

Susan Bowes

# The Enemy



BookRix-Edition

Science Fiction

Susan Bowes

# The Enemy



BookRix-Edition

Science Fiction

Susan Bowes

# **The Enemy**

## The Enemy

### - Chapter One -

Our battleship was taking heavy fire and we sustained major damage to the engines. Warning lights flashed and alarms sounded as Max, our main computer, ordered an immediate evacuation. The reactor had neared critical mass and was going to detonate. The crew quickly abandoned their posts and made their way to the evac stations.

Ellie, my second in command, jumped into my pod just before the hatch slammed shut. We ejected into space. Being the captain of the vessel my pod was only meant for a single occupant. Ellie's sudden decision to leap in was certainly a shock. To say we were a little cramped was putting it mildly.

"Are you out of your mind?" I yelled.

"Sorry Cap. Didn't have much of a choice. That little jolt we felt just before Max ordered our evac was the upper levels being blown away. It just so happens that's where my pod was. It was either join you, or go down with the ship; and I wasn't particularly fond of that idea."

The blackness of space was suddenly illuminated by the detonation of our destroyer. I fought with the controls to guide the pod away from the alien orb we spiraled towards, but the concussion must've damaged the guidance system. We continued to hurtle towards the single mooned sphere.

We entered the atmosphere and the small pod heated up fast. I prayed the heat shield would hold. My life is dear to me and I didn't want it to end in that fashion. I am a soldier and prepared to die in battle, but the thought of burning up in a fireball did not appeal me.

The heat shield held and we soared over a great ocean to a land mass. "We're going to hit hard. Hang on," I yelled. The pod slammed into the terrain. It left deep crevices as it bounced and tumbled before coming to a complete stop. I was very surprised we survived. I looked

towards Ellie and noticed blood gushing from a deep gash in her forehead. I asked if she was okay.

“Yes sir. Just a little dizzy.”

I reached for the medpac in the storage compartment. I cleaned and bandaged her wound as best I could in the cramped quarters. The cut was superficial and the bleeding soon stopped.

“Now what Cap?” she asked.

“We’ve got to get out of here and find some shelter. They’ll have a search team out before long.”

“We’d better hustle then.”

I checked the oxygen monitor. The air was close to our own so there was no need to don our environmental suits. I grabbed the emergency survival kit before exiting. I was dark, but the moon lit the way as we took our first tentative steps on the alien soil. We hurried from the crash site and hid among the huge boulders that surrounded the area while I got a bearing. We then headed up the shoreline.

\*

“Did you track the enemy craft down?” the major asked..

“Yes sir. They crashed in the eastern portion of the hemisphere.”

“Deploy the search team. I want them found and captured.”

“Yes sir. The teams are already on the way.”

“Good.”

\*

“Over there sir,” Ellie said as numerous searchlights scoured the beach. We heard powerful engines rumbling above as Ellie pointed towards what appeared to be a cave. Waves crashed inside the opening and we’d have to swim. We quickly ran into the sea and dove down into its unknown depths as the machines continued whirling

overhead.

The entrance was partially caved in, but we managed to get past and emerged into a huge chamber. The air was dank, but breathable. Ellie noticed several smaller chambers. We swam to them and entered one. The walls were metal and the tunnel was definitely man made. The water slowly subsided as we made our way up the banked passageway. We finally touched our feet down when the water level lowered enough to do so. I searched through the survival kit and found a flashlight. It seemed that the tunnel had been abandoned quite a while ago as there were loose cables hanging from the ceiling.

Ellie and I continued our trek past the jumbled wires through the blackened tube before it finally leveled out. It seemed we walked for miles before light started to filter through the darkness. We were coming to the end of the tunnel. As we neared the end I listened for voices. I couldn't hear anything but a slight humming sound. I moved to the screened opening and peered through. The grate looked into a small supply room.

"What do you see?" Ellie asked.

"Not much. Just some shelving and lockers."

"Do you think there might be something we could change into? I'm cold." Ellie's lips were blue and her teeth were chattering.

"Only one way to find out," I answered as I pushed against the screening. Though rusted, it swung open easily and we climbed through.

Ellie started searching through the dust covered lockers and found some maintenance uniforms. Luckily our enemy is almost the same in size and stature as we are. We stripped off our gear and donned the clothing. I went to the exit and it was unlocked. I cautiously opened the door a crack and listened. I heard nothing.

We stepped into the brightly lit corridor and found the area was deserted. We walked down the hall which was painted entirely in white and slowed at each doorway, carefully looking in as we passed. Most of the rooms were devoid of any furniture appearing to be laboratories. We entered one. It was lined with shelves along each wall containing

numerous vials of all shapes and sizes. I walked over and took one down. I wiped dirt from the exterior and peered inside. It contained some sort of specimen taken from the ocean.

“What’s in the bottle sir?”

“Some sort of sea creature.”

Ellie walked over and peered inside the dirty container. “Grotesque hobby they have. Dissecting the cohabitants of their planet.”

“I imagine it must’ve been important to them. Their animals have gone extinct from what our scientists tell us. Maybe they were trying to find a way to restock their food source by experimenting on this creature.”

“Ugh. How can they eat meat? It’s a disgusting thought. They probably did it to amuse themselves too, knowing them.”

“We don’t know much about them, do we? Perhaps if we did we could’ve averted this war.”

