

Mungo

Fever

And the hunchback sat quietly at Leah's bedside watching her thoughts on the encephalograph measuring p300 brainwaves made by brain 0.3 per sec as Leah had lost movement even blinking.

"Purple fever is a thief in the night like meningitis that you had long ago, can you remember child? No, well the doctor refused to come out, almost died, well I slit a lot of chicken necks on god Telephassa's alter that night.

Didn't work little girl, what did was ghostly. I remember looking at the stars and something entered my heart, a voice from a recess of my soul. "She will live," and at once met a living intelligent force greater than that stone idol Telephassa.

And I see you think Mungo? Hurt you? Well I'll tell you a secret, he and you are bound like chromosome strands and that voice that night is the same telling him to dance naked under the moon.

Bet you didn't know that?

Those stinking scribes do everything they turn into papyrus books for cash. They say the woman man thing was saved for The Wild One, meaning you.

If I blow my nose they did oracle the contents and write a book about the future from them.

They are farts and control our fantasies. See one was found floating in a sewer? The Prefect of Police thinks Malachi did him, lucky I went down and found the bottle he was drinking from, don't won't that left behind?

Mungo

Don't want any cells from fingers going under the electron microscope and having his DNA linked to their computer memory banks? Took his eyes out as we don't want the dead's retinas read either and see Malachi there throttling him?

Malachi likes you, those scribes say a hunter will help The Wild One, so don't worry.

Gad, I am believing this rubbish," the hunchback spat and fiddled with a gene gun full of *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, his gene shuttle vehicle, a soil bacterium altered to Fermanian needs and on its chromosomes the code for a protein that would surround the purple fever bacteria thus strangling it.

And slowly he lowered his glasses; microscopic lenses wired to a plutonium portable battery cooled by coils of liquid sodium and saw through the layers of Leah's cells her chromosomes.

And deftly inserted a needle he couldn't even see at the end of the gene gun and fired.

Saw the *tumefaciens* bacteria enter and watched it slicing her DNA codes and insert its own.

Saw the bacteria stimulate her RNA polymerase that started straightening kinks in her chromosomes put there by fever.

Kinks that stopped her healthy cells breathing.

Mungo

It was a new idea his using the bacterium, was dangerous as it had never been tried on lizards and he was at his wits end for Leah was dying. It worked on rice then it would work elsewhere; it was a natural organic product.

The gene gun had cost him his mother's diamond tiara, everything in his labs below the product of his secret inheritance.

From his mother.

Yet his powerful father gave him nothing, blaming his son's deformity for the death of his wife in child birth.

Anyway: He had tried the conventional electroporation method of inserting genes into Leah but they failed to kill the fever, and no one had told him about red mangrove melon as something nasty had happened to the centurion which he hadn't heard about as he only moved from his dungeon laboratory to his private cooking cubicle to Leah's beside, catching some sleep on a dog's floor mat nearby so that explained why he was scratching.

"Did it hurt her?" A smooth voice.

"I give painless needles," the hunchback responded afraid Wonder Lord Vinki might do some mischief.

And Vinki smoothed the little lizard's man's black long hair tied behind his head, "Then you should serve Artebrates for his hands shake."

"Only Nannaha feeds his habit," the hunchback gritted knowing since she had

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advanced up the comforter's scale his Lord and Master's addiction to poppy was now chronic.

Had stopped using antibiotics to counteract the poppy drug, had become degenerate and typified all that was stinking in Fermanian society.

"Nannaha," the hunchback venomously as he pictured her in black leather surrounded by fawning human slaves crushing and heating the poppy seeds for Artebrates.

And when Artebrates dreamed, she and the slaves would play chess?

"Errach," and the hunchback spat out green stuff into a chamber pot.

Something splashed out of the pot onto Vinki's soft pink moccasin made of finest human hair.

Leah on Nannaha's orders had been denied servants during her sickness.

So very slowly Vinki wiped it off on the hunchback who did not protest, to do so would to invite a whipping from Vinki's red alligator belt.

