

Zoo Keeper

*WARNING: THIS STORY CONTAINS EXPLICIT DIALOG, LANGUAGE, SEX AND VIOLENCE *

* DO NOT READ IT UNLESS YOU ARE AN ADULT AND YOU ARE NOT EASILY OFFENDED *

* THIS IS FICTION, BUT IF YOU DON'T ENJOY IT, PUT IT DOWN *

I was fired. I'd been at Omega for almost a month. My supervisor, Susan Quentin left a message on my phone, and when I got back from coffee break, I went to her office. When I opened the door, her face was flushed and she quickly withdrew from performing a Lewinski on a middle-age white man. She motioned him to put it away and zip it up.

"Well, it's about time you showed up, Sam," she said as she wiped off her mouth. "See, that's why you're being let go – I tried to be reasonable with you, but you just don't get it. Things could have been very nice around here if you'd just learned to go with the flow, like Matt, here." I could see his pants bulging out, and I guess I blushed – he was obviously a stud horse.

"Sometimes women need something special, Sam," the guy said to me. "Something they can really look forward to coming into work for."

"Shut up, Matt," she shot him quite a glance. "Don't presume that you know what women want. Come back in 30 minutes and we'll discuss your possible future with Omega."

She'd been making unwanted advances towards me since the day I interviewed with her, but I couldn't stand the sight of her – 350 pounds of roly-poly fat, cheap makeup, dresses that didn't fit, and the smell of cheap perfume to cover her objectionable body odor – good lord! I just couldn't do that to keep a job.

"He's a NASA Ph.D. retiree," she said quietly.

"Good luck to him, but I'm one payment away from losing my house, and this is the ultimate bad news for me."

"Why not come around to my side of the desk and let's see how badly you really want to save your job."

She saw me cringe and she laughed. Then she stood up and I saw her huge panties down around her ankles and I knew what she had in mind for good old Matt – I wondered if he realized what was coming?

In a grand gesture, she swept her hands over her hugeness and said "You could have had it all, Sam." She used her feet to kick off her panties and then she motioned for me to come to her.

She saw me gag, and she started screaming "*Get the hell out of here!* Matt will be taking your job, as of right now – the job you should have cared about. Instead of being an ass, you should have been taking care of your supervisor, so that she could have taken care of you. Now you're outta here. I filled out the Federal forms on the Web. I'm required to do that by law. I put you in for a job as a zoo keeper in Nashville. "

"I don't know anything about zoos or being a zoo keeper," I objected.

"The law doesn't say that you have to like the job or be qualified for the job. It just says that your current employer has to refer a job."

The *Jobs are Scarce* law went into effect last year when the President's poll numbers hit 3% approval rating. The law let Congress and the President both get some temporary poll number bump, but now it was obvious to everyone that there were actually no jobs anywhere, so it was all a sick joke.

"A zoo keeper shovels animal shit," she quipped. "You're certainly qualified to do that. We'll mail your final check within 90 days."

I passed Matt, who was standing in the outer office, still with a bulge in his pants. "You poor ass," I shook my head.

"I spent 4 years at NASA providing this service to a needy supervisor. She had a Ph.D. in biochemistry, which was no longer needed, since Congress canceled NASA. I'll be just fine, Matt. Imagine getting paid to do this for a living."

"The price is too steep, as you'll find out."

Susan came through the door – her skirt was hiked up, and she was obviously ready and waiting for Matt to do her bidding. She saw me and screamed "*Get Out!*" And then she grabbed Matt by the crotch and dragged him into her office. As I heard her grunting and groaning and choking, I ran out the door, and to the bus stop.

I was worried. I was scared. For backup, all I had was a part-time job at a Mexican food restaurant – I served chips and salsa to the newly-seated patrons. If I stuck around, I'd get a dime an hour raise. I don't speak Spanish, but I knew that the employees hated me because I'm not one of their "kind." The customers looked at me funny, too – and then they looked away, because they felt like something must be wrong with me for having such a menial job.

I thought about the aging and very plump Ms. Susan Quentin, and remembered hearing her say that she registered me with the Federal Job Bank as a zoo keeper. My blood pressure rose and rose and I thought about the consequences of acting like Matt. My manhood shrunk up, and I felt a cold flush as I pondered his fate – it simply wasn't worth it; not now, not ever.

When I finally got home, a waiting phone message promised to save me money on a life insurance policy. I deleted it. The day's mail consisted of advertising and two stern letters from Chase Mortgage. I looked in the refrigerator for something to eat, but it was empty, as usual. The tap water didn't taste like the chemicals were being removed properly, so I would have to replace the filter...except for the fact that a new filter cost money. I found a small bag with some Ritz crackers, and washed them down with the tepid chemical-tasting water. The TV hadn't worked in a long time, so I didn't need to try that. I re-read the letters from the mortgage company and looked at the calendar – Ha! It's Halloween – what a trick, with absolutely no treat.

Finally, I turned off the lights inside and outside the house – I didn't have enough money to buy candy for the neighborhood kids. After dark, they finally stopped ringing the doorbell; I tried to sleep, but worrying about my financial "situation" kept looping through my brain. "*I'm going to have to hit the bricks first thing in the morning and get a job – I don't know where or how, but I can't lose my house after 15 years of making payments.*" Everything kept recursing through my head, but somehow I finally snoozed off into a fitful sleep.