“They invaded our planet. What else could we do but fight? They want to take all our resources. They’ll destroy our world as they did their own.”

“You can’t be sure of that.”

“Can’t I? You’ve seen the recon photos. They’ve depleted their own planet. Now they want ours. You never saw what these savages did to my home. They took everything they thought was useful then nuked it. They took over a billion lives in that one city alone. They are completely ravishing our planet sir and we have to defend ourselves. I will not hesitate to take every one of their lives if that is the only way to save our planet from total devastation; even if it means killing the innocent.”

“That’s quite a mouthful coming out of you. I’ve never heard you make such a long speech.”

“Well it’s the truth, isn’t it?” she spat out.

“It appears this facility is deserted. We can camp here overnight. We’ll

try to make it to the surface and set our homing beacon in the morning. Do you have any idea how long that will be?" I asked changing the subject. I didn't want my second to get any angrier than she was. She'd lost her entire family to the invasion and held a deep hatred for the enemy.

"Daylight will be in approximately five hours sir."

"I'll take the first watch. You get some rest. I have a feeling we're gonna need it."

- Chapter Two -

The major was near the crashed pod as the waves crashed on the shore. He was standing ankle deep in water, but took no notice. "I want this entire quadrant searched. Don't leave one pebble unturned Lieutenant Mace. Do you understand me?"

"Yes sir." The lieutenant snapped his hand up in a quick salute and ran to the troops that were assembled. He yelled out his orders. The men scambled.

The major got on the radio to headquarters. "The search is underway General Beumont. We'll capture them soon."

\*

I shook Ellie from her sleep. "Your turn," I said.

"Yes sir," she sleepily responded. She yawned and grabbed her weapon out of her holster. She moved over to the door to start her watch.

I wouldn't have woken Ellie, but I was finding it extremely difficult to stay alert. Though the air was breathable it was much richer than our atmosphere and gave me a wicked headache. "Wake me if you need me," I said as I closed my eyes.

"Yes sir."



I'd been asleep for quite a while before I felt Ellie shaking me.

"Time to get up Cap."

"What time is it?" I asked as I raised my arms and stretched.

"It's morning. Time to make our way up to the surface."

"Why didn't you wake me for my watch?"

"I figured you needed the rest more than me."

"Next time let me do the figuring," I scolded.

"Yes sir," Ellie replied. "If there is a next time," she whispered under her breath.

"I heard that."

"Sorry sir." Ellie knew I didn't encourage negative thinking.

The place was definitely deserted long ago so there was no need to worry about being discovered, though we still continued to be cautious. We moved to the door out into the corridor and started down the long hallway. We finally came to the end and rounded the corner. There were two elevators and a stairwell. I tried the elevators, but a special code was needed to activate it so we went to the stairs. It had several flights going up and down. We started up not stopping long to catch our breath between floors. I wanted to get to the surface as quickly as possible so we could set up the homing beacon. If any of our ships survived they'd receive the signal. I wanted to get away from this hostile sphere as quickly as we could. I didn't want to make it my final resting place. Unlike Ellie, I had a wife and child waiting for me. I was extremely anxious to return to them and prayed they were still alive.

As we continued our upwards climb I couldn't help but remember how this war had started. Our peaceful world had been invaded by the alien race over five years ago. They'd depleted their own resources and needed to find another planet like their own in order to sustain life. Finding a similar world was extremely rare and they intended to reap all they could before destroying our planet completely. We'd tried to contact them and freely offered all we could, but their only response

was to fire on us. There was no other recourse we could take. We fought back. War had been declared by our leaders and many rushed to join the cause. That's how I ended up stranded on this forsaken planet far from the ones I loved.

I tried to disconnet my feelings as anger started to take hold of me. I could well understand Ellie's hatred towards these beings. She'd lost everything she held dear in life; entering this war with nothing to lose but her life. Nothing mattered to her as long as she got revenge.

\*

"Have your men found the alien yet Lieutenant Mace?" the major asked.

"No sir, but we have found their trail. There's two of them. We followed two sets of footprints to the shore's edge. I assume they went into the water to keep us from tracking them."

"Did you pick up the trail further down the beach?"

"No sir. We lost all trace from that point onward. Perhaps they drowned."

"You'd better hope so Lieutenant Mace. Continue the search. I want them found; dead or alive."

"Yes sir."

\*

We were nearing the end of our ascent and I could see an exit at the top of the stairwell. We reached the last landing and I put my ear to the door. I heard the rumbling of motors. "Damn. They're still seaching for us. We'll have to wait a while longer," I said as I sat down on the landing heavily. I was dizzy after our long climb. "There's nothing we can do but wait them out. We might as well head back down and find a more secure position to set up a barricade.

After a few minutes to rest we started back down. We reached the lower level and started our search. We entered what appeared to be a cafeteria. "This'll do." I said as I noticed large, metal double-doors in

the rear of the room. I nodded in that direction and told Ellie to search the adjoining room while I looked for something to barricade the main doors. She did as commanded as I went to the central counter. I looked at the footing. It was held down by bolts secured to the cement floor. I opened the survival kit and found the drill. Our kits were supplied with all sorts of implements that came in handy in an emergency situation. Thankfully the drill bit fit the screw heads. When they were finally loosened I pushed against the heavy counter, but it barely moved. My second had returned and helped me shove against it. It finally gave way and scrapped against the floor. We continued to push and shove at it with all our might and got it up against the main door. We both flopped to the floor in exhaustion.