Vinki who took great pleasure in handing out the whipping to a friend or slave to continue as he easily suffered fatigue being of gentle stock.

"So Malachi killed the scribe, I wonder how much you know?" Vinki as he fingered some orange rouge on Leah's bedside table for he had overheard.

"A bright colour my Lord."

"Yes," Vinki rubbing some on his cheeks and then played with Leah's blue lipstick.

Mungo

He also rummaged through Leah's smalls and the hunchback said nothing; Vinki was Head of Army Purchasing and only a fool crossed him.

Why the hunchback didn't move, didn't dare too or he did attack Vinki for defiling Leah's clothes.

So Vinki stole Leah's blue suspenders and wore them: it was fashionable, silk stockings were added, and these dandies pranced and popped up all over Fermanian society. They powdered their hair and cheeks, sniffed herbs and drugs from snuff boxes; gambled fortunes on cards and frequented brothels.

"Eaarch," and this time the hunchback swallowed.

"I want Mungo brought back alive, I want to kill him personally, and for this favour I will arm Artebrates regiment in steel swords and laser rifles for his forthcoming campaign against the humans along the Red Grass.

They say Artebrates just wants rid of Leah for she gives him nightmares about Mungo?

Nannaha says you would like to go with Leah because you are kind to her?" Vinki was a Wonder Lord, "And someone found a blood stained glove tucked in the murdered scribe's belt, it seems it is Artebrates?" *Of course a lie as we know?*

And the hunchback thought of turning Malachi in to break the influence Vinki would have over Artebrates for planting such evidence.

"Pity your Lord and Master is a poppy freak? He dreams of civil war?"

Mungo

And the hunchback hated his master for his weakness and prayed to god Telephassa to send him to hell where Vinki would be found so he could torture him for eternity.

“Give Leah this,” Vinki putting down a vial full of red juice.

“What is it?” That was a brave thing to ask.

“Seems Mungo has given us the cure for purple fever, why I don’t know, we are always spreading illness amongst the humans to keep their numbers down?”

And the hunchback knew Vinki wouldn’t understand, he could, and it came from loving and caring someone who was always on the receiving end of the stick.

“Because Mungo cannot bring judgement upon us without knowing mercy,” the hunchback looking at the vial thinking how Vinki shamed Fermanians by reducing Mungo’s kind act to that of a man thing who was only fit to clean toilet bowls.

Why Vinki slapped the hunchback’s head so it bounced off the soft mattress Leah was on.

And Vinki held the head down on the mattress so the lungs suffocated.

Several times the hunchback raked Leah’s body gasping for air.

“I don’t bloody well like you,” Vinki shouted at the weakened hunchback who he now held up by an ear.

The hunchback’s mouth swallowed air like a fish out of water.

“Don’t let me ever hear you speak well of Mungo,” Vinki who twisted the ear he held so it ripped and the hunchback screamed falling to his face and Vinki stood once hard on the back of his head.

This effort of busting the hunchback's nose so infuriated Vinki he kicked till overcome by exhaustion then backed away panting gasping.



Illustration 10: Lord Vinki was corrupt and so was Nahanna.

The little hunchback represented all that was defiled to Vinki, unperfumed and stinking, ugly and deformed, dark and living in the gutters and under floor boards with the rats; a creepy crawly.

Mungo

Even the clothes the hunchback wore did not fit, the legs bent, no fashionable clothes could fit.

Ten minutes later Wonder Lord Vinki finished patting down his disturbed hair, and tucked some of Leah's personal items into his pouch.

He also sprayed himself with some flower scent to hide the body smells of the hunchback.

And when the door slid shut the hunchback moved cursing Artebrates for being so weak.

Quickly ignoring his bruises he forced the melon into Leah's mouth as watery pulp.

Then waited.

So sat against a wall allowing the cold stone to sooth his aches and Leah moaned, a good sign, life was returning to the girl and he would be here when she opened her solid green eyes to see a friendly face.

