

The Harvest

The year started well enough for me. Back in those days things seemed so simple like a dream almost now. I lived near the beach and it suited me well. After work I liked to surf and swim and had couldn't be happier. There was romance too with the girl in the coffee shop. If I concentrate real hard I can almost picture her face and beautiful body.

There aren't many of us now. We can't be sure but most would not have survived the transition too well and hanging on for vengeance did not seem a sufficient reason to live. We have few children amongst us and those that are find it hard to cope, many die in childhood.

Sometimes I am amazed at the fact that I have made it this far. I never really thought I would but I am a survivor and that kept me going. There is always talk of places where men and women live freely and don't fear them. Maybe Europe is getting back on its feet. But it's only talk and it soon fizzles out.

I don't know why God turned his back on us. Were we really so bad as to deserve this?

I have been asked by the commander to set down in writing what happened as best as I can recollect it. I am the wordsmith and it seemed appropriate that the task should come to me.

Everyone remembers what they were doing when the ship first appeared on our skies. It was enormous. Our astronomous calculated that is was a mile in diameter and over four miles long.

Of course they would have known much about us from monitoring our broadcasts. They knew of homicidal divisons and our competitiveness and our fractious polity.

Where they came from we never found out. Of course we were wary and when their ship attained orbit around Earth our leaders were very concerned. There had been no communication from the vessel despite constant efforts to establish contact.

I was a teacher back then and I taught in a small, mixed school down the Peinsula. I remember being glued to the TV set. It was like the greatest show ever to be on television.

Then all electrical appliances ceased to function. At first we thought it might be localised but then we found out it was global. There was chaos. No light, no heat, no engines would function, no planes would fly, in an instant the whole of human civilisation came crashing down.

It appeared that some kind of beam emanated from the alien vessel which disabled all man made devices. From that point on we knew their intentions were hostile.

I was one of the lucky ones. I kept a horse in my backyard. I liked to go horseriding at the weekend. I skirted the city knowing that the worst tragedies would be there.

It was a day's ride to Napa and beyond the mountains where I knew there would be people prepared for such a day as this. This is where I met Commander Jared and his unit.

In the days that followed the news got worse and worse. The military were completely in disarray and not able to mount any counterattack. Suddenly their fliers appeared in our skies. They came from the mothership. What we learnt then was our worst nightmare come true.

They were harvesting us in much the same way as a fisherman casts his net and lands a big catch. Fresh meat is what they were after. Even though with their technology they could have easily synthesised anything they wanted. They were hunters and we were the prey - all six billion of us.

We were defenceless and all we could do, the lucky few, is hide and wait.

They were harvesters and they wanted their crop in good condition. In the days that followed reports came in for huge processing centres, one in the Bay Area one in Los Angeles and who knows where else.

In these processing centres it emerged from the lucky few that escaped thousands upon thousands of people were held in some kind of stasis awaiting packaging and shipment to the mother ship. Young, old, men, women, children it made no difference to them.

I urged Jared to action. That we must do something. But he raised a weatherbeaten hand and said "No Michael, this is one fight we cannot

win. We need to survive now that is our challenge and weather this storm.”

So we dug in and kept a low profile. We lived off the farm animals who had been abandoned by their human masters. Occasionally a flier would pass by our lookouts but none ever noticed they we were there.

Jared was a man I came to respect of rock solid will and principle. He was the patriarch who held our little community together.

We did what we could for those who found their way into our community. Most could not accept what was happening and returned to the city in search of loved ones. Those we never heard of again.

I suppose I was lucky being an orphan and a single man at the time of their arrival. I had no one to care or no one to miss me.

Then one day the giant ship was gone and for the first time in a year we listened to the radio to see if there was anyone transmitting.

Jared asked me if I would be the first to ride down to San Francisco and scout out the land. I couldn't refuse. I wanted to go in any event.

I crossed the Benecia bridge under cover of darkness and rode south towards Berkeley. I was nervous all the time. The freeway was a graveyard of disused vehicles. In some parts of the city fires had been raging whole city blocks burnt to the ground. When I reached the Bay Bridge the sky line gave lie to the dead city within. The processing centre was gone and the sun rose over the city's skyline.

It was Thanksgiving.

(2006)