When Ellie caught her breath she said, "At least we won't have to survive on rations while we're waiting to be rescued. The kitchen has a freezer stocked to the ceiling. They must've left in a big hurry."

I considered what she'd said about our rescue. Without the homing beacon we were completely cut off. The ships from the second wave of our attack would never know we were here.

When rested we got up and continued blocading the doors. We stacked tables and chairs and everything else we could find that wasn't nailed down.

"How many doors do we have to block Cap?"

"There's two more exits leading to the hall. What about the kitchen?"

"No doors to barricade in there thank God."

"We better get back to work."

\*

"We've secured the entire area sir. There was a abandoned town within the perimeter. We searched it thoroughly, but the aliens weren't there. The town hall was searched and blueprints for a research facility that was abandoned over a decade ago was found. It blends in with the coast so that's why it wasn't spotted from the air. I bet that's were they are."

"Where are the blueprints?"

“Right here,” the man said as he handed them to the major.

“Good work Lieutenant Mace. We’ve got them now.” A grin spread across the major’s face from ear to ear.

\*

It took almost an hour to complete our task. I was physically fit, but the heavy atmosphere took its toll. “We’re finally secure,” I huffed out. I noticed Ellie was breathing hard too. I reached for my canteen, but it was empty. Ellie did the same and hers was empty as well. “Did you try the taps in the kitchen?” I asked as I shook my empty canteen.

“Yes sir. They were dry as a bone, but there’s plenty of ice in the freezer. Where there’s ice - there’s water. We can melt it with our lasers.”

“Lets get to it then.”

After we sated our thirst we checked the freezer for something to eat. Though the survival kit had a few packets of rations we’d need more than that to keep up our strength if we were going to be trapped here for any length of time. That wouldn’t be a problem if we could consume what was held in the numerous cans and sacks that lined the walls. I went over to them and wiped the frost from the labels. Since I could not comprehend the alien’s language I asked Ellie if she could read them.

“No sir. That wasn’t included in our training, but there are pictures. I assume the bags are full of meat from their animals.”

“Flesh? We have to consume flesh?” I nearly gagged at the thought.

“There’s some other bags that are marked with what might be vegetables,” Ellie said as she looked through the stacks piled before her.

“There’s no time like the present to find out. Break a bag open.”

She grabbed the laser knife from her belt and opened a slit. The contents spilled out. She tasted a small morsel. “I was right sir. These

sacks do contain vegetables. Of course its not what we're used too, but they'll suffice."

"Thank the stars," I said in relief.

Ellie went over to the cupboards in the kitchen and found a dented pot that had been left behind. She put some ice in the utensil along with some of the frozen greenery. She ignited her laser gun under it. My stomach growled as I waited for the contents to come to a boil.

As we sated our hunger I was surprised by the texture of the plant. It was far from what I'd expected and was rather tasty.

"Its not too bad," Ellie stated.

"No. It's pretty good in fact."

We soon finished with our soup. "I'm still famished," Ellie said. "Do you want some more?"

"I was hoping you'd say that."

We soon appeased our growling stomachs. When finished we went back into the cafeteria and settled down on the floor. It was chilly and Ellie snuggled up to me for warmth. I didn't pull away. She closed her eyes and sighed contentedly. I looked down into her young face. She looked so vulnerable. I wiped the hair out of her eyes. I couldn't help but caress her face. She opened her eyes and looked at me with an innocence that melted my heart. I couldn't resist the urge to kiss her moist lips. She kissed me back.

I know it was wrong of me, but being separated from my wife for so long, I could not help but respond to her passion. Our kisses soon became more intense. We found ourselves stripping the alien garments. I noticed the many wounds on her body and wanted to seek revenge on those who had marred her so. I traced her scars with kisses. She traced my scars with her lips as well. We continued to explore each others bodies as our passion grew. Moans of pleasure filled the room and echoed off the walls as we both moved together rhythmically; unrestrained desires were soon sated. When done and I could catch my breath again I quickly reached for my clothing. Ellie did the same. I couldn't look her in the eye as I apologized for my act."

“There’s nothing to apologize for. It was a physical release we both needed. I could have stopped you, but I didn’t want to. My need was just as great as yours. We’ve been separated from our loved ones much too long. It’s only natural that we’d sate ourselves Cap.”

“I should have had more control over myself. I am a married man.”

“Under the circumstances, I’m sure your wife would understand.”

“I’m not so sure about that. Would you forgive your husband if he cheated on you?”

“I would try to understand why he did it and probably would forgive him.”

“I hope my wife is as understanding as you.”

Ellie started to respond, but before she could we heard something out in the hallway. I got up and went to the doors as quietly as I could. There were voices outside. I quickly ran from the entrance and grabbed my second. We nearly made it into the kitchen as an explosion rocked the room and we fell to the floor. Before the room cleared of smoke the enemy rushed in. I grabbed my weapon and started firing. Ellie did the same. A blast found her and hit her in the side. Another blast found me. That’s all I remember before passing out.

- Chapter Three -

“Are they conscious yet major?” General Beumont asked.

“No sir. Not yet. As soon as they come to I’ll notify you. Why don’t you make yourself comfortable in the rec-room in the meantime?”