In the middle of the darkest part of night, I'm lying here with my arms folded across my chest. If I let them fall down and flop around, the spiders will attack, and in the morning, I'll have welts all over. My legs are too long for the sleeping area, so I have to keep my knees bent. Some snowflakes flit by my face. Then my dream switches to the central Alabama men's prison, where I had to spend a month for stealing a box of stale cookies from a WalMart store. That was really bad. Suddenly, my bad dreams were

interrupted by the doorbell – nuts! Are those kids still at it? The red digits of the bedroom clock said 3 o'clock.

The door pounded. My heart pounded. My head pounded. The porch shuffled and I heard pounding again. I got mad; and then I got up and slipped on my old jeans and a T-shirt. I peeked through the living room curtains and I saw tall kids with elaborate costumes at the door. They looked way too big to be trick-or-treaters, so I needed to chase them off – the neighborhood's been going to hell.

When I opened the door, a fellow who was about a foot taller than me asked "*Mr. Sou-sa Sam-u-el Robin-son?*" His voice was very deep and had a clipped accent. I nodded, but I was mostly confused how he knew my name. "*We're looking for a zoo keeper, and we've just gotten your name. If you'd please accompany us...*"

"Wha...How?"

"From the fed-Eral data-base job bank. Please now..."

A midnight-blue Hummer sat at the curb, with several more over-sized trick-or-treaters hanging around it. "*These are all adults,*" I thought. "*I wonder why they're hiring zoo keepers in the middle of the night?*" The back door swung open, I was pushed in, and within a few seconds, my wrists were bound, my mouth was taped shut, and my head was bagged. I was being ... kidnapped? *What the hell?*

I felt a painful injection in my buttocks, and realized that I was being stripped naked, right there in the back of the Hummer. I tried to struggle, but the trick-or-treaters overwhelmed me; and then I passed out.

How am I going to get a job? I've got a prison record. I'm going to lose my house. I'll be on the streets. Maybe I should have taken that fat bitch to bed – she desperately wanted it. I'm going to lose my house to that lousy mortgage company. How am I going to get a job? There aren't any jobs. Why did that tall man ask about a zoo keeper?

My mind went in loops and more loops as the drug kept me from moving. I knew that the Hummer stopped several more times and more people were shoved in, injected and then wrapped tight with boxing tape. The back of the vehicle was quite full, and I was unable to even move my lips to ask why, or where they were taking me, or what the hell was going on? "*Register on the Federal Job Bank – get abducted by weird-o's,*" I thought. I was just trying to make sense out of a totally senseless, hopeless situation.

I was picked up and thrown into a large, bright, cold area. Light penetrated the canvas bag that covered my head. The trick-or-treaters were all talking a foreign language that sounded like a cross between a Mockingbird and a broken-down sewing machine. Other bodies were tossed on top of me, and all around me, and I could feel my level of panic rising – I was scared beyond anything I'd encountered, and that included my time in prison. Several cars drove away. More bodies were tossed into the room. Then there was silence, except for whimpering. A door was sealed, and my ears popped as I felt us leave the ground – straight up, at an insane rate of acceleration. Then it stopped, and I felt weightless. Then I wanted to puke. And then everyone wanted to puke, and some of them did. And then the raw fear really hit me – I wasn't just kidnapped: I was kidnapped by some extra-terrestrial beings, and, along with a large number of others, I was in outer space, awaiting a fate beyond comprehension. The drug and the early-morning hour took over, and I crashed. And I dreamed scary dreams, reliving my prison experience once again.

Chapter 2.

When I woke up, the fear washed over me like sulphuric acid. I knew that we were moving in some direction, and I knew that every inch of the cargo hold was crammed with humans. I realized that the Halloween costumes that they'd used weren't real – my captors actually looked like they were from outer space. There were overgrown dogs wandering around, sniffing and growling at tied-up people. I saw that the dogs had 6, not 4 legs. Their fangs were razor-sharp, and they were carrying weapons in their front paws, which had opposable thumbs. I looked around as far as my restraints allowed, and estimated a couple of thousand people were in this room. And then I realized that I didn't have a clue if there were more rooms like this on the ship. One of the dogs growled at and then bit a plump old woman on her calf, and she screamed in anguish. A lot of the men were upset, but everyone was securely bound, so nobody could react to the attack.

We went on and on. The room was cool, almost cold, and all the bodies were completely naked. Eventually, large pots of soup were brought out and placed among the people. Then the dogs relaxed our bonds enough so that we could crawl to the food. But our hands were still bound behind us, and each person had to bend down into the soup pot and slurp enough to get some food. A lot of people couldn't reach their face into the pot far enough, and the dogs growled at them, but didn't try to help. The soup was pretty crummy, but I drank as much as I could in a few gulps, and then one of the dogs forced me aside so the next person could slop some up. When the soup pots were empty, the dogs cleared them out of the room. In another hour, one of the guard dogs snapped at the old woman again, and she screamed as her leg was mauled, and she was left bleeding. There was absolutely no point to the attack, so I assumed that the dogs were some kind of sadistical watch dogs, and I vowed to keep myself under control so they wouldn't harm me. And for days, we went on and on, with bad soup, mean dogs, random maulings, and the horrible stench of humans who were forced to defecate without the benefit of sanitary facilities.

I lost track of time. My energy level went down. My spirits went down. I had horrible nightmares, whenever I tried to sleep. I wondered if our President knew that people were being kidnapped and flown away to some unknown planet – someone needed to warn him! Days passed – horrible days.

