

Homeland Security

by Simon Kearns

By the time I got back to the island only Henson was still alive. He didn't speak; the gun said it all. He motioned me to the prison and locked me in a cage.

"Quarantine," he muttered at last, as if now that I was contained it was safe to talk.

"The others?"

"All dead. Burnt their bodies."

He was exhausted, eyes sunken into his skull, shrinking from the horrors he had no doubt witnessed.

"And you?"

He sneered. "I sat in the church tower with this." The gun.

Three days, he told me. Three days and I'd be dead if infected. He gave me food and water and inspected me through the bars of the cage. He moved slowly. His eyes were rheumy. That night he came again.

On the second day he didn't turn up 'til near sunset. His walk was slower, his hands trembled the rations he carried.

"Henson," I said, "you look sick."

He ignored me, set the food and water by the cage, and walked away shaking his head.

"Let me out. I'm not infected. Henson! Let me out!"

The third day came and went. He never returned.