“No thank you. I’ll wait in the viewing room.”

“Yes sir. Right this way.”

\*

My eyes slowly opened. I knew I wasn't at the ocean facility anymore. I assumed I must be in some sort of military establishment. I was strapped to a cot; its surface covered in cloth. I noticed blood had stained the sheets. My blood. I looked to my right when I heard a soft moan. My second was lying on a cot next to me. "Are you alright Ellie?" I asked.

"I've sustained a wound in my side. Nothing serious. Are you okay?"

"I'm wounded, but it's not serious. I'll survive. How long do you think we were out?" I asked trying to conceal the searing pain that racked my body.

"I have no idea. It could've been hours. Where do you think we are?"

"A military prison I would think."

"Do you think they'll torture us?"

"Why? We don't have any vital information. We're just soldiers."

"But do they know that?"

"I hope so." I continued to try and ease Ellie's fears when the door to the chamber opened. The enemy marched in.

Ellie and I were separated. They unstrapped me from the cot and made me walk down a corridor to what appeared to be an interrogation room. I looked up into the face of one of my captors as he jabbered away. They started spitting their language out. I imagined they were questions, but not understanding it I couldn't make sense of the wretched noise that spilled from their lips. They soon grew frustrated. I didn't need to know their language to understand the look of exasperation on their faces. It seemed to be a universal expression that anyone could easily recognize. They soon stormed out the door.

My captors weren't gone for long. They returned with another from my world. I recognized him. His name was Daneel. We'd been classmates during training. He had shipped out a month before me and made quite a name for himself in the battles fought against our foes. He was

the captain on the “Avenger.” His craft had been reported missing over nine months ago. The enemy pushed him over to me and he asked my name.

“Don’t you recognize me comrade?” I asked.

“Should I?” he wearily responded. Apparently he’d gone through much in his imprisonment and had given up all hope of rescue.

I told him my name.

“Your name is familiar, but it no longer matters here. You’re now a prisoner with a number assigned to you. They want me to ask how many more ships are on their way and what wormhole they’ll be using?”

“You speak their language?”

“Not at first. After months of captivity and constant questioning I finally grasped some of their meaning. I am now fluent in their language and they use me as an interpreter. I do not want to be beaten so I do as I’m told. Please answer my question.”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t know anything.”

“They will not be happy with that response.”

“I can’t tell you what I don’t know.”

“Can’t or won’t?”

“I don’t know anything. I swear it. Did you know of our leader’s plans? Did you have any idea what wormhole reinforcements would use to enter their solar system; or if any would come? Would you have told them even if you did?”

“No. At least not at first. After some time I told them anything they wanted to hear. You have no idea what they’ll do to you if you resist. You must tell them something. Make it up. Take my advise my friend. Do not fight them. You cannot resist. You’ll talk in the end. I guarantee it.”



“I swear to you on my honor as an officer that I’m telling you the truth.”

“I believe you; however - they will not. Tell them anything. I beg you.”

“I will not give in to torture.”

Daneel frowned. “Yes you will.” He turned and started mumbling their gibberish. I assumed he was telling them my response.

“They do not believe you. I am truly sorry. Prepare yourself for pain.”

Suddenly an electrical current surged through my body. I screamed out in unbearable pain. They continued to send this current through me as Daneel preceded with the interrogation. I was soon praying that they’d increase the power to a lethal level. The pain was excruciating. Each time I passed out they revived me. The interrogation continued for hours on end.

\*

I came to in a cramped cell. I was lying on a cot in the corner next to a door which had a small opening in the center. I rose to a sitting position very slowly. Every muscle in my body was on fire. I forced myself to stand and looked out the window. Two guards were standing in the hallway. They looked my way. I sat back down. I wondered how long I’d been out. What had become of Ellie? Was she tortured too? Had she broken?

Not long afterwards I heard keys in the lock. A tall figure dressed in military garb filled with all sorts of medals walked through and smiled - if the grimace on his face could really be called a smile. I didn’t know how to respond to this so I smiled. The being laughed. At least I assumed it was a laugh. I laughed back. My response seemed to anger him. His smile quickly disappeared as gibberish spurted from his lips. I was thankful I could not understand him. He turned to the guards and said something. They rushed in and roughly grabbed me. I was escorted down the hallway. We stopped. A door opened. We were back at the interrogation room. They shoved me through the door and strapped me to the chair again. I waited for the volts of fire, but they just stood there staring at me.

Daneel was pushed into the room again and the questioning started

once more, but I refused to answer.

“Please don’t be this way. You don’t know what they’re capable of. You haven’t seen their other methods of torture. Believe me my friend. There are far worse things than the physical pain you’re suffering at the enemy’s hands.”

“What could be worse than what they’re subjecting me to? Death?”

“Death would be a blessing. You will come close to it here I can assure you of that, but they will not let you die. They’ll keep this up for days if necessary. Eventually you’ll reach the breaking point.”

“Never.”

The officer said something to one of the guards and he left the room. Daneel sighed heavily.

“What did he say?” I asked.

“You’ll find out in due time. I must ask you again to relent. Give some information - any information that will aid the enemy.”

“You can go to hell.”

“Very well. Have it your way.” Daneel sighed deeply. He went to the corner and stood as still as a statue. He did not look my way again. I could tell he was very distressed.

