



Taking Stock

Barbara Elsborg

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Previously published

Her last days on Earth could be out of this world.

Zoe has accepted that a brain tumor will make this Christmas her last. She plans to spend it in the Caribbean, hoping some gorgeous guy will scoop her off the beach for a passionate affair, a one-night stand-anything just to be held and wanted. When she discovers-horror of horrors-she has no unread books for the plane trip, she heads out for an early-hours run to good old 24/7 Supa-Mart.

Rowe's and Kai's lives are so regulated by their home planet's equivalent of Big Brother they even have to hide their thoughts. Not easy when a secret attraction exists between them. When they're chosen for an off-world reality show involving unsuspecting humans, they jump at this no-rules chance to open their hearts.

When the giant store's exits clang shut, trapping Zoe and several others inside-including two impossibly sexy guys-Zoe figures she won't need a beach for a no-strings romance. But it doesn't take long for her to realize she could be facing the end of her short future sooner than she expected.

Warning: This book contains two hot aliens with "interesting anatomy", one lucky human heroine, zero-gravity ménage sex, male-male tongue worship, and all the toys one super store can provide.

Taking Stock Details

Date : Published March 10th 2017 (first published September 2nd 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Barbara Elsborg

Format : Kindle Edition 300 pages

Genre : Menage, M M F, Erotica, Science Fiction, Aliens, Romance, M M Romance



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From Reader Review Taking Stock for online ebook

Suzanne (Under the Covers Book blog) says

Zoe is dying. Her brain tumour is inoperable and she only has a few months left...however, she didn't expect to spend those last few months unwillingly trapped in a supermarket with strangers. But despite all the weird and otherworldly circumstances they are all stuck in, all Zoe can think about are the two of the men she is stuck with; both of whom have woken up her libido, she only has a few months left and plans to enjoy them...even if the two of them aren't quite what they seem.

Two things immediately enticed me to read this book, one, aliens or rather two smoking hot aliens and two, ménage, I love a ménage romance, two men are always better than one. But, I just couldn't get into this book, whilst I was reading I found myself getting bored and skimming parts so that I could get to the end; I hate to leave a book unfinished, no matter how hard I struggle with it.

Not that it was all bad; the idea was certainly unique, aliens trapping earthlings in their skewed version of reality TV to spice up their culture, which has turned strictly regimented and bland. Okay...so it sounds weird and it was, normally that doesn't bother me, I love a book that is slightly ridiculous, but this book had too much going on and none of it was explored, it was just glossed over toward the end we had a dying woman, unrequited love, an enslaved race, reality TV, a race stagnating, a new taboo and ménage relationship and corruption.

The romance itself wasn't too bad, it was definitely hot and the three of them had chemistry together, although I wasn't quite buying the case of insta-love they had going on. But, the sex between them was sexy and fun and where else would I go for some blue spunk? I didn't really enjoy this book, the romance was okay although it didn't blow me away and it isn't something I would read again or recommend.

*ARC provided by publisher

Clare O'Beara says

Zoe goes to the local supermarket in Florida around Christmastime, but gets locked in with a bunch of customers and staff. The quite normal characters then find that they are unable to make phone or computer contact and strong metal blocks every entrance.

We are aware that two of the customers are in fact men from another planet, who carry symbiotic life-forms which let them communicate by telepathy. These guys look normal but handsome and blend in with the rest. As the alarmed locals speculate on whether they are in a sinkhole or a reality show, the two guys know that they are actually on a spacecraft.

Zoe has only a few months to live due to a medical condition and her first priority is the medical stores available. After that is secured she starts thinking that enjoying herself with a stranger might be a good way to spend her last days, especially if they are going to run out of air or food in here. She comes across as a strong individual.

I really liked the way the group adapts and comes up with practical ideas, then goes so far as make a Christmas Day for themselves. As this is a romance we go along with Zoe having a fling with one of the off-Earth guys, but when she finds out that he's not quite as we'd expect, it does seem odd that a threesome

suggests itself.

So this is quite unpredictable and fun and the title Taking Stock is cleverly used. Anyone who can cope with all the adult romance action in the second half, and likes an unusual SF read, will enjoy this tale greatly.

Jenni Lea says

4.5 delightfully surprised stars!

Okay, okay I know what you're thinking. You saw the blurb where the first word is "her". Yes, you read that right so I'm just gonna go ahead and warn you now.

There are girl parts in this book.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, let me tell you about this book.