*

"No one cares except for me and Malachi and it must be done," the hunchback alone with Artebrates on the lord's bed.

"Ha ha ha little monster I see someone has given you a good beating," Artebrates reminding the hunchback of his place in society.

And the hunchback wrapped the rubber tube tight about his lord's left biceps to make a vein swell up good.

Mungo

They looked all red and sore from too many needle pricks; Nannaha was a rogue, selfish and wicked, thinking she controlled Artebrates with poppy seed, but if their lord fell so would they? Who wanted a second hand comforter? Brothels at the harbour perhaps or she could earn a living giving quickies to drunken late night revellers in dark alley ways.

And the hunchback prodded some veins and Artebrates howled; infection had set in.

And the hunchback fought for sympathy as, “You have given Leah to Vinki, why my Lord?”

And Artebrates swiped with a hand the hunchback’s face to give deliberate pain. Artebrates like Vinki belonged to society, the hunchback belonged to him.

“Hell fire and dinosaur dung I see Mungo in my dreams using a sword fish on my spine,” the reason why he wanted rid of beautiful Leah.

And the hunchback had some confidence in that Artebrates under the influence of poppy would not remember what was said or done to him.

“Mungo waits for you, you have harmed Leah, given her to the dandy Vinki to harm, Mungo is coming with a swordfish my Lord,” and hoped he would too; giving Leah away was the last straw, so he thought! And injected naltrexone into Artebrates, could have done it so it scraped a vein but felt since Mungo had given a cure for purple fever for free, so did it painlessly and the drug would stop the poppy producing excess dopamine, a neurotransmitter inside Artebrates’s brain that gave him his high.

“That’s torture enough,” and “you won’t need this,” the hunchback clearing a table of needles.

Then left and locked the door for he had a cloned hand of his Lord and Master, Artebrates, stolen when he was on a high.

Now he was taking some risk for Artebrates could have him served up as a selection of sliced meats in his House Berserka Barracks, “But it need be done to save Leah from Vinki, besides the fool’s dream of being emperor will boil him soon enough.”

Anyway: Now sometimes later he returned to Artebrates room ready to give naltrexone again and opened the door with the cloned hand.

“Wah, you almost made my heart stop freak,” a lizard in a leopard skin robe attended by a human slave in a silver stretch one piece said.

“You here?” The hunchback feeling hope crumple sand realised he wasn’t the only one using cloned hands to open locked doors.

“Crawled out with roaches have we?” Nannaha replied, “The deformed come to ask Heaven to escape his back?” Nannaha said pulling a white packet from a pocket, “for you no charge.”

And the hunchback looked at Artebrates and was obvious he had been injected a high dose.

“Nannaha?” The hunchback was sickened.

“My Lord and Master asked for Dropex, I am loyal and serve his cravings,” Nannaha.

Mungo

And the hunchback, *“Gad you bitch of darkness, crawl back to the pit you flew out off?”* A thought only, “Nannaha you are his loyalist servant,” and with that retired from the room wishing her dead as Dropex the human slave laughed his head off.

An hour and a half later Dropex left the room and the hunchback noticed his hair was newly wetted and the zip on the human slave was open at the neck.

“And I know every corner of this castle,” the hunchback and followed the slave to a nasty figure, a seller of poppy seed and the hunchback was recognised by the seller who thought he would sell more; and was rewarded with a dagger in his stomach.

“Spare me,” the human slave begged.

“Help me,” the hunchback and together dragged the seller through a secret doorway down a flight of stairs and, the place was full of cross roads but the hunchback knew which way to go.

And the slave trusted him entirely.

And they came to the hunchback’s laboratories, looking like any school lab’ but had a difference?

“They say I am a great anatomist, independent of the medical school and the priests; Artebrates backs me in the hope of finding immortality. And slid the seller of poppy seed down a shaft to waiting crocodiles below. “They must have been hungry for the splashing was much? My rooms are full of vials, books and empty cages, empty because what was in them waits for you.”

