

Tiberius

Wayne's Cards.

"Tiberius come quickly," I Simon.

Why should I care what was about to happen to the mercenaries who dared come and tell us how to live and prey?

Because I am against backwardness.

Because Tiberius Grant impressed me.

Because Dracon had saved my life.

Because they are both likable rogues.

Because we are all aliens in a strange world.

They were flesh and I pink.

Because I am against murder in the name of religion.

"He's busy," Dracon appearing from shadows.

"The missionaries," I.

Dracon could see the look of terror in my eyes and lifted me out of the way and banged on the heavy cell door.

Opens.

"What is it Dracon?" Tiberius and I smelt Morgan's musk before she slithered up behind.

"Ino is going to sacrifice the missionaries to the sun, only you can stop her," I told him.

For an instant I saw he would do nothing and realized he shared my own feelings about them.....they would bring the settlers after them.....and Wayne following.

Spoiling our adopted orange world.

"They took their chances as we did."

"Tiberius they are human," Morgan softly behind him letting her covering snake blanket drop as she prepared to dress for war.



*Illustration 69: Men like to dish it out, it's called 'Playing'.*

Tiberius blew his horn in the square.

“What do I care?” He with a shrug.

“Bring your men please Tiberius,” I hoping he would dress for he had only a loin cloth on.

It took him twenty minutes to gather Morgan’s war band by which time Ino was gone.

Those sun warriors left behind to guard us watched eager to draw swords against us.

“We mount up,” Tiberius.

None of us apart from me could ride a humpback. I watched the mercenaries fall off, curse and eventually manage to stay on and we lost over an hour in the chase.

Luckily I had an idea that Ino had taken them to the Sun Shrine about three miles down a dry water course that flooded when it rained.

“What is this place Simon?” Tiberius.

“A chosen rock from where the chosen are flown to the sun,” I.

Tiberius rested his hands on his sword hilts.

\*

“Well done Simon,” Tiberius grunted as in front of us the gold sun rock. That rusty piece of granite slab from hence gold veins sparkled up it like vines rose three quarters of a mile into the blue sky.

“Boss,” Dracon and we looked seeing sun warriors drawing their swords, intent on stopping us climbing up violating this sun sanctuary.

“I am Tiberius Grant,” his shouted reply.

And the warm wind spiraled his voice to where Ino waited for the suns zenith.

Ino must have heard for another too did.

Hagar sat upon his blue humpback flicking his fingers while his brother Harkos was silent with down cast eyes. At the sound of the most hated voice on Tagget, Harkos looked frightfully at his elder.

Hoping his anger over the destruction of the fort would be taken off him onto

HE WHO DESERVED IT,

HE WHO HE HAD WAITED AN HOUR TO SEE

IN THE ARENA

Tiberius.

Now Hagar waved a leveled hand and the lone sinuous column of mounted humpback warriors moved on. He did not immediately follow; “Harkos, you want forgiveness?”

A loaded question and Hagar seeing hope in his younger brother’s black eyes, “Then lead my best to Tiberius.”

Hope vanished as Harkos was afraid of the off worlders human dragon who was a god...

..Tiberius.

He drew his light fawn snake robe about him hiding in it.

“Go,” Hagar giving his brother’s reins to a centurion.

Harkos, humiliated.

And Hagar felt the vaccine inside him, no longer would the sun be his god, he was free of its heat and noon chains. No longer would he crawl under a rock slab or burrow in the orange sand for shelter.

The Medic’s price for maps on the whole planet had been worth it. “Thank you brother Harkos, for once you achieved something worthwhile,” for Harkos was a scholar who journeyed Planet Tagget making maps and commentaries.

And King Hagar knew the reason why The Medic wanted those maps?

WAR.



*Illustration 70: Mounted warrior on humpback, another beast that was happy eating reeds before being enlisted.*

And King Hagar felt secure, he had time to strengthen his position and defeat The Medic

for The Medic he who called himself Emperor Wu had promised not to come east to Tagget Canton.

### SUCH THE CHILD LIKE TRUST OF TAGGETIANS.

Before Tiberius reached the first purgatory area which are caves cut in the sun rock allowing pilgrims mediation and self mutilation for cleansing the soul before reaching the summit,

The first human missionary

Was tossed over above.

Trumpets blared to alert their god. It also alerted the rock condors waiting dinner.

It was a woman and we watched her billowing pleats in the rushing wind.....thud, like a bag of offal bursting on the orange sand nearby.

I was afraid.

Here was Tiberius, a human, how would he react?

"I am Tiberius Grant," he screamed rushing forward. I admired his zeal but knew he and those following would be spent before they reached the top. I also knew all the missionaries would be dead by then.

Sure enough, Ino didn't wait for the sacrifices to reach the bottom before the next was thrown down.