I waited for the torture to begin, but the guards did nothing. Within a few minutes the officer came back with two other guards dragging Ellie into the room. She was unconscious. The officer grunted something and one guard brought over a chair placing it directly across from me. They threw Ellie down and strapped her in. They tossed water into her face to revive her.

“Ellie can you hear me?” I asked as consciousness returned to her.

She muttered something, but I couldn’t understand her. She lifted her head slightly and looked at me. She’d been severely beaten. Her mouth was swollen and one of her eyes was badly bruised. I wanted to weep at the sight of her. I turned and glared at my captors calling them every name in the book and then some. The officer just looked down

at me and smiled. He said something to Daneel. Daneel came over and stood by my side. "They want to know—,"

"I don't give a damn what they want to know." I shouted. I called him a traitor and spit in his face. My captors laughed.

The officer said something. A guard walked over to the console and hit the button. Ellie's screams filled the room.

- Chapter Four -

Daneel was right. I did break. I'd like to claim I did so to save Ellie, but I cannot. They hooked me up to the machine again and sent more current through my body. Before long it was too much to bear. I finally broke down and told them anything they wanted to hear.

After breaking my captors brought me back to my cell. I wondered what they'd do to me after they realized I lied. I've been here for days on end now without being interrogated again. Perhaps just breaking me was all they wanted. I'd been given their gruel and water and I sustained myself, but other than that I hadn't seen another living being. I was going crazy wondering what had happened to Ellie. She'd been near death when they dragged her from the interrogation room. Was she still alive? I had to get out of here. Somehow, somehow I'd escape my imprisonment and rescue her. We'd get out of this hell. I stared planning my escape.

\*

After weeks of solitary confinement I was finally moved to a large facility. Many of my kind were there. Daneel was among the prisoners. We were out on the exercise grounds when I spotted him. I could understand his betrayal now. I'd done the same. I walked over. "Hello Daneel."

He looked up at me. "Hello. I see you finally submitted my friend. Can I call you that? You probably despise me for what I've done."

"I realize now you went through. I'm no better. I bear the title of traitor too. I want to apologize for my behavior towards you."

“Don’t be so hard on yourself. You did what was necessary to survive. Death is something we all try to avoid. “

“Yeah. I guess. Have you seen my second?”

“No.”

“I hope she’s alright.”

“Me too.”

\*

The days flew by. I’d asked Daneel to teach me their language and learned it quickly. I knew the only way to insure my escape was to act as if I’d given up all hope. In time I gained the enemy’s trust and was given a few privileges.

I soon learned that Daneel was an outcast among my kind. Because of my association with him I was treated the same. Though this hurt me deeply I dared not show my true feelings. Outwardly I was very friendly with our foes, but inside I raged against them. I kept my hate well hidden.

When we were allowed outside I often wandered over to the fence that separated the men’s compound from the women’s. I searched every face that passed by hoping to see Ellie. After two months of captivity I finally saw her in the distance. She was being marched out of the main gate. There were a number of prisoners in the line. I asked Daneel where they were going.

“They are put to work in a factory on the other side of the trees.”

“Why aren’t we sent there?”

“I don’t know. It’s hard labor from what I hear. They’re always so drained when returned.”

“I’ve got to talk to Ellie, but she hasn’t noticed me at the fence. I’ve been so worried about her.”

“There is a way I can help you in that respect. Come to my barracks after lights out.”

\*

I counted to three as the spotlight swung past. I ran as fast as I could and ducked under the next structure. The searchlight passed again. I ran and hid two more times before reaching my destination. I rapped on the metal door. It creaked open on rusty hinges.

“I see you made it without any trouble,” Daneel said when I was safely inside.

“Never mind that. Can you help me get to Ellie? I’ve got to see her.”

“I can’t, but there’s someone here who might be able to help you. His name is Florek. He’s the best scrounger in camp. He’s made many friends among our foe and has used that to accumulate quite a stock of useful items. He’s bribed the guards on occasion and might be able to influence them to let you speak with your friend.”

Daneel called a small, lanky kid over. He looked like a frightened child barely of age to serve in the military until you looked into his eyes. There was a cold, hard edge to them. I asked if he’d help.

“It’ll cost you. Your friend may have to endure sexual advances in order to see you; if she hasn’t already. Are you sure you want to put her through that?”

“I have to see her. Isn’t there another way to accomplish this without her having to succumb to molestation?”

“Probably not. These beings are very strange. It’s hard to figure out exactly what they require for any particular favor, but I’ll do my best to see that she’s not harmed.”

“I’d appreciate anything you can do. Thanks.”

“Don’t thank me yet. This may take a while.”

\*

I'd asked around camp what was made in the facility beyond the gate. No one knew for sure, but the rumor was that they were working on some new sort of weapon. Time has no meaning when you can't fill the hours with some kind of labor, but I'd refused to aid the enemy in that respect.

I hadn't heard from Florek in days. I still watched Ellie being marched to the factory every morning. She looked more haggard each time she passed. I was afraid she wouldn't last much longer. While watching her today I heard a voice behind me. "I think I've found a way for you to see her if you're still interested."

"How?"

"You're being moved into the factory workers section."

"Moved?"

"Yes. I've arranged it. It is the only way to see her."

"I don't know the layout there. How can I—, er, never mind."