And then we landed with a loud bang! People tried to get up, but couldn't – they'd lost mobility from being bound up for so long. The dogs started pushing and shoving people towards a giant hatch, and everyone tried crawling, the best they could. We were pushed out the hatch, and fell 15 feet onto a stack of bodies that had already been shoved out. More bodies landed on us, and it wasn't fun at all. The bodies were all filthy with feces and vomit, so lots of people in the pile were overcome and passed out. One by one, we were jerked to our feet and shoved towards a powerful shower, where all our accumulated gunk was washed off. And then we were branded on our buttocks and our face with a red-hot branding iron – it hurt like hell, and the dogs obviously enjoyed giving us so much pain. Some of the people who tried to resist were beaten unconscious, so that others could see that they shouldn't resist, too. And then the dogs used the branding iron to beat the unconscious people to a pulp. Only a few people were killed this way, but no one else resisted the branding, afterwards. Anyone trying to talk was beaten with a large flat stick, so everyone shut up pretty quickly. These dogs obviously had done

this many times before. And then we were shoved behind a tall steel fence, still bound, and hurting very badly from our burns. I tried to count, or at least estimate the number of people in the enclosed area, but I lost track – there were thousands, for sure. I heard a scream, far overhead, and I looked up. At maybe 5,000 feet, a huge aircraft circled. To me, it looked like an ancient pterodactyl, like from the age of the dinosaurs. As my eyes focused on it, I saw that there were several, no, many of them, circling, watching, calling a cry from hell itself.

A huge orange sun went down suddenly, and the night got very cold. Of course, our compound was well-lit, so that the guards could do their job. A pair of large moons rose, and chased each other around the sky – at least I was sure now that this wasn't some kind of Halloween hoax – I knew that we were surely not on Earth any more. I also knew that we'd never be back on Earth, ever again. It rained cold rain, and a raw wind came afterwards. Some snowflakes fell, but nothing worth mentioning. Everyone was cold as hell, and miserable. Many people tried to huddle together for warmth, but the dogs used sticks to whack people who looked like they might be talking to each other. The night passed slowly. I saw the dogs drag off a couple of women and one young man – I had very little doubt about their fate.

The sun came up suddenly. But wait – it was a different one from the bloated orange ball that set last night! Okay, so this planet had 2 suns and 2 moons. In an hour, the orange sun rose, and a small moon was visible, too. Okay, so 2 suns and 3 moons. I also saw a huge orbiting space station chasing across the sky, and I realized how much sense that made – this was, after all, a space-faring race, so they'd have all kinds of space hardware up there. Soup pots were brought into the compound, and as we approached them, our bonds were removed. I guess everyone was as glad as I was about that. The dogs prodded people with sticks to make sure that nobody talked. One married couple was caught holding hands, and they were both dragged off by 2 packs of the huge dogs – again, I had no doubt about their fate, and in a few minutes, everyone heard horrible screams coming from the direction that they'd been dragged. And then there was silence, and we all turned to the soup pots and silently took double-handfuls of the crummy food, and then quietly pondered our fate.

A few cold nights and hot days followed the same rhythm, and I noticed the dogs picking out a few women and a couple of young men and dragging them away – it went on all the time, and everyone was scared to death that they'd be next. Had we been kidnapped and hauled half-way across the galaxy to be dog food? I didn't think so – I just thought of the dogs as very mean beings who were taking advantage of our weakness and our inability to fight back without getting clobbered. On the fourth or fifth day, the leaders came – *what a scene!*

Down from the blue-green sky they came, with strange, loud music playing all around. I tried to watch the whole thing, but there were hundreds of these creatures that looked like Tyrannosaurus dinosaurs, *from Earth!* They were dressed in body armor that glowed bright gold in the sun. There was no visible means of support for the huge beasts, yet they came slowly out of the sky without moving a muscle. I guessed that they had some kind of gravity repulsors attached to their feet. They landed in waves, and finally, it was obvious that we weren't dog food, but dinosaur food! I could see the 6-legged dogs bowing to the ground when the dinosaurs arrived – good, at least we knew that the dogs weren't in charge, but that was a good-news, bad-news kind of thing. The winged aircraft that I'd spotted slowly

formed up a huge circle and started spiraling downwards. When they got to about 1,000 feet, I could see that they looked just like pterodactyls, but I still thought they were aircraft. When they made their final swooping entrance, I knew that they were animals, not machines. They formed lines and sat on the ground, waiting for the last of the big dinosaurs to descend. The final tyrannosaur, in most-elegant costume, came down slowly, to total silence from all the dogs, pterodactyls and humans. He spoke quite loudly:

"I am Ambassador Telda-Dan Zo. The *Citizens of the Universe* are our owners and our Masters, and we are yours. You have been selected from your planet to be our servants. You will serve us well, or you will be disposed of. You have seen our guards, the *Dargs* – and you are right to fear them. Our *Teras* (and we knew that he was talking about the giant flying pterodactyls) are to be feared too. We bring many species here to serve the Citizens of the Universe, and humans are brought because they are capable of independent thought and action, which can be used in the service of our Masters. If you serve us well, you will live, and if you do your duty to the Citizens of the Universe, you will live well. Otherwise, you will just be a protein snack for the Dargs or the Teras – it's up to you. Males who are abusive or resist orders will be castrated. Males who continue to resist will be turned over to the Dargs for entertainment/torture, before they are disposed of. Females who resist will be turned over to the Dargs for their comfort/pleasure/torture, before they are disposed of.

"Prepare to receive your work assignments. In the service of the Citizens of the Universe, all jobs are necessary. Your planet was once the home to many species of animals that were owned and bred by the Citizens of the Universe. They were all relocated here when the climate changed, due to a meteor that could not be stopped. After that, the temperature cooled, and mammals took over your planet. You are the result of that evolution, so you belong to the Masters. Take good care of the Masters' creatures, as they are most-favored. Tending to their needs is your only role. Speak when spoken to. Follow orders carefully. There is no escape, and no way back to Earth. The sooner you understand that, the better off you'll be."