Mungo

“Arg,” the human slave gasped as the hunchback used the dagger again to good effect.

And the slave was pushed down the shaft into the mouth a crocodile that had the limbs of a dash hound.

“Yaw a wa,” the hunchback uncoiling the slave’s vitals from his feet and threw them after the body to the crocodiles.

“Go rot in hell scum bag,” for the hunchback had no mercy for his type.

What goes round comes round.

But in a way he was a slave too, used to death and slaves had no rights, even him, just things that existed for instructions and as food for another.

“I have no remorse, death awaits me too, I have sent them both to a better land and I want no repercussion from killing the poppy seed seller, slaves know how to talk, they get it beat out of them.”

And after rummaging about his vials found a sedative for Leah, Artebrates could go cold turkey, he deserved no less.

But another vial returned that night, the vial creature type, Lord Vinki.

“How is Artebrates tonight?” he asked Nannaha.

“He sleeps my Lord,” and allowed Vinki to wipe his sandals on her black hair: she was a comforter only.

Mungo

“Good, keep him on poppy seed so when Leah is well I may do as I please with her,” and he fondled a handful of rings for he planned to pierce her ear, nose, lips and belly so all could see she was owned by men and tattoo her flesh on her shoulder and bottom with inviting signs so all men would know at once she was a comforter.

And while he dreamed such cruelties, cruel because Leah had no opinion in the matter, the hunchback found his father.

“Wake up father,” he shouted as he pumped naltrexone into the old warrior in another room. Now and again he hit the old lizard hard.

“I should let you die so I can claim my inheritance, all my brother’s are dead and you killed them with your stupid wars; now only I live and a good lawyer can fix anything.”

You disowned me so I live at the level of slave so am childless,” and spat at his father repeatedly.

Yes Lord Artebrates was the hunchback's father.

“Because you are so dam ugly you did have ugly children and I did disown them in case folk saw I carried bad genes.

I know 10% of children born are not their father’s, something as ugly as you could not be mine. What I know before a babies year is out the real father see’s himself in the child and I do not see me in you nor when you where a baby. Your mother cheated on me and with what? Ha ha ha ha,” his father Artebrates was cruel.

Mungo

The hunchback felt a volcano erupt in him and knew who the real monster was.

“She never cheated, her servants swore to me before you realised they loved me with kindness and cooked them,” the hunchback replied calmly, how he managed to hold his wrath is Heavens secret?

“Their sweet meats were good,” Artebrates and his deformed son compared him to Mungo and sighed disgusted this **was** his father.

“Now your legal male children are dead, burned by humans to ensure they cannot be cloned, now the only seed left is mine,” the hunchback.

“Not so monster, I have whore sons, many,” his father seeing a way out and looking for more poppy seed and, “You killed your mother.”

“You lying dinosaur dung head, it wasn’t my back that split her so in child birth so she bled, it was you, where were you that night?

Sucking poppy seed and you left Vinki and his quack to her needs; you killed her dinosaur dung head,” and hated his father even more so than he already did.

Artebrates checked his plate of poppy seed, he didn’t like anyone belittling him about his habit and put on a stupid face as if he couldn’t care, but he did, deep down, just wasn’t showing the hurt.

“If it wasn’t for Leah I did have left long ago,” the hunchback continued.

“And I did set the hunting lions Abel and Eve on you as is my right as your Lord and Master, slave because you would be an escaped slave because I owe you.”

“Stuff you,” the hunchback shouted unable to absorb any more punishment and just before he shut the door Artebrates called out, “I suggested to Vinki she die.”



Illustration 11: Abel and Eve invite you to supper

The hunchback’s heart murmured, his father had ordered mummies death under the hands of a sadist. “Hail Emperor Artebrates,” and went straight to Leah’s room and used the cloned palm print on it *bit it wouldn’t open. Was father lying to wind him up?*

“Someone outside,” Nannaha to Vinki who was admiring his body piercing work and Nannaha flicked on a video screen and they saw the fuming hunchback outside Leah’s room.

