

The Man

The Emperor

The Emperor Augustus William Sutherland in a gold toga was sitting on his diamond throne watching a display of silent laser swordsmanship to a background of 1812 for he liked the sound of ancient canons. He was one year older than The Man whom he hated detested loathed over as a threat to the OLD ESTABLISHED ORDER.

His order.

Every laser thrust was accompanied by quickened drum beats by his skin drummers. That would bring his roving eyes back to the duelling swordsmen. He was looking for sport, a new beauty to initiate into his court.

The swordsmen found the drum beats disconcerting and red cuts soon appeared; that was the idea. It wasn't fair but Augustus always said 'Nothing in life was fair or there wouldn't be poor and rich.'

He also said, 'We breed the poor so they can wonder at our richness', also 'the poor need the crumbs that the rich leave them too eat.' 'Poverty magnifies our splendour,' 'someone must be poor and I am glad it isn't me,' 'My laws are to protect us from falling to their level.' Augustus was also called The Hunter for he had hounds to deal with those who resisted his ideals made for a world where people wanted power, they loved it, it corrupted and filled you with ego.

It was not unusual for kids playing or lovers walking too stumble across the remains of those who had not escaped the hounds.

Anyway the drum beat stopped, a sword lay on the floor, and so did the fingers that once held it.

But Augustus was looking into the blue eyes of a pretty young girl whose parents had edged her forward to be noticed so they could profit.

Now Augustus held up his palm skywards so allowing the wounded swordsman to pick up his weapon and use his other hand which he was useless at swordsmanship with.

Augustus couldn't care, he was grinning so much at the girl he was showing his brilliant white dentured teeth.

The girl fluttered her extra long dark eye lashes and blushed.

Her mother sensing victory and richness unclasped the girls cape so it dropped revealing the girl wore very little else.

Augustus summoned the girl to his side as he stood up and left with her; then he turned and told the swordsman who was winning to hurry up.

And with a new zeal the man hacked and hacked till his opponent's sword and hand lay on the floor.

There was a gurgling sound as the winner killed the defeated one, then the sound of coins being thrown; it was all in a days work.

And as one died a man left the room, a man who said he was the 'Fountain of Mercy', that man was Augustus.

A man who boasted his laws were for all. "The public execution of one rich man quells the rebellious poor who see my laws discriminate against none."

And the rich put up with Augustus for they were as bad as he and was rumoured there existed a secret society amongst them, a society that selected one of their own who had not behaved and gave him/her over to Augustus; to be publically executed and thus the rich paid their dues to society and the poor were happy.

It was also rumoured Augustus headed this secret society which was very convenient for him. "I tickle the wealthy," he boasted and often introduced new blood into the ranks of the elite, a war hero, a corrupt official who donated much, a beautiful courtesan, a noted man of science and many more

And when troubled brewed with the masses these fortunate's became the public executed.

Their estates confiscated and Augustus grew rich.

The man was geared to self preservation and knew how to win.

He made his enemies disappear and corrupted all he came into contact with.

Even the servants who grovelled at his feet knew what money could buy.

The idle rich men and women who owned them had taught them to visit the slave markets to *see if anything interesting* had turned up?

And from the lowest to the highest all aped Augustus's ways, his opulence, his orgies, his tastes to alleviate himself of boredom; *for they were his citizens were they not?*

It is recorded that after reading that a wife of a Roman emperor entertained a whole legion so his beloved 16th Space marine Regiment would be rewarded such, and had Po Wei round up a thousand daughters for the display in the arena.

It was also rumoured Po Wei's son, Po Shen donned on armour to join the marines! Also wild beasts chained at intervals to catch any fleeing maidens pursued by marines.

Trenches were dug and filled with flesh eating fish.

Balloons were tethered to posts, chilli wraps sold, ice creams and soda drinks, alcohol and drugs. A carnival atmosphere and it was allowed for society lacked morals.

And it was known citizens fed their disobedient servants to their pet dogs, bears and tigers for they aped the emperor and supported him for they feared one

He who condemned the guilty,

The Man.