The Teras started to run in ever-increasing spirals and they flapped their huge featherless wings. I almost laughed when I thought of an old *Keystone Cops* movie on TV. Eventually, they were able to lift off, and everyone watched them return to the high-sky. The Dargs stood up to their full height of about 6 feet, and they barked and growled and beat their chests. The tyrannosaurs shrieked in unison, and started to slowly rise on whatever magic carpets they possessed. The Ambassador rose last, and the Dargs extended their front arms in a salute. The Teras circled an area where the Tyros rose and rose, presumably to go back to their space ship and leave orbit.

As I stood watching all this, one of the Dargs slugged me in the stomach with a short steel bar and said "*Sou-sa Sam-u-el Rob-in-son , report for work.*" The Darg waited to see if I'd resist, but I wasn't that stupid – I simply wanted to survive.

"I'm ready for work," was all I said. I'd already seen the Dargs use their teeth to rip off and devour men's private parts, and I wasn't going to be a casualty of smart mouth syndrome.

"Come," was all he said, but I could see that he'd been ready to use that steel bar and his teeth to reduce me to a whimpering hunk of protein, ready for disposal.

Chapter 3.

He brought me into a walled compound and took me to an office that had two Dargs waiting.

And then he announced "Zoo keeper. *Sou-sa Sam-u-el Rob-in-son, his name.*"

The taller Darg said "Return to patrol."

"So you zoo keeper. Paper says so. We have need of zoo keeper. Come."

The Dargs had a hard time speaking – their vocal cords weren't up to the task. I thought about telling him what I'd told Susan Quentin, and I remembered it well... "*I don't know anything about zoos or being a zoo keeper,*" to which she'd responded "*A zoo keeper shovels animal shit.*" Right – how hard can that be, I thought?

I was brought to some kind of creature, but it was so big that I didn't know at first that it was alive. The Dargs explained that it was a *To'alla M' Bod*. It was one of the favorite creatures of the Masters, but it had a very bad problem with mating. It was so big that if it tried to mount a female, it would crush the life out of her; so they'd stopped letting the *To'alla M' Bod* and the *To'alla M'Bad* have sex until they figured out what to do. The Masters would be very angry if their precious animals were destroyed, so they'd requisitioned a zoo keeper to figure it all out, and now, here I was.

"And if another *To'alla M' Bad* female dies, it is your problem, and your responsibility," the Darg growled.

Well I looked at the huge white thing that looked like a 3-mile long earthworm, as best as I could tell. It was obvious where his male part was, and I could see why it would be very difficult for a female to be under such a massive bulk for any length of time. "Can I see a *M'Bad* female?"

"Come."

A female was only about 1 mile long, and I could see where her female reproduction entry place was. I couldn't believe the size of these creatures, or that they could ever mate without killing the female – so this was a real problem, and I took it seriously. I joked to myself that we'd need a freight train to carry the female to the male, a siding track to create a close approach, and a way of exciting the *M'Bod* male at just the right time to make it all work. "*Hmmm...This has got to be the most outrageous idea in the entire universe, but it just might work!*"

When he heard me grunt, the Darg asked "What zoo keeper think?"

I tried to draw a picture, but his eyes weren't meant for reading. I said "Wait. Can I show what my idea is?"

"Show."

I grabbed his assistant and laid him on the ground. I drew a very long letter "Y" in the dirt, and then I positioned the tall Darg on the ground a few feet away. I found a rope and pulled the assistant towards the intersection of the "Y", near the tall Darg. When they touched, he shouted "*Human zoo keeper has good idea. What he needs?*"

So how do I build a ... *well, a railway?* "I need steel bars for tracks, a long row of flat cars, some diesel engines, a couple of construction cranes, and a bunch of trained people to help the mating process."

"Make list. Can get. You train," he said and barked and growled at his assistant for several minutes. "We order things from your planet. They be here soon."

I worked up a list of things that I imagined a railroad would need. I pictured myself as a young boy, walking along the Chicago and Northwestern tracks near suburban Chicago. Let' see: tracks, spikes, gravel, ties. The list went on and on as I thought about the engines, the flat cars, engineers, controllers, road grading equipment, surveying equipment. We'd need construction cranes and forklifts, too. I wanted the list to be complete, so I drew pictures and reduced them to a bill of material, and then I gave the long list to the Darg and he barked orders to a group of Dargs, whom I guessed would be visiting Earth very soon.

And then, for a week, I thought about what training would be needed. The huge M'Bod had to be ready, at exactly the right time, and the mating couldn't be allowed to take too long, or the creatures would roll over onto each other and tear up the railroad. I wrote an outline of steps that needed to be done, and I created a timeline too. If we could really build a railroad and load the creatures, then this would work. As the days went by, I laughed at myself for being so delusional, but I expanded my notes and told the head Darg about all my plans. He really was convinced that it would work. One day, 200 men and women showed up, and he said "They are yours. Train."

And train them, I did, and it was very hard to do, because there were always Dargs that would snatch one for "entertainment," and that scared the others so badly that they couldn't concentrate. I complained to Sowz D Mooz, the lead Darg, and he growled and ordered the Dargs to stop attacking the humans. A few growled and whimpered, but they seemed ready to obey his orders.