Mungo

“Let him wait,” Vinki as he hung yellow silks from his swishing lizard tail and Nannaha turned down the door volume so never heard “Mungo will eat your livers for you.”

Two hours later the hunch back stopped crying outside the door and swore he did burn down the rotten city of Telephassa with every foul lizard in it.

“According to the prophecy this isn’t supposed to happen? Dam scribes and their lies,” he screamed.

He also realised if father was telling the truth, he had murdered mummy legally by letting Vinki at her over a lie she had cheated on him.

“Why?” He asked and answered “Because you are Lord and Master, why not let the hunting lions Abel and Eve at her, it would have been more merciful than Vinki.”

He also remembered it was Vinki who had boasted he had caught his mother in bed with a House Berserka.

“A no one House Berserka who wouldn’t be missed when he was quickly hung from a beam in the great dining hall as an example to others to keep their place in society.

And his mother’s tongue cut out to stop her telling her side.

As long as daddy got his poppy seed he couldn’t care what happened.

Mungo

And never heard Vinki boast, “I have Artebrates' new will, I will inherit everything and he can live here in his castle till his death, *which won't be far away, does that please you Nannaha my girl?*”

Again Nannaha fell to her knees so Vinki could wipe his feet on her hair, “I am loyal to my Lord and Master and give him anything he so desires as I am his number one comforter,” and as for Vinki would pump the old foolish warrior full of poppy till he burst.

Vinki loved her, and the more powerful Vinki was, the more powerful she became, and one day she would be the power behind the throne Nannaha believed.

“You speak wisely child,” and led Nannaha to a bedchamber, “and feed my pha well with that hunch back.”

“Lord and Master the feed will be mixed well with him,” and Nannaha comforted the wondrous Wonder Lord Vinki.

And much later Leah's door opened and these two, departed and the hunchback asleep, Vinki wiped his feet on the little man's head.

“What wa what goes on here?” The hunch back rising and realising what had happened anger consumed him.

“Dinosaur dung head,” the hunchback and leapt so he planted both his feet into Vinki.

“Gad that hurt,” and was the hunch back whose bandaged ribs hurt from Vinki's earlier beating.

Mungo

“Slave,” a priest shouted as both holy men tried to pull the hunchback away from Vinki. Now these two were bodyguards for a third priest behind.

But the hunchback, “I aim well even with black eyes,” and hit both priests in the throat, killing them.

And the third priest shouted, “I am a legal scribe so protected by the law.” But the hunchback had just crossed the law’s boundaries.

And this man ruffled under his black robes for a laser pistol and the hunchback intuition filling him landed upon him, twisting the pistol down and against the priest, so cut off both the man’s legs so he fell and balanced on the stumps left.

“Mercy,” the priestly scribe begged.

“Man of the law I am now my own law,” and used the laser to open the scribe’s sweetmeat to the world.

Surely a son of Artebrates.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaa,” Nannaha screamed fleeing to her own room whose door she bolted, just in case a cloned hand was in the possession of the deranged hunchback?

Vinki's safety was far from her thoughts.

And muttered brave words to herself because she primed the laser pistol she kept in a draw for emergencies.

Not much good having one if it isn't ready for use?

So never heard the hunchback cry over Leah or return to his father’s room.

Here he left a note, “Father, This was Leah’s.”

Mungo

And left the rings he had carefully removed from Leah. Leah wasn't into body piercing; she knew her body was beautiful enough.

At that moment a black fly bit Nannaha and was full of oncherciasis which was river blindness but she didn't know that.

And Vinki escaped and deep in his heart he wanted Artebrates dead for as legal heir he could have Artebrates green houses, for his own had been shattered during a cosmic storm that had brought radioactive ions into his cotton crops within.

He was now broke; he was just a greedy lizard man; and Cathbadh had emptied his granaries to the mob..

And Lord Artebrates dreamed of successful civil war.