So they flocked to the emperor's race days where he had a swimming pool filled with sharks and TRASH was thrown in wearing jockey colours and bets placed to see who managed to pull themselves out of the pool.

And Augustus had stables for the winners where they lived with his gladiators and lived to excess for none knew when his sell by date was UP.

Men and women who lived for today only for they believed in nothing except Hedonism, pleasure for that is what the top believed in.

They did not even see God in themselves so did not believe in anything apart from DEATH that was very real.

And if DEATH could reply it would whisper, "Curses be upon your kind,

Till the tenth generation.

I have no objection to

Genetics.

But what you have done,

Unclean people,

So I have given you

My bone grinder,

The Man.

And Augustus understood DEATH also without listening to its still voice; for he paid his followers well to the extent that they would execute their own mothers and many did.

And Augustus had the largest standing army ever known in the history of humankind and they saw themselves as invincible legions of a forgotten empire with gaudy standards to follow.

And all in all it made Aelfric Europe very jealous for Augustus was a challenge to his belief that HE WAS ABSOLUTE only.

Now Augustus was expecting a visitor, Tintagel the Wise who had come as ambassador from The Man. The Man, the very thought of him made Augustus's bile rise in his stomach so that when the gladiator lay under the victor's sandals it was an acidic stomach that decided life or death.

And the skin drummers understood and beat faster making a crescendo of excitement as the crowd of murderers waited for Augustus to order?

And Augustus gave the thumb's down and DEATH was heard in a rattle of a last breath. And Augustus accepted the head of the vanquished and he offered it to his newest conquest, the young girl who accepted it and passed the grizzly trophy to other courtiers and finally it was disposed of in a trash bin.

Millions of years of design and evolution had just been destroyed just like that! By a man called Augustus who could not make a pea plant thrive.

And Po Wei gave Tintagel audience for peace was needed to recoup loans to pay the troops. And Tintagel knew The Man had paid Po Wei a small fortune too make sure Tintagel's head was not returned on a silver plate.

So Tintagel bowed very low till his head touched the blue mosaic floor depicting Tang hunting scenes as a hundred cymbals vibrated.

Tintagel stayed bowed which pleased Po Wei immensely.

The Mayor Domo in Aelfric's household had warned Tintagel not to move until Po Wei summoned him too, that had been Simon's the food taster's mistake; he had stood up before Po Wei had summoned him when he acted as ambassador.

Po Wei saw all who served The Man as TRASH and saw himself almost as a god.

“Follow me,” Po Wei ordered and led Tintagel into a private audience chamber painted with Ming dynasty floral scenes; birds and tigers. Scenes that were depicted on Po Wei’s trailing sixteen foot gown that Tintagel did his best to get out of the way of as slaves carried it.

Po Wei liked to show he was power and power meant life or death to those below his status.

And as they walked oriental banners hung from ceilings, some looked Japanese Samurai and in wall niches expensive antique vases; only the best.

Depicting scenes that Tintagel’s mind censored.

“A man becomes like his furniture,” Tintagel had complained often to The Man.

“Good I will not be like Po Wei then,” The Man.

“A heart like wood will not bend,” Tintagel warned.

“Love will bend it,” The Man and Tintagel asked “What love, where is the girl to soften it?”

But both knew The Man spoke of another love?

“Judge your rulers by their seats,” Tintagel would later write in his Chronicles.

For Po Wei sat on a red polished lacquered ebony throne on goose pillows embroiled in flowers and animals. Very nice Tintagel thought, but you are not The Man who sits on a rough wooden seat.

Now Po Wei gripped the ebony carved dragon arm rests asking, “What does IT want?” For Po Wei was making it obvious he was speaking to something his cat had left behind.

“For the exalted Emperor Augustus to stop the traffic in exiles,” Tintagel lied.

SILENT PAUSE.

“Augustus will consider,” meaning Po Wei will.

And Po Wei guessed that the stream of exiles flooding into the dictatorship was a drain on its economy and was pleased. It also worked the other way round; the rich were leaving the dictatorship seeking solace in the empire.

Po Wei was overjoyed that such economic woo had befallen his enemies.