About a month later, I heard a loud crack of thunder, and I realized that it was a sonic boom – I looked up. A huge spaceship was landing nearby. Sowz D Mooz waved his arms at me and we both raced to the landing site. A dozen spaceships had all the stuff that I'd ordered. It took days to unload it all. Humans and Dargs worked together to get all the heavy rails unloaded and stacked, using large forklifts. The Darg couldn't control the forklifts, so after they dumped a load of the heavy steel, a couple of humans pushed them aside and took over. And then, out came the wooden ties, and then the Dargs tried to unload one of the giant construction cranes, but he just couldn't do it. They obviously had never been exposed to construction equipment, so I shouted to Sowz D Mooz that he needed to stop before he wrecked a whole ship. I'd never driven a crane, but it was pretty easy to figure out. There were some levers to make the tracks work, and some levers to make the boom work – it wasn't that bad. I

got the three cranes offloaded in two days, all without incident. The Dargs were very impressed with my driving skills.

Onboard were thousands more humans, and they were as terrified as I was on my first day. I happened to see a familiar face and I froze – *it was Susan Quentin!* And she was holding tightly onto the guy who replaced me (was it Matt?), and he looked even more scared than her. Almost immediately, one of the Dargs ran up to her and bit her leg, and drew blood. Her scream could be heard all over the compound. A Darg with a short steel bar cracked it across her face to stop her screaming, and she spit out teeth. Her boyfriend rose up in a defensive posture, and in an instant, a pack of Dargs was upon him, tearing him to shreds. Susan was dragged away by a pack of Dargs who alternately beat her with the short steel bars, and mounted her. Suddenly, a Tera swooped from on-high and plucked off her head, and carried it back up with him. Her tongue was drooping out of her mouth, and her eyes just hung from their sockets. The remains of her fat body were disposed of in a few minutes, and that was that. Some part of me wanted to feel that I'd been revenged, but mostly I just wanted to puke.

I snapped back to the present: we needed to lay some track before we could unload the diesel engines and the flat cars. Humans and Dargs worked hard to make a roadbed, which was like a 6 mile long double Y-shaped loop. Some of the weaker humans perished from the hard, continuous work. At first, Sowz D Mooz asked if it was okay with me if his Dargs could feast on the dead protein, and I just shrugged – after all, what good was resisting the obvious. After a few days, nobody asked, and everyone saw what would happen if you slacked off even a little bit; so the work went very expeditiously.

The path that I'd surveyed and marked got load after load of gravel, and then the ties were carried to their places and spiked into the gravel. The Dargs were very good with sledge hammers, and I saw that they enjoyed the simulated violence that swinging a 20-pound sledge can deliver. A few of the strong human males challenged the Dargs to a contest, and the Dargs won, but they gained respect for the challengers. Every day, more rail bed was finished, and my hair-brained scheme seemed to be on track. Finally, the rails were carried to the bed and spiked into the ties. Day after day, I used a small surveyor's telescope to make sure that the tracks were exactly right, because I didn't want this whole thing to fail – I knew that all of the humans would be disposed of in a horrible way if this didn't work. Every week, I held a meeting with crew leaders and explained our situation, and they fully understood, and they wanted this project to succeed as much as I did. One evening, I caught a Darg mounting a young man, I shouted at him to stop, and he attacked me with his sledge hammer, raised high.

"You're not allowed to do that to my work crew!"

"Then I'll do it to you!"

But my boss, Sowz D Mooz pointed to a crew of Dargs, and they attacked the lone Darg and killed him instantly. "We agreed that that would not happen anymore, and I apologize for his behavior." A Tera swooped down and grabbed a big chunk of the dead Darg and returned to sky-high. Then the other Dargs tore the rest of the body to shreds and consumed it. "*Crap! This is really a bad place,*" I thought for the millionth time.

"Some of your Dargs are still attacking human females, and you saw that one of them attacked a human male. If you want this job done, then you must stop this bad behavior."

"Agreed," Sowz D Mooz replied. He went out and started growling and barking in a certain way. The Dargs hung their heads and whimpered. Sowz D Mooz must be very important, I guessed. After that, the sexual assaults and the random vicious biting stopped completely. Day after day, the railway progressed, and Sowz D Mooz was visibly pleased.

Finally it was complete: six miles of straight track, with an intersecting siding at mile three. It was time to unload the actual train from the spaceships.

It was very difficult to use the giant construction cranes, and finally a couple of the track workers spoke up and said that they knew how to operate them. Sowz D Mooz was very impressed that humans would work so well together, and that they would work for me to complete the job. He thought that I was very important, and I wasn't going to correct him.

The engines came out first, and then, one by one, the flat cars came out. We hooked 2 engines together, and then hooked dozens of flat cars. Each engine and each flat car took hours to lift, move, and properly position on the newly-laid track. Finally, an entire train unit moved to the siding track and waited. The rest of the engines and flat cars were unloaded and put on the main track. It was all quite amazing, but it was still looking like my wild idea would all work. I pulled my crane men into a meeting and explained that they'd have to carefully lift the To'alla M' Bod and the To'alla M'Bad, and put them on the flat cars in a certain way. They understood exactly what to do – and they knew exactly what the cost of harming the great beasts would be.

I had trained some men and women how to sexually arouse the male, using long-handled scrub brushes. Everything was ready, and the next morning, at the rising of the white sun, we started the whole process moving. The male was slowly and carefully loaded on to the flat cars by rolling 50 to 60 feet at a time of his huge body with utterly careful crane work. The female was loaded and put on her side in a similar way. Now the arousal team started working on the male, with incredible results, and I signaled the train on the siding that it was time to approach. When the female got within a few feet, nature took its course, and the huge male organ embedded itself properly, and he did his job quickly and vigorously. I signaled the female's train to move off before the male could start moving enough to destroy both trains. And then, over the next couple of days, we unloaded His Majesty, and Her Hopefully Impregnated Majesty. Humans and Dargs cheered together. And then Sowz D Mooz knelt in front of me and thanked me profusely. "*To our Grand Zoo keeper!*" And the entire assembly cheered three times, and then Sowz D Mooz said "*A week of festivity for the humans!*"

And it was a grand time. During that week, all the hatred embedded within the Dargs was suppressed, and they mingled with the humans without biting or causing trouble. In fact, I saw some mating going on, but it was obviously consensual, so, as gross as it appeared to me, I just shrugged it off.

