



FLYING HIGH

Flying High, by Scott Behrens

The 123rd Annual Bake Sale in Burkeville, Virginia was well under way. A rather cool fall day had kept business to a minimum so far for most of the women. Dalene Popple was very upset by the turnout so far. She idly straightened her tightly packed rows of cookies and cakes as she eyed the woman across from her suspiciously. This woman had practically monopolized business all afternoon.

Dalene walked over to the table adjoining hers and sat down next to Nancy Jordan, her neighbour and best friend. They sat in silence for a few minutes as they watched the woman facing them across the field. Dalene broke the silence as she counted her money.

"What's that ones name? I've never seen her here before." she asked.

"Helen Cranston", Nancy answered, "She just moved here this summer. She's living in the old Martin house. I wonder why such a young girl would want such a big house all to herself."

"I don't really care. All I know is that she's getting all the business we've been getting for the past twenty years. It's not right."

Nancy agreed, "I know. What's so special about her?"

"Nothing", said Dalene, "It's probably just her pretty face." Dalene stood up and brushed a dried leaf from her pants. "Gotta go Nancy. I finally got somebody".

Dalene walked over to her table, leaving Nancy still watching the woman across from her.

Helen Cranston opened the tailgate of her station wagon, pulled out a large cardboard box, and set it beside her table. When she had finished transferring the assorted cakes, cookies, pies, squares and donuts from the box to her table, she threw the empty box with the other two on the opposite side of the table. Helen sat back down in her lawn chair. She pushed a few stray wisps of her brown hair back behind her ears. She smiled as she watched the other women entice the browsers with their down-home conversation and real nice smiles. She flashed them a smile as they headed for her table. After a few minutes had passed, Helen had already sold a good portion of what she had just set out, mostly to customers who had come back for seconds. She smiled as she noticed a young couple entering through the gate for their fourth visit. Their eyes were rivetted on her table as they made a beeline towards her.

The boy's eyes flashed over her table in admiration as he rubbed the short stubble on his chin. He licked his lips in indecision.

"Could I have a dozen brownies and two dozen chocolate chip cookies? he asked.

The girl's greedy glossy eyes flashed from her boyfriend, to the table, then to Helen, and back to the table again. Then she looked back up at Helen.

"I sure would like to get your recipe for the cookies", she said. "Even my mother can't make them that good."

"I don't think I can do that," said Helen, "But I'll sell you as much as you want."

The boy interrupted. "Better give me another dozen cookies".

Helen smiled as she took his money. "I wouldn't eat them all at once. They're awfully rich. They might make you sick."

The boy's eyes bulged as he picked up his bag of cookies. "Don't worry about that", he said.

Helen pushed the bill into her pocket as they walked quickly out the gate. The women were all standing together now as the young couple had been the last to leave the grounds. Helen sat down and tried to ignore them.

Over the next half hour, Helen continued to reap in the profits which her monopoly was bringing her. The number of people within the grounds had increased steadily over the past thirty minutes. The majority had formed a line in front of Helen's table. Helen was surprised when she saw the young couple once again at the end of the line.

A deep bass hum suddenly filled the area and accelerated to a high-pitched whine. The brightness of the sun was suddenly obliterated by a huge oval shadow. The dry earth within the fenced-off area was whipped upwards as if in a tornado. Helen looked upwards and stumbled backwards against the tailgate of her car. She could distinctly hear the young couple screaming and running around in circles.

Helen watched in amazement as the spaceship very slowly descended. Violent blasts of air sent cookies, cakes, and pies in all directions. The high-pitched whine settled back down to a basal hum and then stopped. Helen watched in amazement. Everything was quiet except for the young couple.

"This must be a hoax," thought Helen, "Why would they choose us?"

Her thoughts of a hoax were soon dispelled as the young couple was suddenly silenced as a red light enveloped them. Total silence covered the area. A small section of the bottom side of the ship suddenly disappeared and a powerful purple glow stretched from the opening to the ground. Several beings began to descend the beam of light.

Helen tried to scream, but her voice caught in her throat. "It's finally happening," she thought, "we are the first."

The beings had no visible legs, but glided down the purple beam in an even, smooth motion. There were all the characteristics of science fiction writers. There were the horns, the dragon-like tail, and the cycloptic, emotionless eyeball. Four beings were on the ground now. They moved out from under the beam. Helen could see their skin-type uniforms covering their hideous dark bodies as they came near her.

The first one, presumably the leader, extended his bidigital hand in a gesture of friendship. A series of moans and squawks escaped his mouth. Then he took a deep breath.

"Good afternoon", he said, "excuse me but it took me a few minutes to pick up your language. I'm Alkorg. What is your name?"

Helen's voice caught in her throat again. "Helen", she said.

"Do not be alarmed. We are friendly forces here to establish friendly relationships with you", he said. He turned to face the other beings. "Establish friendly relationships comrades", he said.

The other three all turned in different directions with their arms spread open. Helen could hear them greeting the other women. Alkorg moved closer to her and picked up a bag of cookies. He opened it and took a bite from one, then dropped it back into the bag. He pushed a button on a small box attached to his shoulder. Several more beings transcended the purple beam and began to gather the baked goods into large