Have you ever been shopping at your local Wal-Mart and thought, "You know, one could actually live in this store."? Yeah? Well so did a bunch of aliens from another planet. So much so they decided to create a reality television show based on this very thing.

Our first MC, Zoe is a 27 year old schoolteacher who has only three months to live. You see, she found out recently she has an inoperable brain tumor. Zoe, being one who never gets into trouble, never takes risks or strays outside the norm, decides to have one last hurrah and books a trip to a tropical paradise for Christmas. She plans to relax on the beach, soak up some sun and possibly have one last fling before she dies. Finding at the last minute that she doesn't have anything to read on the plane she runs out to her local Supa-Mart to pick up a trashy romance novel at three o'clock in the morning. Just a quick in and out and she'll be back at home ready to leave for her trip.

Yeah, right.

Enter Kai and Rowe. They've been best friends since they were kids. Consummate party boys. Rowe is a big wig and Kai is his right hand man. Oh, and they're also aliens. They've been sent by their producer to 'play human' in the newest reality show that has been sweeping their planet. But they have each been harboring a secret love for the other. Will Kai ever tell Rowe that he secretly wants in his pants but was afraid he was beneath Rowe's station so he never tried? Will Rowe ever tell Kai that he's been secretly in love with him since they were just boys? Stay tuned to find out.

This book was chock full of delightful surprises. Seeing as how I've loved other books by Ms. Elsborg I expected to enjoy this one as well. What I didn't expect to get was a book that might as well have been titled 'Written Exclusively for Jenni Lea'. It had everything I like in a book. **EVERYTHING**. I had such a huge grin on my face the entire time I was reading - even during the girl parts! Because let me just tell you, even though I had to endure reading about girly bits Ms. Elsborg more than made up for it with the anatomy lessons. I mean, the things those aliens can do with their cocks... MA GAWD!

This is such a fun story! It's an easy and enjoyable read. There's action, adventure, and quite a bit of humor as well. It also has the most creative form of 'knotting' I've ever read. Plus! It has the one thing I love more than knotting. Can you guess what that is?

For those of you who are worried this is not a true MMF, worry no more. While it is quite heavy on the

female parts, there's tons of hot man on man lovin'. Barbara did not disappoint!

So, take a chance on this one. Don't let those girl parts scare you off. You'll miss out on a fun and exciting story if you do.

Highly recommend.

ARC provided by the author in exchange for an honest review.

Karen says

Aliens, a brain tumour and a 3 a.m. to a tacky superstore a couple of days before Christmas. Doesn't sound like the beginning of a really great read? Well, it was.

Obviously you have to suspend your beliefs but that's part of reading, being able to switch off your rational brain and actively want the alternative reality to be real. What a ride!

MMF ménage stories are my absolute favourites, but they do need to make me feel the emotional connection between all three people, and this achieved it really well.

Going in my folder for a cosy re-read now I can enjoy it without worrying about Barbara was going to wrangle a HEA from all the possible disasters.

Loved it.

Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

[wait for it(view spoiler) (hide spoiler)]

Chappy says

What a wonderful and super hot MMF story.

I loved the premise, so original and so well done. I mean who would think that an alien race would run a reality show using unsuspecting humans.

I felt so bad for Zoe's misfortune but she ends up finding true happiness. Kai and Rowe are amazing and these 3 sure know how to turn up the heat...talk about steamy.

The perds were awesome, that's all I'll say so I don't spoil anything.

~ Lei ~ Reading Is An Adventure ~ says

★★★??½ ~ 3.5 Stars

Lonely Zoe has been given three months to live. One night she decides to go to WalMart - uh SupaMart at 3:00 in the morning and before she knows it, she and a group of other people are locked in together. She can't take her eyes of the very good looking guys Rowe and Kai.

She gets to know them much better! Elsborg writes excellent menages and this is proper mmf, with lots of fun getting together. Creative story, was a bit longer than I expected.

Prone to Crushes on Boys in Books says

It was bound to happen, me reading a book depicting a reality show. "Big Brother" but with a group of unsuspecting humans trapped in a Supa-Mart with two aliens sent to steer the gameor are they part of the game? (dun dun dun)

I KNOW, I KNOW that this is SciFi, but it just did not feel.....believable, the situation, the threesome or the events that follows. Please don't let my thoughts deter you from reading it. It just did not mesh with me but I know there are others that would enjoy it.

Ann says

Sooooo, apparently there's +1 knotting or some such business. If Jenni Lea says its hotness to the nth, then it is and I shall read it.