At the end of the week, Sowz D Mooz announced that the M'Bad female was pregnant. Everyone cheered the news. Another ship of servants arrived from Earth, and the cycle began anew. The Dargs acted like Dargs, and the new humans were terrorized like previous loads of humans.

I made up my mind "*I have to return to Earth and warn the President that this is happening. We've got to defend against these creatures. I've got to get home!*"

Chapter 4.

After about two years passed, which was hard to figure out, because the suns here were so different than back home, Sowz D Mooz announced that a mating dance would take place, and all humans would participate.

"I don't understand," I said.

"It is important for humans to mate, so that they are comfortable here. It will make everyone work better if they are happy."

Well, I understood what he was getting at, but I also knew that it would be a cold day in hell before I'd bring an innocent human child into this world, and I told him so. Humans would be a very cheap source of labor if we'd just breed ourselves, and spaceships didn't have to constantly make round-trips to Earth for spare slaves.

He stated "All species will mate on 4th moon rise in 3 days. They all coming now."

Within hours, I understood what he said – humans and Dargs were just the beginning of the servants of the Masters. Dozens of different species of bizarre nature were driven by packs of Dargs, and we all intermingled within our compound. We had all been naked for so long that we didn't even think about it, but each time a new ship came from Earth, the new people were quite upset about their nakedness, in the presence of others. Well, the other creatures coming to the mating dance were the same, and yet there we all were – staring at each others' nude forms and wondering, just a bit, about what that would be like.

The appointed night came, and Sowz D Mooz stood up and announced that it was mating time, and all species were allowed to enjoy themselves. A gong sounded, and it began – the most absurdly wild orgy ever conceived. I just stayed off to one side, because I'd sworn that I'd never bring a new human into this evil world. But soon, a blue creature with 6 large breasts, tipped in purple, and very large green eyes stood there staring at me. Near her was a young Earth girl, maybe an older teenager. She stared at my nakedness, and so did the blue creature, and, well, I'm a man, so I'm weak. In the morning, I woke up in the most embarrassing position imaginable. When I tried to untangle myself from the females, the blue one insisted on sex one more time, and that woke up the human girl, who joined right in, and that day passed quickly and with great fun had by all. When we broke apart for noon meal, the blue female stayed very close to me – *did she have some feelings for me?* Could that be? The human female

introduced herself as Cassandra, and she had just turned 20, and where were we, and what the hell was going on, and boy, was I great last night, and who is this blue broad, and when are we going home?

"Hellfire, Cassandra, I can't answer any of those questions. We're on a planet that is far, far away from Earth, and we have to survive. More than that, I can't say. Do what you're told, and these Dargs won't kill you. I've never seen these blue creatures before. In the last few days, I've seen many species that I've never seen. I'm just going with the flow, as they say, and you should too. And then she and the blue female decided that I'd talked enough, and that more sex was what was needed, and so it went, into the night.

The breeding ceremony lasted a few days, and then a gong sounded and couples broke apart, and started back to their own tribes. As weird as it was, it was all most enjoyable. The blue female looked at me with her big eyes, and reached out for me. Sowz D Mooz saw that and asked "Do you need an assistant? That can be arranged for one in your position."

"Sure, and I like Cassandra, too."

"All right," he said.

After that, we lived together in harmony, peace and copious sex for a long, long time.

I warned Cassandra about getting pregnant, and the consequences of raising a human child in this living hell, but she was one step ahead of me – she'd had a 5-year anti-pregnancy implant given to her just days before she'd been captured. She explained that she and her boyfriend had decided to put off children for that length of time so he could finish his degree. I was very relieved. Blue girl was very kind and gentle, and had a voracious appetite for sex. I guessed that I was the luckiest guy on the planet.

When it came time for mating the M'Bod and the M'Bad again, we got the crane crew ready, and repeated the train-enabled sex act. It worked flawlessly. My reputation grew. And more than that, the Dargs gave me respect wherever I went. They were pleased that I was able to fulfill the Masters' request, and they let me know that it had real meaning to them.

Over time, blue girl learned to speak some Earth words, and Cassandra helped her out a lot. Finally, we were able to communicate pretty well. Her name was Soo'La and her other names were unpronounceable. Once she learned what the word love meant, she told me that she loved me for saving her from her clan, who would have surely killed her if she'd stayed with them. She was from a lower caste than them, and she was just considered dirt, and therefore disposable. Late in the nights, after Cassandra went to sleep, Soo'La would come and hug me in her blue fur, and squeeze me against her 6 breasts until I was aroused and we had sex and I finally fell deep asleep against her warmth. Sometimes she would hum a quiet tune in a cadence, and with notes that were totally different from any lullaby of Earth.

One day Sowz D Mooz called for me to come quickly and help. I saw an animal that looked like a small tyrannosaurus lying on its back, twitching, retching, crying. "*Zoo keeper: fix*," Sowz D Mooz barked!

Even though it was only 6 feet tall, those razor-sharp teeth could cut a human into a hundred pieces in a second, so I balked. "I don't want to harm the animal, but I fear its teeth and claws."

