

Colour: A giant orange Rhegid condor trails Aelfric's progress. Planet Rhegid is famed for its natural bright dyes from its grasses.



Illustration 28: The orange condor

“The sound of a thousand 6 metre long horns greeted Aelfric Europe as he got the welcome befitting a king,” Tintagel the Clone.

And Rhegids lined his passage on both sides and threw rubbish at him as he headed towards the glass palace of The Slow Horse Emperor.

“King of Robots,” was burnt into a piece of broken chipboard screwed into his back; he was a robot, some had plugs in their feet so you could shave from them, he was a ROBOT.

”Let us pull him to pieces,” and “throw him in one of his own baths,” for the Rhegids had not forgotten the robot war; so mothers frightened naughty children with the word ‘ROBOT’, so all these people were preconditioned to hate Aelfric before they saw him; *but had heard about his famous baths!*

“I should never have wanted to be ABSOLUTE,” Aelfric muttered as his bare feet walked upon orange grass growing up between the stone cobbles.

He knew FEAR as this world was huge, he must have been mad to think he could be ABSOLUTE over space.

“You here?” Aelfric gasped as he saw The Man and the 5, The Slow Horse Emperor, and all the mighty warriors of the Rhegid nation.

Above an orange condor circled Aelfric and the bird was not molested for the Rhegid god Tupt is a condor that circles battlefields.

And The Man felt pity for Aelfric and Nesta saw and was pleased; she did not want to marry a brute.

“Only a robot with grand dreams eh Aelfric?” The Man asked and stood on lower steps so his height did not dwarf the living god Tupt the Slow Horse Emperor.

And the robot lunged at The Man.

Now Slow Horse did not flinch, he was an emperor and trusted his soldiers would deal with the robot king.

“He was a god and goddess SLEUT the cat had not visited him out of the land of the dead to make an appointment with him to die so was not afraid,” Tintagel the Clone.

And one robot and the other a man with implants wrestled with each other and were not interfered with.

And Nesta felt FEAR for she was in love with The Man and worried he might be slain.

And the 5 were prevented by the Rhegid mighty from helping The Man.

And the boy emperor studied his father and his human side while the fight progressed.

“Please stop them?” It was Nesta at his feet and she had come unsummoned so why guards where about to lift her away.

Now sparks flew as The Man tore away Aelfric’s scalp revealing a shiny metal skull with bone in the middle layers; part robot part human.

And the boy emperor dismissed the guards, actually Nesta should have been flogged for her public action but the boy desired her and so both a Rhegid and human emotion had control of him. But it was too late to stop the fight for The Man was airborne, his silver wings flapping with Aelfric on his back strangling him.

“Nets,” the emperor commanded and beast masters approached and fired nets from shoulder held cannon and the fighters fell heavily to the steps leading to the throne entwined.

Now the 5 were not impressed with the Rhegid as they tore The Man free from the nets. And the Rhegid were not impressed with them for they had seen mutants aboard pirate ships and wondered why The Man allowed them as his companions?

“Beast,” Pyoo-ur Sister said standing hard upon Aelfric, and then the rest of the 5 beat him.

In fact this evil man seemed to be getting a lot of that these days; *do not forget his baths for what goes round comes round.*

And the emperor signalled to his mighty men to stop the 5 and it took 26 of them to do so and now the Rhegid were impressed.

“*Suit’s hell cats,*” they now called them, Tintagel.

Now Nesta made too run to The Man but Slow Horse the Emperor jumped up and held her back. This was sacrilege, what he did in private was one thing, but this was a very public display. He was the god TUPT and she a human commoner and SILENCE prevailed as Slow Horse realised what he did; Nesta should be put to death for touching him so; *but it was the other way round wasn’t it?*

And the orange condor above circled lower sensing dinner was afoot!

It knew there was no greater honour than to die for your emperor the god Tupt and gain immediate entry into the Heavenly banqueting hall and as Nesta was a girl, to serve the warriors there.