"If you were going to say escape forget it. There's no way out of here except death."

"How can you be sure about that?"

"You don't want to know how I know."

"What do you mean?"

He didn't answer. His face was set like stone and I knew it was useless to question him on the matter further. "When are they moving me?"

"Tomorrow."

"I don't know how I'm going to repay you."

"You may not want to if you learn the truth," he said as he turned and walked away. I wondered what he'd meant by that.

Two guards entered my barracks early the next morning and told me to

gather my belongings. I silently thanked Florek and grabbed my ragged clothing and the single blanket that was issued each of us. We headed out of the ramshackle building and I was escorted through the gate. We entered another hovel on the other side. No prisoners looked towards me as I walked in.

“Find yourself a cot and wait,” one of the guards said. I did as told. I walked down the length of the building and searched for an empty bed. As I did I looked at the mens faces. They all seemed completely depleted. Not from overexertion, but from a lack of all hope.

The guards came back shortly and ordered us to form into a line outside the barracks. The men slowly rose and staggered out. I joined them. We were marched to the gate of the compound. Women were being prodded from another section. I scanned through the crowd and finally saw Ellie. The men and women were kept separated as the procession moved out the main gate towards the factory beyond the trees.

Once at our destination I noticed that the facility was huge. I was assigned a work space and given instructions. As I stood next to a conveyer belt a loud bell sounded. The belt started moving. There were six in all. There were containers of all shapes and sizes carried along the length. These containers resembled the ones we found in the freezer in that lab so long ago. Apparently the rumors were wrong. There was no secret weapon being assembled.

The guards left the immediate area and climbed a double set of stairs. They entered a glassed enclosure with catwalks sprouting from the center like the spokes of a great wheel. These walkways overlooked the entire floor. As the guards prowled overhead I looked for Ellie. She was assigned to another belt. Not being in close proximity I began inspecting the cans for any dents or imperfections. Thus I started my task at the factory.

We'd been at work for a number of hours when the bell blared and jostled me from my boredom. The workers turned and shuffled towards a door. I followed. We were marched into a cafeteria. We were herded to a counter and a bowl of gruel was shoved at me. I was then pushed towards some tables.

I looked for Ellie and found her sitting at the far end of the room. I went

to her and spoke her name. She didn't look up. She wore the same bleak look of hopelessness as all the others. I sat down next to her trying to get her to speak, but she just sat there spooning the horrible sustenance into her mouth. The gruel was running down her chin and she didn't take notice. I leaned over and wiped it from her face with my fingers. She wasn't even aware that I had done it. She continued to shovel the food into her mouth as if in a trance.

I looked across the room at the guards. Some were staring my way with grins on their faces. Our captors were passing currency between themselves. Apparently they'd made bets on my reaction to Ellie's condition. I fought to control my emotions as I grabbed my spoon and started eating. I saw the look of disappointment on a few as money changed hands. I continued to eat and held my rage in check. The bell soon blared again to signal our return to work.

The day ended and all were marched back to the compound. I dragged myself to the cot and flopped down wearily. I'd been at the belt for at least ten more hours without another break. My eyes were burning. Not just from the constant inspection of the cans that passed by on the seemingly unending conveyer, but from tears shed for Ellie.

\*

The days passed and I did all I could to earn the factory's guards trust. I joined in their laughter when one of my kind dropped to the floor from sheer exhaustion. When they questioned me about my lack of concern I told them I was treated like an outcast. I said I hated others of my kind because of their ire towards me. I stated that I did not care anymore about what happened to the others. I soon gained their complete trust and was given a new job. I became what was called a "tasker." Translated to our language it meant supervisor. I was to make sure production was kept at a maximum.

The belts moved at a furious pace as I kept after the workers constantly. I wrapped a solid wall around my emotions and ignored the stares of rage that I now received from my kind. Many had died under my watch. One day I asked one of the guards what became of all the dead. He just smiled.

Little by little I gained access to other portions of the facility. I kept my eyes open and noticed exits that weren't under constant supervision or



viewed by camera. I'd found there was no other route out of the prison except from here. This then would be where I would make my escape and I wasn't planning on fleeing alone. I vowed that I would take Ellie with me.

Weeks passed as I joined my fellow workers on our daily march to the factory. I noticed new members today. Florek was among this group. I made my way over to him and walked beside him. He asked if I'd found my friend.

"Yes. I found her. At least what's left of her. She's shut down completely. She doesn't recognize me at all and doesn't speak. She goes to her position and works until the bell sounds silently walking back to camp to await the next day."

"I expected as much."

"Why didn't you tell me what to expect?"

"I didn't know for sure."

"I can't understand why she's so withdrawn. I know we're all pushed to the very limit of endurance, but I don't understand the depth of disparity."

"You've never been to the core of the factory I take it."

"No. I'm not allowed access."

"Those who continue to resist have been taken there. They found out what's at the end of the conveyer belts. They were taken there to break them. It's how they broke me."

"What do you mean? How?"

"It's better you don't know. Where do you want me?" he asked as we entered the building.

"Line one," I sighed.

Without another word Florek walked to the belt and immediately went to work.