"Understood." Sowz D Mooz called a squad of Dargs, who tied down the tyro loosely, but securely.

I approached it. I could smell its very bad breath – it smelled like rotten food. I guessed that it ate something that was spoiled, and that it would either die, or puke it up, or it would poop within a day or two – impossible to tell.

"Let's use a crane, lift him upside-down and try to get him to vomit," I said.

Sowz D Mooz barked orders and two of the crane drivers were escorted in. "What's up, boss?"

"We need to lift this dinosaur upside-down and see if we can get him to upchuck whatever he ate last."

"Got it!"

One of them went for the crane, and the other one prepared a hoist out of ropes and leather. When the crane arrived, we hooked up the Tyro and quickly lifted him upside-down. He reacted violently, retched, and vomited. And then he was placed back on the ground. I looked at the mess and saw that he'd consumed a Darg for his last meal, and he'd nearly choked to death on him.

Sowz D Mooz saw the mess, too, and he wanted to take revenge against the Tyro, but he couldn't, because it was one of the Masters' beasts. Without missing an opportunity, a Tera swooped down, scooped up the road-kill puke and left for the high-zone. "I hope he doesn't choke," I deadpanned.

Sowz D Mooz said "I hope he does!"

And then we both laughed.

"You good zoo keeper. I like."

"You're a good boss. I like you too."

My crane drivers untied the Tyro, and he ran away, screaming. Sowz D Mooz thanked them and told his Darg guards to take very good care of them, because they were doing the work of the zoo keeper and the Masters. They growled in approval. The crane drivers became honored members of our city, and they continued to contribute solutions to the day-to-day problems that arose. They both became my right-hand men, and I often went to them for intellectual bonding and brotherhood.

Every few months, more ships brought more humans and other species to this strange planet. Every few months I swore to go home to warn the President. Every year, the mating dance was held. Cassandra, Soo'La and I were obviously mated for life, so we just enjoyed the time like every other night. But time kept running towards the bottom of the hour-glass, and I tended animals, oversaw strange mating rituals, burped babies of many species and thought about what a good life I had. And then that would get me thinking about my responsibility to warn the President, and so on and so on.

About six or seven years later, Ambassador Telda-Dan Zo and his entourage came back in grand fashion. After his speech to the crowd, and laying down the rules as he did with us, he met with some of his leaders, including Sowz D Mooz. The Ambassador gave him two scratches on his forehead.

"You have done well, friend Mooz. The Masters' reward is now upon you."

A hundred nearby Dargs bowed to the ground and growled and whined at their leader's badge of recognition and accomplishment. I knew that word of this would spread across the entire planet in a few days. I guess that's when I decided to put thoughts of returning to Earth aside. I was here, and I was happy to be here. Sowz D Mooz instantly started growling and whining in the Darg manner as he told the Ambassador about the wonderful things that I had done for the animals of the Masters. The Ambassador thanked me and reached over and touched my forehead. His claw scratched me twice, but it didn't really hurt.

"Sowz D Mooz said that you have shown dedication, accountability, a sense of purpose and pride in your job of zoo keeper. This is the greatest badge of honor that I can give to you, human. You have served the Masters well, and this mark elevates you to the level of *Trusted Advisor to the Chief*."

I thanked him and bowed low. I had everything that I needed to have a comfortable life, so when he asked me if there was anything that I wanted, I said "More equipment, more medicine for the animals, and more books on the different species, so that I can treat them better."

The Ambassador laughed in a deep, dark way that only a Tyro can, and he said "You shall have all you require."

I could see Sowz D Mooz puff up with pride, and he looked me right in the eye with gratefulness – quite a reward in itself.

After the dramatic levitation of the Ambassador's Guards on their magic carpets, and as he was leaving, Sowz D Mooz announced that a feast in honor of the humans would be held in 3 days. "*We honor those who honor the Masters!*" Dargs from all over barked and yelled their approval. Somehow I knew that the next shipload of humans wouldn't have the problems that we'd had. Humans would finally be treated reasonably well, and that was a great advancement.

That night, as Soo'La lay hugging me after sex, I had a terrifying dream...*I dreamt that I went to Earth to warn the President about these creatures, and he stood there and shrugged. "What can I do about it? They are so much more powerful than us, that they can literally do anything they want. We're lucky that they use us as slaves instead of just killing us and eating us!"*

The nightmare was like a laser beam cutting through my brain. I awoke in a cold sweat, shuddering. "Rest, my love," said Soo'La. And then she reached over and wrapped Cassandra in her other arm, and we all slept in her blue fur until the orange sun was mid-sky.

Chapter 5.

I woke up startled by an idea – could it be true? *"Was the Federal Job Bank program just a front for getting kidnapped and sent into slavery???* *Are the unemployed being exported to work in this crazy place? It wouldn't be the first time that political leaders have exploited people like this, but haven't we learned anything?"* But I didn't ponder that idea for long: books, equipment, and medicine showed up in vast quantities, and I had all I could do to have warehouses constructed to hold the bounty. Now I could treat more creatures, and better than ever. I asked for volunteers to read the books and summarize them, and many people of many species stood up at once. They realized that they were helping themselves by getting medical care for the first time. Sowz D Mooz always called me Doc-tor Sam-u-el now, but I was far from that title as a human could get. But I had one thing: a willingness to help out, and learning to help out became my first priority.

I studied night and day. I formed a council of advisors who read the books and translated them and made me understand them. I found different species who were willing to be nurses and other skilled medical professionals. More books kept rolling in on each ship that came here. Soon, I had to have more warehouses built, and I appointed more translators, librarians, skilled assistants and just plain helpers who moved the books in and out of the libraries and kept the floors swept.