??? Mary's Menage Reviews ??? says

Barbara Elsborg could try very hard but at the end of the day she never disappoints.

I love Sci-fi and menages. The combination is rare so for me it is always a threat. I read this prolific author already, The small print, Anna in the middle, Just what she wants and her Misfits series. So I knew that she could do well contemporary and fantasy, but what about science-fiction?

Guess, she did!

Barbara Elsbord is a pure breed British author living in north of England. Therefore I thought it was smart to introduce the heroine as a Brit immigrant. I know that many American readers complain about the English

writing and the differences. It was set from the start and poof! no more complains about biscuit and cookies or pants and trousers or whatever. I always find funny people complaining about reading English style versus American style. I was born in France, lived in England and finally became Canadian many years ago. French and English from Europe are indeed different from North America. We all understand each other but the accent, the slang and some expressions are different. Instead of complaining about it, I find it funny. Knowing that we all come from Europe and our roots are French, British, Irish, Spanish etc..., it is funny how people tend to forget their origins and make a fuss about reading a book with tiny difference of styles or vocabulary.

Anyways. Personally? I love it!

Did I find many English expression? To tell you the truth, nope. Guess Samhain Publishing have some great editors and wish to please their American customers :P

My fist comment about this story will be how original the plot was! From the start, I was hooked and the story reminded me for a couple of seconds the movie, The Cube. But then, it was completely different.

I thought that it was totally original, a mix of survivors and the cube and a mega store.

I loved the characters. I was not sure with one male though. He was a bit too hyper active and the happy spoiled brat that I am not that fond. He turned to be more than that and I fell for him as the other one. I liked also the heroine. She was not a whinny character and she was sweet and smart.

I heard on the grapevine that some complained about the credibility. Was it or not? My opinion is simple. If I read a sci-fiction story, I keep my door very open. I know that nothing I will read will be 100% possible. Yes a couple of things bothered me like how the aliens knew about supa-mart, how they could learn so fast everything earth related including slang and culture. It was a bit rushed in my opinion but the story did not focused on the how but on the right now. So once, I read the first couple of pages, it was never an issue for me.

I also believe that some readers do find difficult to have heroes that are physically different. For me, it is fun because it is different. I am not fond of cloned stories. I like to be surprised and the author sure did, in a good way.

I did find some humor in this book, like each time I read Barbara Elsborg but it was progressive up to the epilogue. The epilogue is hilarious. I always thought "what if...". Of course, I cannot say more without spoiling the story but you will know once you read that part. It was truly funny.

This is a long novel and once or twice I thought it was a bit redundant or too much unnecessary sex scenes, mostly at the middle/end of the story. Nothing major, but for me it did not bring anything more in the established relationship. So it was a bit disruptive for me and the story did not flow as smoothly as I wanted it to be. Once in a while, I also thought that it was a tiny bit too much over the top drama (9/11, abusive character, fatal disease, perverts aliens). The cover book for me is average. The only good part is that the heroine's eyes have the right color as it seems her hair. But I am glad I do not judge a story by its cover. Nothing major really but enough that I could not give a 5 poly stars, even if it was very very close ;)

So now the real question is not if I recommend this story, because I sure do. The real question is if you have an open mind. Because if you do not like Sci-fi, if you think that all aliens must be human clones, if you do not accept crazy possibilities... then I suggest to find another story.

But if you like to read something different, original, crazy, funny and romantic... Taking Stock is for you!

Take the risk! It is worth it!

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This is an ARC review.

Book is available in pre order.

Release date is September 2, 2014.

Sunny says

3.5

Crazy, silly, sweet.

A little simplistic, but for the most part, fun.

I'd read it again :)

Side notes:

Perds are awesome.

The Tantulan's different anatomy provided some interesting sexy times :)

Under the Covers Book Blog says

Zoe is dying. Her brain tumour is inoperable and she only has a few months left...however, she didn't expect to spend those last few months unwillingly trapped in a supermarket with strangers. But despite all the weird and otherworldly circumstances they are all stuck in, all Zoe can think about are the two of the men she is stuck with; both of whom have woken up her libido, she only has a few months left and plans to enjoy them...even if the two of them aren't quite what they seem.

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Suze says

Once I got my head around aliens, space travel and perds I quite enjoyed this romp through the space/time continuum!

Zoe, Kai and Rowe are super hot together, though the perds do steal the show.

Tantula does sound boring so can get why they did what they did. I did wonder how the missing shop would be explained though.

