

The Stowaway

A young stowaway stumbles onto a chop shop selling drugs to aliens.

I wiped the sweat off my brow with my forearm, leaving a streak of dirt I was sure, and looked around. The room was loud from the power tools, and the lights were muted from the dust filling the air. Cars were in different stages of breakdown. Today was delivery day, and we were slightly behind production.

“Let’s go. Let’s go!” I ordered, trying to ease my nerves.

A honk outside notified the men to lift the doors. The whoosh of fresh air filled my lungs as a 2003 Ford Explorer pulled into the shop. I nodded with approval as I thought of the state of the engine.

“Jack.” I turned and saw Sam standing there with a black brick in his hands. I moseyed over to the kid, whose blond hair was hidden by a layer of dust, and inspected the product he displayed.

“Looks good, Sam. Put it with the others. The clients are coming today for a pickup,” I said as I gestured to the black void that I assumed was a wormhole portal in the corner. Sam nodded and beelined to the opposite wall toward a safe holding a stack of similar bricks.

A commotion drew my attention back to the SUV that had just pulled in. I didn’t have time for distractions. “What the hell is going on?”

Tom’s leathery face flushed. “I didn’t know she was in the car, Jack. She was sitting on the floor, sleeping.”

I frowned and looked over his shoulder. A petite brunette with wide eyes looked back at me, clutching an oversized tote like a life preserver. I glared at Tom and shoved him for being so careless. The two men behind Tom caught him as he staggered back. I strode over to the girl. She looked terrified, like a bunny in the thralls of a hawk.

“What is your name?” I asked as kindly as I could, still trying to rein in my irritation.

She didn't answer for several moments until she finally seemed to register my words. "Sarah," she squeaked.

"Well, Sarah. You picked a hell of a day to come to the shop."

"Hello, Mr. Johnson." A shiver crawled down my spine as I turned. A tall, thin man wearing a gray Al Capone suit and a black fedora stepped through the portal. He was followed by two others, wearing similar suits.

"Mr. Gee. Welcome."

"Do you have my inventory?" he asked as he eyed Sarah behind me.

I blew out a breath of nerves. "Of course, Sir."

Mr. Gee lifted his hand. "Who is this female?"

I glanced back and met her terrified stare. She couldn't seem to take her eyes off Mr. Gee. His un-Earthly long arms and legs, unnatural olive hue, and large, heart-shaped head clearly stated he was not from this world. To add to her fear, he blinked. The vertical flutter of his eyes made her gasp.

Mr. Gee's disproportionately large, jade-colored eyes narrowed as they met mine. "I do not anticipate any issues. Correct, Mr. Johnson?"

I swallowed past the lump in my throat. "No. no, Sir."

I looked over at Sam, who watched the interaction closely. "Sam!"

"Yeah, Boss?"

"Take Sarah to my office."

Sam ushered Sarah down the hall toward my private office.

I turned back to Mr. Gee. "Your bricks are right this way," I said as I led the men back to the safe. The door opened, revealing several black blocks.

Mr. Gee flashed his small, pointed teeth. “Ah, Black Snow.”

I nodded. “Every engine has been broken down and scraped clean of its carbon buildup.”

I paused for a beat. “May I ask a question?”

Mr. Gee frowned but nodded once.

“What do you do with the bricks of carbon?”

Mr. Gee and his entourage laughed. “Oh, Mr. Johnson. Black Snow is the most popular and most potent drug on our planet. Your product is in high demand.”

Mr. Gee tilted his head at the safe, and the other two quickly gathered the blocks, walked toward the black void in the corner, and disappeared. Mr. Gee stopped short, turned, reached into his suit pocket, and handed me a bar of gold. “Your payment.” He paused and looked down the hallway leading to my office. “I am hoping you will take care of our little problem?”

I nodded fervently.

He laughed and disappeared through the portal.

My eyes didn’t leave the void until I heard someone clearing their throat. I turned and met Sam’s gaze with Tom peeking at me from behind him.

“This is on you!” I spat, looking past Sam at Tom. His head hung with shame. My heart raced as I made my way to the door that read Jack Johnson. I rapped on the door and pushed it open simultaneously. Sam was on my heels.

Sarah sat on the plush, brown leather loveseat with her tote by her side. As soon as we walked in, she stood quickly, and her bag fell over and dumped out beside her. A small hair dryer, wallet, hairspray, and a roll of Chapstick littered the floor at her feet.

We stood in silence for a moment. “Sam, I need a minute with Sarah.”

He froze for what felt like an eternity before he reluctantly mumbled, “Okay.”

The door shut behind Sam, and I turned. Sarah's retreating steps matched my encroaching ones until I stepped on her wallet. I paused long enough to pick up the dryer by the cord and closed the distance between us.

"I'm sorry, Sarah. Carbonized drugs and aliens are a nasty business, and we can't risk word getting out."

The corners of Sarah's lips lifted. "Actually, Mr. Johnson, I'm here to end you and your operation. Her eyes blinked in the same vertical manner. I gasped as she snatched the cable out of my grip and had it around my neck before I could react.

"I'll make it quick," she whispered in my ear as she tightened the cord.