And that is all it would be, thanks to poppy seed, dreams.

Cathbadh.

"You are blood?" Carman.

And Cathbadh knew there was no point denying so shrugged.

So Carman studied him good.

She saw much of King Sess in him and was pleased.

"Come and eat," and Cathbadh accepted sitting besides her on a lounge ate vinigered human sweet meats.

"Vinki is useful, a monarch needs an unpopular minister for her people to hate," pause, "they love you."

“I fed them in your name.”

“Why didn’t you throw in your lot with Prince Annunaki?”

“Dead isn’t he?”

And Carman laughed, “I like you Cathbadh, they say you are a wizard, show me some tricks”

And Cathbadh put his head on her feet and she wiped her naked feet on them.

He was no fool.

The elections for the new Senate are in two months time. I will show you how to put your people there and not Vinki’s,” Cathbadh and rose and opened his mouth to accept a morsel of sweet meat from her.

“Serve me well,” Carman and he did and **time stops for no one** not even the black domestic beetle that crawls out of floor boards to eat food remains under the red moon. So Cathbadh returning home found the frightened hunchback waiting for him.

“How did you get in?” *A silly question?*

“Master teacher, you gave me a cloned hand when I was your student,” the hunchback on his face for Cathbadh to wipe his feet on his hair. And Cathbadh did shaking his head making a mental note to retrieve the hand and to who else he had given his cloned hand too?

“I need help, I have beaten Wonder Lord Vinki,” and explained and Cathbadh grinned.

Mungo

“I will seek Carman and get her to grant you immunity from Vinki, anyway tell me how your experiments are going?”

“Well soon the question of our infertility will be a nightmare of the past,” the hunchback still flat.

“That will go well in your favour for Carman is relying on us. She knows only you and I can solve the problems that decline our race, but you must promise not to harm Vinki again, after all he is a Lord and what are you?”

“A monster,” the hunchback quietly.

“Yes, quite so.”

AND BOTH THOUGHT OF THEIR RACE’S BIGGEST PROBLEM, The Wild One.

And when the red sun rose the hunchback was in front of his Mighty One who had no sympathy for him.

An attack on a ruling noble was an attack on the ruling class of which she belonged too. The aggressor must be punished to discourage further attacks on her diving enlightened position.

“You will be taken to the poultry market and beaten with sticks till you faint and left there till the next sun. Count yourself fortunate little man that Cathbadh speaks in your favour,” Carman.

The hunchback crawled forward and kissed her sandalled feet in gratitude.

Carman smiled; she always liked her mercy appreciated.

Mungo

“Oh Mighty One please hang him from my kitchen so he can see the pots and cauldrons ready for him,” Lord Vinki complained and his Mighty One cast a stony look at him and bent forward, “Artebrates is our only hope of crushing the humans, harm him not, but slip the executioner a gold coin to make sure the hunchback does not fan too soon.”

Vinki smiled, she was indeed cunning worthy opponent and was satisfied.

He would slip several gold coins that way and the hunchback would be restrained from fainting all day.

Now Vinki trembled “I lost the mob when Cathbadh gave my grain to them, but soon the senators you have never heard of will demand your banishment and as for Artebrates I own him and his gold will pay my expenses.”

And allowed Carman to wipe her perfumed feet on his hair as a sign of submission.

And mazarrats sang for Leah and The Elder heard and said to young ones, “There are many false prophets such as scribes, only listen to me for I am The Elder and lead our people to light,” and the young ones understood.

Knew one day they did live above ground where there was plenty of sunshine and no recycled air. Did hear birds instead of lathes and fountains than a turned on tap.

They could toilet where they pleased like other wild beats instead of in steel drums that went for fertiliser for the vast vegetable burrows, heated by abandoned nuclear reactors.

Mungo

And they needn't fear the reactors exploding. "We will only listen to he that is close to the light," meaning The Elder.

"I am the way," and The Elder smiled and Mungo is the chosen instrument, protect him.

