please you Vern, now write how merciful I was too this planet and its rebels.”

I smiled back and nodded but inside I was

Angry,

Bird man

Shamed,

Joyed that Arthur was to be king.

Hateful of the man in front of me.

Loathing was closer.

And for myself.

So didn't trust myself too speak.

Vern Lukas was silent for once.

"If you know where Arthur is bring him to my capital. HE WAS NO LONGER SMILING.

Go Vern Lukas go," he ordered and if I failed a firing squad was waiting for me.

I stopped passing the hated dictator and looked into his dark eyes.

Then spat into his right eye.

That made him move and he leered back and I saw him hate all I represented,
Bird man, so spat into his left eye this time.

So walked away still with my weapons and he was in chains.

I was going to find my woman and child also.

My Bird folk.

At the entrance to the corridors that linked the green houses to the kitchens I
stopped looking back.

"I have made Arthur King of Tara 6 Mingo. Do you hear me?" Tzu Strath was shouting.

A grunt was a reply.

There is no place for you on Tara; you are a dinosaur, extinct, obsolete.

Understand Mingo?

Bird man

Finished,” Tzu Strath was loud.

I knew then that Mingo was about to die and my heart saddened.

Pain ripped across my heart.

By the gods I would miss that Bird man.

I met Boudicca who was walking aimlessly.

Something was wrong.

Zombie like she stared at me.

So sought our good Diviciacus?

And found him in front of his alter.

“Welcome friend,” he said.

“I am not a friend monster?” I answered back and then he argued how could anyone who had shown kindness to Boudicca and Mingo be regarded as such?

And out of the shadows minions grabbed me and held me down across the alter where Diviciacus flashed a knife about.

And he cut my chest to inflict pain.

He plucked feathers from me and threw them onto the alter coals.

He obviously liked to play with his food.

And then he screamed, at first I thought he was going into a hallucinating frenzy from hence he would cut out my heart.

But instead he grabbed one of his minions holding me and used him as a shield so a probe spear sunk into the misfortunate man and exploded.

Diviciacus ran toppling bronze incense burners. One of which hit my head, dazing me.

I remember a scream and warm blood saturating my hair.

Bird man

That is all.

At times for a writer I am a very poor observer. I learned later that it was an escaped Mingo who going in search of Boudicca had saved me. He wanted to?

1...escape with her.

2...Tell her he loved her before he died.

But I do remember soldiers pulling me to my feet.

Where dead minions clustered.

Mingo Drum Vercingetorix I salute you Bird man King.

So followed and together with Tzu Strath and the dictator we saw Diviciacus standing on the stone work of a tower that overlooked the rough frozen sea of the polar south.

The air was rent with a roar as Mingo threw himself at Diviciacus and together fell entwined.

At once Tzu Strath ordered his men to rush the base of the tower as Mingo and Diviciacus hurtled towards it.

I saw blood, much and before Diviciacus let go his grasp of Mingo, Mingo managed to slow his fall with his wings.

In time to land softly.

Then he took something from Diviciacus.

He held up to the sky a heart.

“This is my domain,

My roar is my law,

As far as I can see my lands,

Justice has been done.”

Bird man

I saw Tzu Strath shaking his head and knew there was no room for the lines of the beast Mingo Drum Vercingetorix in his new world order.

“Mercy is next to godliness,” I said quickly.

“I don’t believe in gods,” Tzu and ordered his men to take me away.

That was the second time I saw Mingo.

Tzu did not want any witnesses.

Thus it is reported to me:

“By your own sword Law take your worthless life.

The future of Arthur demands it.

Either he is king of peace?

Or you a king of war?

Chose Mingo Drum Vercingetorix.”

There was silence as men of all races tried to hear Mingo’s reply. Their ears competed with the roar of the arctic wind and the bashing of the freezing surf at Mingo’s feet.

THEN SILENCE.

I tell you not a sea bird chatter chattered,

Not a sea mammal barked.

Not a motor was turned on.

And then the winds quietened and the sea calmed.

The gods Tzu did not believe in where about.

The Planet Maponos waited for the return of Mahbon the young god reborn to be given back to the cycle of life; for what is taken must be replaced. Arthur is given life; a life must be given in return.

Bird man

The equilibrium of the cycle of life: nature.

Mahbon the young god of the Bird nation was the sacrifice so that the seasons might be plentiful again; the children grow strong and be mighty warriors.

“Fall upon your sword or I will give the order to kill you BEAST,” Tzu Strath.

And he broke the silence.

And from where I stood I could see Mingo, and he grunted “I am and was the last of the free born.

I have nowhere else to run and fight.

Better to die a free man than a slave,” thus he confirmed Tzu Strath’s belief that Mingo would never change his warrior habits and live in peace with the human settlers.

“Blooming savage,” Tzu muttered and wanted the savage dead; already he blamed Mingo for Boudicca's death, and even when he heard she was alive and the savage had taken her here instead of to him, for help it made Tzu hate the bird more.

There was also another reasons, a bad one, Mingo was a challenge to the rule of Arthur, a boy king whom Tzu hoped to control for after all he was still a bird chick, a bird with wings and there could be only one power behind the Bird man Throne, him.

AND I SAW MINGO FALL UPON HIS SWORD LAW and into the sea that became wrath and foaming so that the waves carried his body under the ice caps.

And swear I saw Vate standing where Mingo had fallen on Law.

Later t was reported that the sword Law lies in an ice flow and the ice has refused to yield it to any of Tzu Strath’s engineers trying to free it.

It awaits the rightful king; another legend is born to keep the War Lord Tzu awake at nights.



Illustration 106: An era was dead.