Some things just never change whether on Earth or Heaven?

Yes the silence was heavy as the Rhegids expected Nesta to fall upon the nearest sword and become a maiden in heaven, but she wasn’t a Rhegid, she was a human

with different ideas, if they wanted immediate access to their heaven well they could commit suicide, she was going to marry The Man **wasn't she?**

And Slow Horse had unwittingly provided himself a solution in how to possess Nesta as wife 67

“TUPT....the great winged war god of the Rhegid empire who spent most of his time drinking, womanising and fighting with his chosen heroes against the foes of chaos,” Tintagel the Clone. And both Tintagel's knew about Princess Veig and her son and had not made such a birth public. Slow Horse An t-each Mal was TUPT wasn't he? Not a product of a liaison between The Man and his mother; but he had to come from somewhere and not from under a cabbage leaf?

“The Senate of Lords would kill Slow Horse if they suspected human blood was in him and had put down his pale complexion to a distant ancestor not a human gene,” perhaps in time when the empire needed an arranged marriage between a human to survive such a marriage would take place, but right now the empire was strong and needed no one.

“She has been blessed by TUPT,” someone shouted meaning Nesta still lived because many a commoner had touched Slow Horse and stopped breathing; almost as if they had been brought up to expect to die after touching their god so did.

But Nesta was a human girl brought up to want toe nail polish and purple lipstick?

And he who shouted was Tintagel the Clone from the crowd and it was taken up in sighs and gasps and “It is true she still lives?”

Now The Man knew he had a problem with the boy emperor who was not a boy after all? And he looked for support amongst the Humanist Party they who wanted closer ties with humans but they were silent, there were too many ordinary people here under the spell of the Purist Party led by one of Slow Horse's uncles.

And Nesta looked at The Man and asked herself if quick divorces were available, a war worse than the Trojan Horse would break out if The Man forcibly objected for see saw the look in the eyes of the 5.

As for the boy emperor he was looking at Nesta so missed the look of impending hostility in the 5. "Remember your mother Slow Horse?" The Man whispered to the boy emperor who jerked upright. He knew of the rumours and that was why Princess Veig had been sent to a nunnery on Dog Planet and he looked into the eyes of his papa.

Now we are dealing with an ABSOLUTE ruler who knew no FEAR because others did his fighting and he wanted Nesta and that was all there was too it; his friendship with The Man was secondary and besides, it was The Man who courted his friendship was it not?

And at that moment the orange condor flew down and bit Aelfric's left arm off so blood and hydraulic fluid came out.

And all saw he was indeed a robot and they took him and ionised him sending him to the penal Planet of Dog.

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And The Man and the 5 were escorted back to their ship and what could be done to save Nesta? And a translation machine mistook The Man saying "poor kid," about

Nesta translated it as daughter and so it was presumed Nesta was the daughter of The Man.

So the Purists were horrified and the Humanists overjoyed with happiness and then all saw such a union would mean any children would inherit both empires to be ruled from here, New Saturn would be a gateway for Rhegid traders and settlers into human galaxies. Many Rhegids did get rich.

“You are my sister never mind, Suet is Tupt’s half sister and there is nothing wrong in us marrying to keep the empire in the family,” Slow Horse told Nesta who could not believe what she was hearing? What was wrong with this child who pretended to be an emperor but he wasn’t pretending, he was absolute and Augustus could learn a thing or two from Slow Horse.

And then Slow Horse decided to visit his mother in the nunnery on Dog Planet, if anyone would understand why he wanted Nesta she would and so made his first mistake, he exposed himself to little germs like the cold and small pox for he had never left his palace that was so vast it was a zoo, library, amusement park, a city of cooks and soldiers, of officials and all in antiseptically clean air.

So not a germ could survive whereas Dog Planet is where they sent robots like Aelfric Europe.

FULL OF DISEASES.