

Hunted

*'I'm scared,' Fly had said.
He was never scared. He was her hero. Her girlish hero from all romance books mixed together. Big, bold and beautiful—in an alien kind of way.*

On the cliff, where she'd tried to climb, was lots of activity. Rising dust spiralled into the sky, and stone and rock tumbled over the edge, and carried in the air was the sound of flapping wings.

'What the—' she began but her words were cut short as Bo toppled off the cliff with a too-human yell and lay unmoving on the rocks below.

She didn't have time to react as a huge black bird rose from the top of the cliff, and flew down and landed on top of him. It began to pull away at his hair until its beak found the soft flesh beneath.

Jenny edged backwards until the cold sea told her there was no more land. She moved along the sea-edge as her hand reached for the gun. The bird hadn't seen her. It folded its large wings away and it seemed smaller now the wings had gone but no less dangerous. Its long beak was hooked at the tip, and it pulled at Bo's flesh, tossing its head back as it swallowed.

Jenny continued edging along the shoreline, trying to get as much distance between her and the bird as possible without it seeing.

It squawked, its wings extended again, and it hopped to the other side of Bo and began tearing chunks off him. The gun felt incredibly pointless in her hand. The bird, its wingspan eight metres from tip to tip, she quickly deducted, danced around Bo's body, squawking and flapping its wings. Jenny felt very exposed. She looked at the cliff face; its wall held many cracks and crevices she could hide in, but she had to cross the beach to get to it.

The whistle was around her neck but she daren't blow into it to alert Fly. The bird would hear also—and it was closer.

She had two options, she thought, keep edging along the shoreline until she was out of sight, or shoot the thing. The gun only had two bullets—three if she was lucky, and it was tricky to reload.

Keeping her eyes on the bird, she crossed the beach at an angle; away from the creature yet moving towards the cliff face. It had a long tail speckled with yellow, and black clawed feet, which it used to anchor itself on Bo's body as it pulled at the flesh. Bo, Jenny realised now, had been protecting her. He'd seen the bird, and was trying to tell her not to climb the cliff.