And sure enough Tiberius was tiring from the effects of keeping his humpback on the narrow path.

Already one mercenary had fallen, not far, twenty feet, but his humpback landed on top of him.....we could see a red carpet moving towards him.....ants.

Then the hail of stones from Ino's warriors.

The second.....a human mercenary hit in the eye fell from his mount rolling down the side of Sun Rock.

A condor appeared and bit him in half and then more Condors, fighting over the man's

uncoiling parts.

And Tiberius returned fire, his cartridge pistol echoing across the desert.

There was no turning back now from open war with Ino. Panic gripped me as I wanted away from Tiberius for I knew if I stayed I would die. Not even Tiberius could take on thousands of sun warriors.

Then Harkos appeared below as his trumpeters announced his arrival and WAR like intentions.

The stones, arrows, spears and odd laser fire from above ceased.....so did our



*Illustration 71: A Spartan mother told her son don't come back unless carried atop his shield dead. But the fallen fall and are stripped by thieves of shoes and belts; while a camp follower seeks her lover and a hungry dog has all its festivals rolled into one.*

dying.....five of us dead.

“Dracon I wonder?” Tiberius, “If Ino would agree to peace?” This man Tiberius had nerve I tell you.

“Morgan take the men back to first purgatory....defend till I return,” I heard him ORDER from the shelter of a bush. His words held me back from slithering further away

from him.

And Morgan did hold the path on Sun Rock and the slaughter was great amongst the feared warriors of Hagar.

They just kept coming in swarms led by priestesses of the sun and moon.

At first the mercenaries didn't kill the holy women, but had to in the end in an effort to take out the enemy's spiritual inspiration to reach us.

We were murdering them.

Their dead piled up.

The condors didn't wait for dinner.

Harkos overcome by the killing,

Burst amongst them shouting

"Turn back."

"You are of 'The Dead,' Brother Hagar replied on the wind.

\*

I Simon did see the last missionaries roped together

Fall.

Ino wasn't being cheated this time.

"I am Tiberius Grant, I heard him shout and looking saw him at the summit before vanishing to get an alliance against Harkos's men.

I felt like shouting back "So what?"

Was he so vain he had to boast his presence? No, it was his war cry and the warriors of Hagar and Ino drew back.....full of hate and fear for the dragon.

I never saw Hagar ride up to his brother Harkos and order him to personally lead the assault or Tiberius force with logic Ino to reveal a second hidden way down Sun Rock.

Tiberius could only guess there must be an escape route down.

Rodents usually have one?

And he was right.

And he appeared with Ino's charging sun warriors into the rear of his enemy.

"Tiberius," Morgan crooned and I saw love in her eyes for that great man. She would never harm him but I wondered about him, Tiberius?

Then the off worlders war band led by Morgan ran firing down the path to bloody  
Melee

As for me? Out of hiding.

"Guess we are left?" And I jumped out of my pink skin.

There was Dracon, quietly prostrating with a huge cartridge rifle on the path.

"Why aren't you down there?" I hotly.

"Why aren't you? Surely aren't for the same reasons?" He squeezing the trigger.

He fired six times into Hagar's warriors that were a danger to Tiberius removing their threat.

"Someone has to cover the general's rump?" He and fired and I looked at Tiberius and saw a sun warrior drop.

Then Dracon looked further a field and saw the brothers Hagar and Harkos and Dracon fired at them.

"Enemy isn't much good without a head to lead them?" He muttered.

Dracon was a killer, it was obvious war gave him a cover not be prosecuted for his murders. He had no conscience, enjoyed what he was doing without remorse. Just like the sun warriors, professionals at their job of dying.

And Dracon's bullet had Hagar's name on it as Hagar's right elbow vanished with his lower arm.

Another bullet killed Harkos's red humpback.

All in all good shots for they were at least half a mile away.



And the effect was immediate.

Harkos screamed a lot pinned under his thrashing beast.

And Hagar slumped and his escort guard started leading him off the battlefield, not that he was in it anyway?

And it only takes one to see before all think their leader is dead.....then rout.

And Dracon stopped firing for Tiberius and his off worlders were not running after the backs of the defeated as Ino's sun warriors were doing that hacking at falling brave men.

Snake killing snake and the carnage was great.....over three hundred of Hagar's best died on the frontal assault against purgatory and seven hundred hacked in the back by snakes.

Taggetian against Taggetian and the humans hadn't even implemented a divide and rule policy.

And Ino rode up to Tiberius, bold, not cowed by him, full of the joy of victory and the knowledge she had many prisoners to sacrifice.

What a pair they made, just shortly they had been prepared to kill each.

Tiberius gripping sword hilts and she sticking her chest out for him to admire.

She was as bad as him; they were children at heart.

"See Ceugant Dana has given me victory for the missionaries given," her faith restored.