Sowz D Mooz was very impressed as he watched a small city grow – a city dedicated to helping all species and all animals of the Masters. Different species came from all over, and some of them were very ill, but we tried to treat them in an orderly manner, and to the best ability of the hospital staff. Almost all of them survived, and the ones who died got the best treatment possible, and they held no malice towards any of us for not treating them well and properly.

One night I asked Sowz D Mooz about the Masters – where were they? Did they ever come here? Why were the Tyros their ambassadors? He explained.

"They can't come here, they are Lords of the Universe – look up in the night sky and I will show you one!"

He pointed to a puff of glowing interstellar dust and made a gesture. "That is a Master!"

"That looks like what we'd call a nebula."

"Yes, because you just don't know. The Masters were here in the beginning and they will be here until the end. They brought life, and they will bring death. They live outside of time, but they cause time to pass for all others. They are to be feared and respected. They are to be worshiped."

"Well, we worship many things on Earth, but that's not one of them, but I guess I can get used to the idea."

He growled acknowledgement. "They bred Tyros and Teras and all the species on many planets. When they choose to do things, they command Tyros, because they have the ability to hear the Masters

directly. The Tyros command all other species. We Dargs come from that star," he pointed to a blue dot.

"Where is Earth?"

"Too far to see," he replied. "Last time we tried bringing humans here, they were not capable of thinking. They were stupid and evil and clumsy. We terminated them. Now you have grown into a proud race, and you are capable of serving the Masters well. You have shown that you have the ability to think new thoughts, and to work with others. The Masters' creatures are benefiting from contact with humans."

I was sad that I would never see Earth again, but I had really gotten over that hurdle a while back. I gained more knowledge of the Dargs and their ways, and even the Tyros and Teras seemed less hostile to humans.

The white sun chased the orange sun across the sky, and many things happened. The Dargs became friendlier as we treated their maladies and interacted with them for various reasons. I remembered when they were so mean that you couldn't turn your back for a second, but now, humans were treated with great respect, maybe I'd say honor? Teras somehow got the word that we could treat them, and they swooped down, not to eat humans, but to ask for help. Their squawks and head-shaking were decoded to some extent, and we were able to treat many of their problems. The attitude of the entire planet changed in that period, from 15 years to 20 years after I'd arrived.

Cassandra set up schools and more schools. She loved teaching, and developing courses for the creatures that came from all over the planet. They came to learn – either zoo keeper tasks, or support tasks, it didn't matter. Many races had talented people who performed myriad tasks in support of our primary mission. One by one, fences came down, and creatures showed great respect for each other as we all strived to serve the Masters' needs. Their animals thrived and multiplied, and we learned true satisfaction by doing our jobs – which we all felt was most noble – protect the Masters' zoo. The exotic creatures were utterly fascinating to the hundreds of thousands (or millions?) of humans and other species who supported us. It was clear that humans were in a leadership role as far as the zoo was concerned, and the Dargs enforced the hierarchy whenever there was a question by other species.

Finally, Cassandra and I had a beautiful daughter. We named her Lisa Soo'La Robinson. Soo'La constantly doted on her, and I realized how deeply her race was imbued with the concept of mothering. In the third month of the year, Sowz D Mooz held her high, so that all could see the *Child of the Zoo keeper*. "Birth is painful, life is hard, and then you die," he growled. "See what a difference one human made to our world."

And then he pointed to the two crane operators and said that they would be rewarded for their hard work, too. They had improved the mating procedure, and had invented many great machines to help other species in all forms of convenience and necessity. The crowd hushed up, and then they all cheered. It was an awesome day. It's funny, but when she grew up, everyone calls Lisa "Sammy," I guess in honor of me – it was a bit embarrassing to me.

I've lost track of the years, and I'm growing very old. I've tried to pass my knowledge on to others, so I've written this as an autobiographical document for anyone who wants to know how we got here, and why. Lisa's become a fine doctor and surgeon, and she's saved many lives that were beyond our capability before. My good friend Sowz D Mooz promised me that she'd be rewarded when Ambassador Telda-Dan Zo returns next year. I unconsciously reached for my marked forehead when he said that, and he smiled and did the same. We both laughed at each other –friends in spite of impossibilities and improbabilities, but friends, nevertheless. Soo'La, my beautiful blue Soo'La will be dead soon, as she is extremely old for her species. Cassandra's eyes are growing dim, too. I remember thinking of her as a teenager when we first met, but she had the grace and beauty of a true lady all these years. I will miss my wives more than I can say. The people of this province are now free to move around, as the containment fence was torn down many years ago, when we were declared to be peers of the Dargs. We have special "integration schools" for the newcomers from Earth, and we show them how to thrive and prosper on this great planet. Getting listed in the Federal Job Bank isn't the key to torture, assault and oblivion, as it used to be.

Last year, I got reports of people who actually "stowed away" onto the space ships that were on Earth. Apparently, word got back home that this was a nice place, compared to the crumbling economy and crushing poverty that people were used to. Well, I don't know if the reports are true, but this is a grand place to be, with new discoveries being made daily. Is this better than Earth? I can't speak objectively, but at least everyone who wants to work has a fulfilling job and feels like a valued citizen.

And we call our city "*The Zoo*," and we're proud to be residents, and we're especially proud to serve our Masters' needs. And as for humans, we're all Zoo keepers, and we take great pride and pleasure in sustaining the great herds of beasts that bring such joy and wonder to us and our Masters, the Citizens of the Universe.