

“Mighty One we are gathered to hear your words of wisdom and obey,” the herald shouted to the assembled guests at tables below the Mighty One’s Great Table.

WHY Carman looked at her lords and at the herald who spoke the same words every evening.

Well she had no words of wisdom for them; she was irritated after her encounter with Cathbadh.

What she wanted was a bath where she could think the future out.

So the Lords of Telephassa looked at her expectantly, why she didn’t know? She felt like a dried up seed husk they used as balloons.

So she stood up, some Lords anticipating her to start eating spat out mouthfuls of blood wine or dropped their large forks with bits of starters back onto the table.

Carman had actually stood to utter wisdom and taken them by surprise.

“The humans must die or we make peace with them, a star ship is here,” and she sat down and drank blood wine and nodded to the carvers to begin work on the roasts.

And the carvers began.

The food was squirming on many tables below about her Lords and Ladies.

And her carver with assistant with pins skinned her food prepared in garlic butter and then fried the skin to crackling.

Mungo

And the food tried to push an apple out of its mouth but fainted with shock and pain.

And Carman's guest all smacked lips as their peptic acids went to work in their stomachs for they loved crackling so much, but none could eat till Carman ate first.

And when she did none ate faster than Hebat, Carman's fourteen year old son and none looked at Nudd with more loathing than he.

Nudd the five year old who pushed aside his plate of crackling and ate sweet yam covered in hut runny peanut butter.

And the carver carved and drained blood from food to prepare a broth mixed with sweet red wines and chilli peppers to fire lizard blood in this cold night.

Why Hebat gulped his broth all down and asked for seconds for warmth.

Nudd drank warm buttermilk.

And Carman saw and was pleased Hebat was strong and knew the future lay with him, he was for supremacy over the food that was human.

Then Lord Artebrates late as his arthritis made him slow entered the hall and sat next to Nudd and the diners went silent at his affront to Carman.

He had made no attempt to apologise for his lateness.

Never mind he was old and harmless, a joke, let all see The Mighty Artebrates who would lead armies against her, why he could hardly walk.

"Tongue," Carman ordered as the curses and moans of her food were beginning to annoy her as it always did.

Mungo

And the tongue was taken and “Mungo will avenge me,” was no longer uttered by her food.

The food was weak; Fermanians knew how to take pain, their criminal code made sure of that, why the way her food withered and squirmed she just could not understand why humans were on the ascent?

“Give me the eyes,” she commanded and the eyes were taken so the food could not loath her as it was eaten.

“Give them to Nudd,” and it was deliberate and her guests fell silent for this boy might be their emperor one day and lead them into battle.

And Nudd looked at his mother whom he longed for a hug and never got.

Now Artebrates still ate humans but not in front of Nudd so had more brains left to him than Carman cared to admit, took the eyes and swallowed, belched satisfaction and winded and then waved the carver away.

For the rest of the evening Carman spoke to no one as she watched Nudd and Artebrates and saw Legion Lords, men from the army bow to Artebrates and Nudd as they passed, this was not good, Hebat would be their emperor not Nudd.

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Now later that night she stood at the end of Zigaratta Observation Tunnel breathing in the perfumes of the flower gardens listening to the quarrelling humans in their slave pens.



Illustration 35: A flower garden, perhaps the blood thirsty lizards liked some tranquility after all.

Looking at the million windows throwing light out of the great termite mounds twenty miles away.

“Bin I am here,” Cathbadh corning out of the wall again.

But Carman seethed and reached for a sword hanging from the tunnel wall.

“Angry bin?”

“Pretty soon you will not be my bin,” and Carman span and slashed empty air where Cathbadh had been.

Now he stood to her right grinning like a cat.

So she slashed again then gripped her stomach and dropped the sword.

Mungo

When she moved Cathbadh realised she was pregnant and with his child so hurried to her and got her to lie down.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Another heir means another war,” she breathed out.