And Tiberius showed her his guns and said, "This is what gave you a victory? Dracon is a good shot and Hagar falling turned the tide of battle."

SILENCE.

"They weren't welcome here," she said finally meaning the missionaries.

"You didn't have to kill them?"

"I did, you know that, and if Morgan hadn't insisted you wouldn't have bothered coming. But more will come, they want to convert us to Wayne's Book, and make humans of us.."

AGAIN SILENCE.

They both knew the answer to the missionary problem, keep killing them.

Tiberius now broke eye contact.

And Ino rode away to rally her warriors and lead them back to the Cathedral of the Sun.

“Don’t follow Tiberius,” Morgan pleaded as she watched the sun warriors wave trophies towards Ceugant Dana.

“I have a WAR to fight,” he ignoring Morgan’s fear that Ino would bed and destroy him. She had seen him stare at her body language display.

Ino was no passing fling.

There was nothing for it but to follow him.

And Ino left her four hundred dead, the mercenaries their twenty.

It was the way, the condors would feast and the equilibrium of nature restored, the way provided its cleaners.

Condors and ants, jackals and wolves, lions and bears, by noon tomorrow only bones to bleach in the sun.

And Harkos wanted his blue fields and red corn where this nightmare didn’t happen.

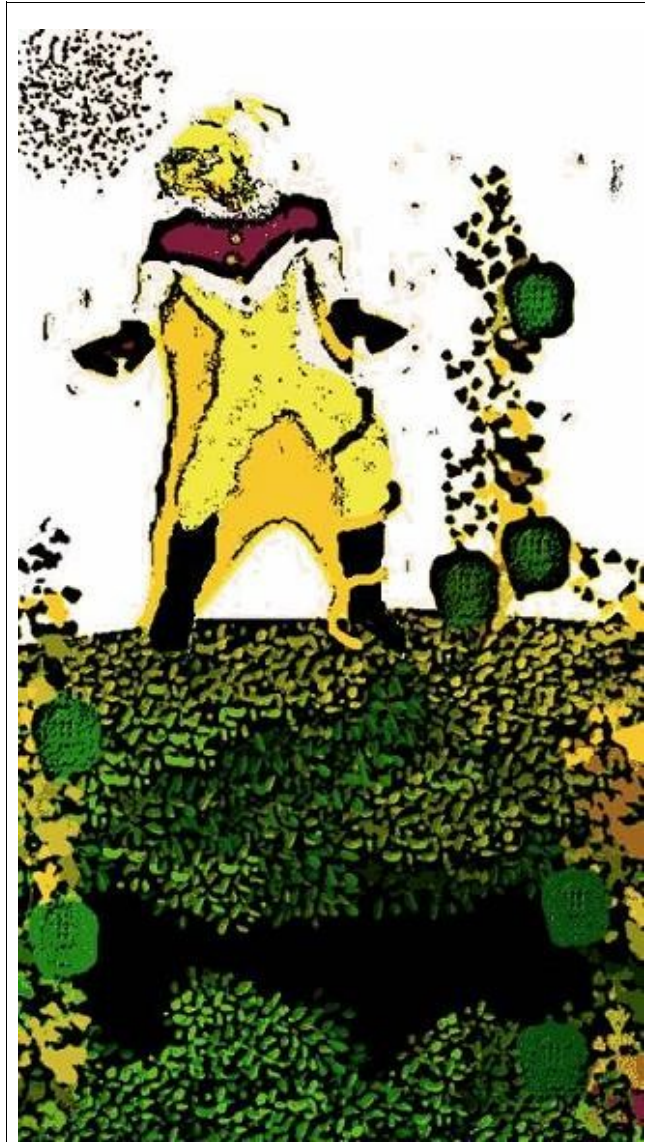
\*

“Wayne was even shocked, all knew what had happened to the missionaries at Sun Rock, but to sit listening from one who had been there was different. Even the alien ELECT were embarrassed. They knew now what Wayne was up too? A great pity they hadn’t caught on earlier or they might have demanded an immediate end to this facade of a trial and the death of Dracon to silence the war stirring.

But one thing was clear; Tiberius was as guilty of the missionaries’ murders as Ino as he sympathized with the snakes in wanting rid of them.

If the ELECT had gone home.

Been no War of Expansion



*Illustration 72: Harkos had green fingers;  
nature's growers, sprites made things grow big  
about him.*

And no future King of Tagget.

But they didn't.....the ELECT watched Wayne allow the defense Zane Cameron to submit a plea of NOT GUILTY. Whether Wayne wanted Dracon dead or not no one knows; only devious Wayne could answer that?

\*

Dracon was innocent of war, he was a soldier, a mercenary, but he was guilty of breaking the Heritage Trust Laws; laws that came from Wayne himself.

ORDER MUST BE MAINTAINED.

And General Macpherson was maintaining it.



*stus Caesar*