3/3.5*

Helyce says

Reviewed here first: <http://smexybooks.com/2014/09/review-...>

Ms. Elsborg has quite a backlist and while I have only read two or three of her stories, I have had strong emotional reactions to both. So, when this arc came to me and I saw this description in the warning, I knew I'd be in for something completely different.

“Warning: This book contains two hot aliens with interesting anatomy, one lucky human heroine, zero-gravity menage sex, male-male tongue worship, and all the toys one super store can provide.”

I am not ashamed to admit it was the “interesting anatomy” that hooked me in. Here's a little bit of set up.

Zoe is a young woman who has recently been diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor and is given 3 months to live. Since her situation is terminal, she decides that she's not going to sit around and wait to die and books herself on a Caribbean vacation over the Christmas holiday. The night before she is to leave, though, she realizes that she doesn't have anything to read and heads out to the 24 hour Supa-Mart to rectify this.

While there, something fantastical happens and she finds herself trapped inside the Supa-Mart with 10 other people and absolutely no means of escape. On the plus side, all the men are good looking, especially Kai and Rowe who seem to have noticed her and who she feels an unmistakable attraction to immediately.

Kai and Rowe are aliens beamed down to earth to be shut inside a Supa-Mart with 9 humans while the whole building is transported through space and time to the planet Tantula. The Tantulan people, who had somehow been able to get into and become addicted to Earth's reality style TV shows, will be watching the antics a la Big Brother as the humans try to make sense of what has happened to them and just survive. They are clueless as to the fact that they are traveling through space, but they quickly realize that someone out there is watching.

Taking Stock is a really humorous look what a reality series with a Big Brother-like set up would be if some sexy human looking aliens were thrown in the mix. While this story dragged a bit during the set up, once our characters realize they are not getting out, they form a cohesive unit where everyone has specific task or responsibility. Because they are in a Supa-Mart which I would guess is a cross between a supermarket and a Walmart, they have everything they need to survive comfortably.

After all the initial attempts to break out are unsuccessful, they go forward and make do with an odd kind of acceptance to their situation. They realize early on when talking that they have much in common, namely the fact that no one there has any family that would miss them. A really huge clue. Of course, Kai and Rowe know exactly what is going on and they have to play along and stay in character even when things that they didn't expect are thrown at them. One of the most important things is that there were only supposed to be ten people including Kai and Rowe. The fact that there are 11 means someone else was thrown into the mix unbeknownst to them.

Of course, like every house based reality series on earth, the Tantulans would obviously expect there to be sex, and Kai, Rowe and Zoe do not disappoint. Initially it's Kai and Zoe who seem to have an immediate connection, though they quickly become a threesome when Rowe admits his long time feelings for Kai. It's after their first encounter together that Zoe begins to think that something is not quite right with Kai. When she shares her theory with one of the other men in their group he disappears. This causes a bit of panic, as can be expected, and while everyone has come to the conclusion that they are being watched, they decide to go into hiding. If there is no activity, and nothing to watch, then whoever is holding them captive will get bored and release them.

When the Supa-Mart arrives on Tantula, the story gets a bit more serious as the Tantulan people have expectations their Earth guests do not really want to be a part of. They just want to go home. The focus of the story becomes Kai, Rowe and Zoe at this point. Both Kai and Rowe love both each other and Zoe and they want to do anything to save her. They believe their doctor is far advanced and can save Zoe by removing the tumor. What happens next is truly straight up science fiction and really was entertaining as all get out.

Again, I admit that I was lured into reading this story because of the questionable anatomy of our aliens. They do not disappoint and there is a lot of interesting sex in this story. Special genital endowments aside, there are even more interesting characteristics to the males of the Tantulan species.

Completely out there, I was entertained enough to keep reading, and what happens at the end did bring a cute kind of closure to the story.

Heather in FL says

I thought this was a very imaginative story. Stealing a Wal-Mart -- um, Supa-Mart -- for alien reality TV. Interesting concept. Throw in two sexy male aliens trying to pretend to be human who have an unspoken thing between them that they've never acted upon? Even better. And the sweet girl who is dying who wasn't supposed to be there in the first place. It sounds like it could be hokey, but I found it very interesting. How the people from such different backgrounds were able to work together while they thought they were stuck. How Zoe was happy to go with the flow and she kept coming up with the truth, but kept discounting it as some side-effect of her brain tumor. It was a very sweet story, and I was happy with how it ended.