- Chapter Five-

While I passed the endless hours away at the factory I planned my escape with Ellie. If I could find her that is. I hadn't seen her in a few days. I asked Florek if they might have transferred her. He looked at me strangely, but just said no. I finally went to the guards and asked them when she'd been taken. No one would tell me. I asked for permission to find her. They wanted to know why since I'd stated I didn't care about my people. I told them she'd been my sexual partner on our home planet. They laughed raucously between themselves, but said I could look. I searched the entire floor as well as all the rooms, but she was nowhere to be found.

A few days later while standing over Florek at the belt pretending to admonish him for lack of speed he asked if I'd found Ellie. I replied that I couldn't find her anywhere and asked if there were other prisons she might have been transferred to?"

"I imagine there's lots of other prisons, but I'd doubt they'd move her from here. If she's not at her work station she's probably dead."

"I refuse to believe that. Ellie is one of the strongest people I know. She's alive somewhere. She just has to be. I'll find her if it's the last thing I do."

"It very well might be the last thing you do."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just drop it my friend. You won't find her."

"You say that like you think she's dead."

"If she's not at her work station she is dead. That's the only way we escape from this prison."

"If that's true I want to see her body. I have to know for sure."

"No. You don't want to see her remains my friend. You wouldn't be

able to take that.”

“What do you mean?”

“You don’t want to know. I keep telling you that. Please don’t ask me again.”

I continued to pester Florek, but he kept changing the subject. I wouldn’t be put off. He finally said, “Alright. Have it your way.” He told me where they take our dead.

I left Florek’s side at the belt and went up to one of the guards. I asked him to check and see if Ellie had died. He sighed, but didn’t deny me an answer. He climbed up the stairwell to the glass enclosure at the top. He spoke with another guard and they left the room. I couldn’t see where they went, but within a few minutes the man I’d asked came back down the steps.

“I’m afraid you’re whore has died, but don’t fret. There’s more where she came from. How about that one over there.” He pointed to one of the newer arrivals. She was a mere child.

“No thanks. At least not today. I kind of got used to the other one. Do you think I could view my friend’s body?”

He chuckled. “You aching one last piece off the stiff?”

“You might say that,” I laughed along with him, but was revolted to think that anyone could abuse the dead in such a way.

“Sorry. Can’t be done. She’s probably already been processed.”

“What do you mean - processed?”

He looked me square in the eye and said, “You don’t want to know.”

“I wish people would stop saying that. I can assure you that I do want to know what happens with our dead.”

“You won’t find out from me. I don’t want to end up the same as your buddies.”

“What is everyone so afraid of?”

“Nothing. Now get back to work.”

“Yes sir,” I sighed. I went back to the conveyer belt and stood behind Florek again. I pretended to ball him out for slacking off some more, but really told him he was right about Ellie. She was dead.

“Time to move on my friend. Let it go. Forget her,” he said as he noticed my tears.

“How? To what? This existence? This isn’t life. I’m still going to find her and say goodbye before I leave.”

“Still thinking you can escape? I told you there’s no way to get out of this prison but death.”

“You’re wrong. There is a way. I found a hall exiting this room. If I can hide there after work I know I can find a way out of the building besides using the front gate. It’s constantly under surveillance, but the exit I found isn’t. I’ve seen guards going through that door and they don’t come back. There’s got to be another exit from the factory.” I paused before asking, “Do you want to come with me?”

“And end up like the others? No thank you. I’ll take my chances here.”

“Suit yourself, but if you change your mind you know where to find me.”

“I beg you to reconsider. If your caught–, well–, I told you many times that you don’t want to know why. It leads to madness.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“I can’t tell you.”

“That’s what I thought you’d say.” I couldn’t hide my anger as I stormed away from the belt.

\*

The workers shuffled towards the exit as the bell pealed. The girl the

guard pointed out to me that day passed by and he grabbed her by the arm. "Come with me little one," he said as an evil leer crossed his face. "I want you to be nice to your boss while he rides deep inside you." She didn't look up at his gross remark. She'd been raped numerous times since her capture and no longer reacted to being treated like a whore.

It had taken a while, but I'd learned how to play our captor's many games of chance. Florek asked my sudden interest as he passed out the playing cards. I just said I was going stir crazy and needed something to pass the time. He agreed to teach me. I had learned how to wager and won most hands played.

I was soon sitting at a table playing the game with the guard I'd befriended. I'd won a lot of his currency. I told him that I'd changed my mind about the girl and paid him a significant fee to bed her. He said he'd bring her to my barracks, but I said I needed privacy. I asked him if we could stay behind at the factory. At first he said it couldn't be done, but when I gave him every cent of currency I had, he quickly stuffed the bills in his pocket and agreed. He said I could have her after today's shift.

"Here you are my friend. Get to it," he said as he shoved the girl towards me. He made no attempt to leave the room.

"Here? In front of you?" I asked in horror. I'd heard that guards sated their lusts with our woman as their friends looked on with great amusement. They often took turns raping them. Sudden anger flared inside of me, but I kept it in check.

"What's the matter? This place aint good enough for ya?"

"Well-, er, there's no where to lie down for one thing."

"Do it on the floor or on a conveyer belt then," he chuckled sardonically.

"Come on. You've been paid very handsomely. Have a heart. I need bedding of some kind. I like being on the bottom. This bony ass needs a little comfort. I won't be able to get off otherwise."

"I guess we could use the officer's lounge. There's a couch in there."

“We?”

“You didn’t think you could have the whore all to yourself, did ya?”