Yes that meant civil war but this time the heir was his.

“If it is a daughter there will be no wars,” he said and at once both knew Hebat would be in danger then.

For ten thousand years only an empress had sat on the Sun Flower Throne since King Sess had died. And Hupasias the shaman was saying his femurs and molars were aching predicting bad times unless an empress was found.

A daughter would guarantee Cathbadh’s position of influence and Hebat’s journey into the purple other world. And pain racked Carman for she loved Hebat but a daughter would change all that and she knew it.

And Carman took from under her kimono a dagger and struck at Cathbadh who was so shocked he left her, he would return later when his bin was in better temperament.

Wenches carrying little mins were known to be unpredictable.

And as he slid behind the bull head into his secret tunnel Carman pulled a silk chain hanging from the roof and summoned a Fermanian officer and four coelophysis.

“Centurion Leah.”

Leah deliberately showed her fangs emphasising her reptilian nature for she heard mazarrats sing she had human blood.

Mungo

She had also thrown a lot of caged mazarrats down wells to silence them for good.

“Does Mungo live?” Carman and Leah told all.

“Bring a slave,” and one was brought and Leah was told to bite him and he salivated and was sick, fell to his belly and died.

“Why did your poison not kill Mungo?”

Leah shrugged.

Why Carman thought Leah had not poisoned her arrows and then remembered the incorruptible.

“You must destroy the Incorruptible One, only you can get to her through Mungo for the mazarrats sing he still loves you and not Keira.

You may see your son now and Leah left to visit Conn her eight year old puzzled that Mungo still loved her? Why?

Had she and Mungo been lovers, what about Conn? Who was his father, was it Mungo? Such dangerous questions needed traitorous answers.

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“My darling,” Leah hissing wrapping herself about Conn whose long black locks was of human hair, also his blue eyes with only a hint of Fermanian pink retina.

And Leah examined his human skin and like her own had soft scales under it. But she was disappointed his tail had not grown as her own had since Cathbadh was her doctor these days.

“Leah,” the hunchback entering and hugging them both.

Mungo

The boy squirmed, hugging was for girls.

“He is Mungo’s child your man thing lover and not by Cathbadh’s orders to amuse some friend of his as comforter,” the hunchback, “that wicked man has inserted shuttle genes into you to make you more lizard than you were made.”

Leah pushed him away, she was Fermanian.

Now Cathbadh had been listening behind a secret wall he now pushed and appeared saying, “She is mine and you have given me much power over Artebrates and your life is forfeit for returning to Telephassa hunchback,” Cathbadh.

Now the hunchback drew his dagger and Cathbadh ordered Leah to defend his body.

At once Leah wrestled with the hunchback and Cathbadh laughed.

Of course Leah succeeded in holding her father still so Cathbadh could play with the dagger upon the hunchback.

Death was a mercy and like all mercies Cathbadh believed must be waited for. And Mercy came in the form of Malachi seeking Leah and he threw Cathbadh away like paper.

Now Leah stuck her dagger into Malachi’s wrist for she knew him as enemy.

“She is being turned into a monster Malachi, we must take her away from here,” the hunchback urgently.

“And their shouts brought Berserkas for outlaws in traps should be silent,”
mazarrats sang.

Mungo

“Holy Telephassa dung Berserkas,” and Malachi hit Leah on the jaw and knocked her out, then threw her body on his shoulder and threw himself out the cane window and ignoring his wound bounced, leapt and fell down vines to the bottom.

Behind him fell the hunchback?

“Run, only twenty miles to Mungo’s camp,” Malachi joked but was serious.

“I am going by pha,” the hunchback answered back.

None turned back for they did not want to see Conn crying for his mother or they did have seen a smiling Artebrates at the window.

“Leah will bring me the weapon and Mungo’s hair,” Artebrates for Leah had told him Mungo got his strength from his hair.

Fate was in control, always is.