How could Po Wei stop such traffic when they paid him vast bribes to be allowed out? “My poor cousins,” Po Wei called them and they certainly were after meeting him!

And Tintagel was pleased, this is what he and The Man wanted, to make Po Wei think the dictatorship was weak and Tintagel bowed low again till he tasted the lime polish on the mosaic floor.

Suddenly a copper coin span beside Tintagel’s face for Po Wei had thrown the beggar substance.

Tintagel thanked Po Wei for his generosity and accepted the coin. Let the empire have all the decadent wealthy and the dictatorship would take the artisans, craftsmen and labourers who believed in good old fashioned hard work never hurt anyone.

The Man called them “His silverware.”

One refugee trained to carry a 60lb rucksack, laser rifle, spade, tent, blanket, ammunition and his armour was worth more than any of Augustus's well paid soldiers for they had read The Man's book and believed in The Man.

These men followed The Man not his generals and his generals knew it and why The Man could roam space like Buck Rogers and return to a throne.

Could Augustus do likewise, think not, he might return and find Po Wei on his throne?

Now Po Wei looked at the cymbal players in their red leather jerkins studded with brass bells; the audience was over, the nose began again.

Tintagel kept bowing all the way out of the audience chamber and thanked heaven for the major Domo even if he was expensive.

And once outside bought a fizzy drink from a floating drink vendor to rid himself of the lime polish with the copper; *waste not want not?*

And resorted to his Victory V to rid himself of the cheap fizzy drink taste. There was no waiting convoy of black hover limousines but a return bus ticket on the mono rail. Po Wei wanted to degrade Tintagel his opponent as much as he could.

Only one man could be a god and that man was Po Wei? GREY.

So Tintagel rode the bus a hundred feet above the traffic lanes to the Inn of the Split Winds observing all he saw.

The sullen distrustful faces listening to their private music players, the anything goes fashion, the needles stuck in noses, the obvious chastity belts, the grey walls of the bus covered in graffiti and advertisements. GREY.

The bus was a reflection of the empire, it had lost something, a community spirit was missing, and it was now everyone for him/herself.

Outside the Inn which was no more than a brothel a fight had broken out between two youths and now one lay bleeding badly on the pavement from a stab wound.

And above him the hover bus had broken down. GREY.

Inside his room Tintagel looked out his uncurtained window where neon advertisements threatened to keep him awake and saw the girls float by on their platforms, enticing him to treat for their wares.

Every race, sex and robot was out there with clients and vendors selling food to the condiments of the game?

The empire was not well, most where addicts to something, a whole generation was going to waste out there?

And across from Tintagel a Snuff Show House where a queue had formed for the condemned of the empire where sold here to meet their end.

And Tintagel saddened as he knew those in the queue would pay a small fortune to watch another human murdered for an inner gratification.

The empire was indeed not well.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

Tintagel tensed.

The Major Domo had just been tortured rather crudely by Aelfric Europe so his double game was now known.

And on a roll out pump up air bed Nesta pretended to be asleep. Tintagel saw her and was pleased, she would grow into a beauty and he would teach her well and she would be loyal to The Man. How so, for she saw what Tintagel saw, the human decadence outside their window.

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Silver florescent light.

Rose water smell.

And one enemy was Augustus Sutherland who desired too have the planets The Man took in war back. Right now he lounged on a leopard skin sofa eating black olives fed to him by two girls, one dyed red and the other light blue.

Po Wei was listening with him to tapes playing from The Man's enemies begging Augustus to make a treaty with them against The Man.

PO Wei didn't think Augustus was concentrating, the nymphs were very attractive, that was good, they were meant to be.

So Po Wei neglected to mention that the new treaty had cost the empire ten years taxes and these enemies of The Man would declare Po Shen, Po Wei's favourite son their king.

And one amongst them was called Prince Vespa.

REMEMBER HIS NAME.

It is easily forgotten.

“Master,” Tintagel gasped as he opened the door after the knocking and lowered his laser.

“Want a mercenary bodyguard?” The Man asked knowing Tintagel had seen through his disguise.