“I was hoping—,”

“Not on your life,” he interrupted. “If you don’t want to share you can just forget about the whole thing.”

“I’m sorry. I guess I just didn’t expect you’d want me to share. Would you mind if I went first?”

“Naw. I don’t mind at all. I like to watch. All the more exciting if you get my drift.”

“I know exactly what you mean,” I snickered. My hatred towards these foul beings increased by the minute. I wanted to grab him around the throat and squeeze the life from him.

The guard pushed the girl in front of us as we headed up the stairs. We passed through the glass enclosure into a different section. The officer’s lounge was located there. I’d seen it before while giving production reports.

As I walked through the door I wondered how I was going to get out of this. I had no intention of harming the child, but since the guard insisted on watching I might have to go through with it. I should’ve known I wouldn’t be left alone. That’s why I asked to be first. If what I thought the guard meant while watching was accurate, he would be distracted.

We entered the lounge. The guard pushed the girl down on the couch and told me to proceed. He said he had to get back on duty soon. When I didn’t proceed he asked, “Now what?”

“I’ve never done it with anyone watching before. I’m just a little uncomfortable about it.”

“You better get used to me watching if you want her again. If she’s anything like I’m expecting, you’ll be back for more.”

“Alright,” I sighed. I sat down next to the girl. I unbuttoned her blouse and gently caressed her small breasts with my hands; then leaned over and kissed her on the lips while I moved one hand down between her thighs. I moved my lips down her body as I peeked up at the guard. He’d unfastened his pants and they’d slid down his legs. He was stoking himself.

“Come on. I haven’t got all night,” he said in anticipation.

“Alright. But I’m finding this a little difficult with you staring at me.”

“Just get on with it.”

Though I hadn’t wanted to hurt the child, I didn’t have much of a choice but to continue. I peeled her clothing off and pushed my hand between her legs. She gasped, but didn’t try to stop me. I continued to perform this unspeakable intrusion upon her body and moved my fingers gently back and forth. I dared another quick glance at the guard. He’d become very excited and was in the process of pleasing himself. I waited. His breathing got rapid and he closed his eyes as he neared his peek.

This was my only chance. I suddenly leapt from the couch and swung my fist as hard as I could. He wasn’t expecting the blow and went down heavily. I reached for his weapon. He pulled me to the floor and we wrestled. The weapon fired. He was still. I rolled off of him and he still didn’t move. I felt his pulse. The man was dead. I’d never fought with our enemy face to face before, but the satisfaction I felt at his demise was most exuberant.

I got up and stuffed the gun in the waistband of my trousers then went back to the girl. I covered her nakedness as fast as I could and pulled her towards the door. When we exited the glass enclosure I stopped and strained my ears for footfalls. I heard none. The lounge must have been soundproofed. I cautiously moved down the stairs and we exited the conveyer room. I ran down the hallway with the girl in tow. She didn’t resist. We reached the end of the corridor and ran through the exit to the stairwell. We descended in silence.

When we reached the bottom I pulled the girl down another long hallway. There was a set of double doors at the end. I pushed against them and they opened easily. I felt for a light switch and soon the room

was flooded with light. What I saw before me was shocking. Along each wall were our dead. They were naked and stacked nearly to the ceiling. My stomach retched.

There was a long conveyer in this room also. Perhaps it led to the outside to carry our dead to a burial plot. I continued towards the end of the conveyer, but it did not lead to the outside world. It lead to another room with a great oven. Did they cremate our kind before disposing of us I wondered.

There was another belt that led from the oven. My assumption about cremation was wrong. The bodies were dumped upon the belt intact having been cooked. My stomach heaved again as I watched the conveyor carry the bodies towards a chopping saw slicing the remains into pieces. Bile rose to my throat, but I managed not to vomit. After dismemberment the bodies were dumped onto another conveyer leading from the room.

I had no choice but to follow the conveyor as it passed through another opening. I walked through the exit and stopped dead in my tracks. An overwhelming horror stood before me. This is what Florek had kept from me. I could understand his fear now. This is what made him break. I could not contain the vomit as it spewed from my mouth. My second had been right about our enemy. These beings were vile. They had turned into cannibals.

I flopped down on the floor and started to laugh and cry simultaneously as I watched my species being stuffed into cans that had later passed through my own hands; inspecting them with such indifference. I had never been interested in the labels before, but now knowing how to interpret and write their language I and could not help but read them. Some of them read Foodsource, some read King Marketing, while others read Greater Pacific and Atlantic Food Sorce. I assumed they were grocery stores. I damned the day I crashed on planet Earth.

I stood and went over to the girl. I sat her down on the floor then sat next to her as she stared straight ahead not comprehending the horrific sight before her eyes. I thanked God that my wife and child could not see the tragedy that had befallen our species. I prayed that they would never know. How I longed to hold them in my arms, but that could never be. Florek was right. There was no escape from this wicked world.



I said a soft farewell to Ellie, my wife and my son. I regretted that I'd never see my child grow to adulthood. Tears flowed down my cheeks as I put the gun to the back of the girl's head and fired. She slumped over onto my lap. I then put the weapon in my mouth and pulled the trigger. I was free of this prison at last.

Text: An original story created by the author.

All rights reserved.

Publication Date: November 8th 2016

<https://www.bookrix.com/-susanbowes>