“Come in and discuss terms,” Tintagel replied and searched for a Victory V.

The Man strode in. all seven feet of him and stopped beside Nesta.

SILENCE.

The door shut.

“Master she is my apprentice not what you see,” Tintagel.

“A girl?” The Man.

“Since when did you become a sexist?” Tintagel. At that moment Nesta opened her eyes as The Man sensing defeat so contented himself by removing cosmetic warts and interesting disguises from himself.

Nesta screamed, she wasn’t sure if she was having a nightmare.

Her scream went unnoticed as downstairs in the bar two female wrestlers were struggling with a small black declawed brown bear. Of course there was lots of mud; nothing had changed apart from the added stimulants and the bear.

In fact the whole cheap hotel was full of screams.

One more by Nesta just meant the occupier of that room had bizarre tastes.

As a passing alien in the corridor who had seen the disguised Man had thought,
“That is one ugly mercenary.”

“Relax Nesta, you are not intended for him,” Tintagel soothingly.

The Man smiled reassuringly as his scar that ran down his face to his lip lengthened; somehow Nesta wasn't soothed?

Here was a lion and she was the fresh food.

With a shrug The Man handed Nesta his laser pistol and sat down, drank a glass of orange peel wine and then with his lengthened incisors tore into a piece of cold chicken meat baked in honey and mustard.

Nesta pointed the gun at The Man.

She watched The Man sprinkle salt and pepper on to his meat and heard him belch loudly.

She put down the gun in disgust; if she was to be a spy then she better accept the weirdoes that went with the job.

The Man felt a little uncomfortable, Tintagel had been right; Nesta was a pretty little thing. He put down his chicken and wiped his hands on the table cloth and apologised for frightening her.

Tintagel raised a suspicious eyebrow?

The Man was looking Nesta up and down and she knew it as she just stood there glaring challenging.

Tintagel now suspected the war of the sexes had just begun.

Then Nesta didn't know who this stranger was or did she?

And The Man wished Nesta a better life than spying.

A life with a solid man behind her and a home,

Kids and that sort of stuff.

Looking at Nesta just starting out on her life made him feel protective.

He was The Man with an image to maintain.

And he enjoyed doing it,

The women and wine,

The women and war.

The women, wine and war.

Poor poor poor The Man.

“Life’s a bitch then you die,” was one of his favourite quotes.

He offered her some wine and chicken and she took it and went and sat cross
legged in a corner.

FLASHING NEON OUTSIDE
FILLS ROOM WITH RAINBOWS
FOR THE ROOM HAS CRACKED
GREEN WALLS.

Nesta watched the stranger’s face become softer as his disguises came off, the man
could pass as handsome if it wasn’t for that scar.

‘Scar? Scar?’ Alarm bells went off in her memory; weren’t Tintagel and The Man
the best of friends?

She remembered he had bionic limbs just like this stranger and her heart beat
faster.

And he kept looking at her and smiling; somehow her legs felt exposed, she knew they were nicely shaped and were designed to make men look and remembered

‘Women and wine,

Women and war,

Women, wine and war,’ this was her original target; she did not cross her legs, but brought them up to her chin.

The Man cursed the climate changes that heralded in hot sticky air and new clothe designs, what clothes? It was too hot for clothes and she knew he could see her gold pants.

She was natural youth, he was boasted implanted youth.

Nesta you are taunting The Man who has a thousand courtiers, what is your game Nesta, didn’t mummy tell you to wear longer kilts?

The trouble was Nesta didn’t have a mummy to tell her such niceties so she dropped one long shapely leg.

The Man choked on a piece of chicken and Tintagel stood behind him slapping his back.

NESTA WAS GLAD HE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE.

‘The skin’s luring scents have long been captured and imitated by the imperial cosmetic industry. The Man and Nesta belonged to those individuals who didn’t need lotions as their skins made an over abundance of their own scents to trap unwary individuals. I should have known but I thinking of my cybog robot Wendy so was

blind, blind, blind to the none ending struggle between the sexes in the game of creating more physical life,” Tintagel.