

Sub Zero

By Richie Church

“Why is this spot called Sub Zero?” a young woman asked looking at the lake in front of her.

“For two reasons.” replied the captain, “The first submarine to explore this area was called *Zero* and it is said that they went to the bottom of the sea.”

“But wouldn't the pressure destroy the sub before it got close?” she asked.

“It should, but they weren't crushed, they vanished!”

“How is that possible?” asked a young man.

“Well Mark, I don't know.” the captain answered

“Maybe me and Maria can figure it out.” he said with a glance at his sister.

“If a group of well known scientists can't figure it out, what makes you think you can?”

“Because the scientists weren't in the sub, and we will be.”

“Hmmm, Good point. But we will see, won't we.” the captain smiled and turned, “We better get going then hadn't we.”

“How long did it take them to reach where communication was lost, Captain?” asked Maria as they climbed into the sub,

“About eight hours. So get comfortable, this is going to be a long ride.” he replied, “And call me Shawn.”

They talked a bit before settling into their seats and looking out the windows.

“We are getting near the target depth.” Shawn announced.

“How much longer?” Maria asked.

“About forty minutes. Is everyone ready?”

“Ready as I'll ever be.” replied Mark.

“Sure.” answered Maria.

Thirty minutes had passed when Maria said,

“Uh, Shawn, the pressure is starting to increase much faster.”

“What is it at?”

Before she could answer, the sound of metal tearing apart started ringing in their ears!

“What's going on!” Mark yelled, “It sounds like the sub is being torn apart!”

“Everyone stay calm!” Shawn shouted.

The sound stopped almost as quickly as it came.

“What happened?” Maria asked, “And why are we going up?”

“How deep are we?” Shawn inquired.

The sub stopped.

“We're at the surface!” Maria said with surprise.

“We should get out and see where we are. Carefully.” Shawn said getting up and heading towards the hatch.

Shawn opened the hatch and they all climbed out onto the grass. They were standing beside a large pond in a clearing surrounded by a forest of trees that looked like a cross between Birch and Oak.

"This place looks fun to explore!" Mark exclaimed.

"We had better head back and report what we found." Shawn said turning around.

"What happened to the sub!?" Shawn stood looking at the pool in disbelief.

He turned and looked at Mark and Maria. He gave them a worried look and said,

"I guess we're stuck with Mark's idea."

He started walking into the woods with the two siblings following behind. Mark glanced upward, then gave his sister a worried look.

It was getting dark.

Mark slowly drifted awake. He stretched and yawned. Blinking a little he started to stand then stopped. A couple feet in front of him sat a girl staring at him. She had blue eyes, dark hair, wore a simple leather dress and no shoes.

Mark slowly sat down and stared back. Their staring contest went on for a few minutes before he finally said in a low voice, trying not to wake the others up,

"Who are you?"

Her expression changed to one of thought for a few seconds before she answered,

"You from other place?"

"You know English?" Mark replied slightly surprised.

"Chief teach some to me. Not good yet. Why ask in English if you think me not know?"

"Yes, we came from the other place. Who is Chief?"

She smiled, "I show you."

"Let me wake up my friends. How far away is he?"

"Village is short walk from here."

Mark shook his sister and Shawn awake,

"That girl says she knows where more people are."

"How do you know that? And what if she is really luring us into some kind of trap and she is really from some cannibal tribe?" Shawn said giving her a suspicious look.

"She knows English, and what else are we going to do?"

Shawn reluctantly agreed.

Mark turned toward the girl and said,

"I never asked what your name was. My name is Mark."

"Shemia. (She-me-uh)" she replied as she got up and started walking further into the woods, looking back to make sure they were following.

Mark groaned as they walked into a clearing filled with tepees.

"Short walk that was. It's gotta be noon by now!" He complained.

"You should walk more then." Shemia said with a grin.

They walked towards the largest tepee.

"This Chief's house." Shemia said as she led them in.

"Shemia you should have been back last night and who are these visitors you've brought back?" asked the tall man who sat at the back of the tepee. He scanned the group before resting his eyes on Shawn.

"Is that Shawn Towns I see, or have my eyes mistaken me?" he asked.

"Yes, that's my name. How did you know?" Shawn answered.

"Have I really changed that much? I'm Ron, from the sub *Zero*."

"You're alive! I thought everyone died!"

"Three of us are alive and well. Carl lost his head the first night and we never found him." Ron said with a sad look, "But let's not rest on the past. We have lived well here. We all have families now. You

have already met my daughter. Tonight we will have a feast, but meanwhile I want to talk with you about what has happened back at home. Shemia, warn your mother that we have visitors.”

That afternoon was full of food and stories from both Ron and Shawn. And the feast that night was excellent. As Ron showed them their beds Maria asked him a question,

“How do we get home? Our sub is gone so we can't get back the way we came.”

“Ah, home.” Ron said, “Even if you had your sub, you still couldn't get back that way. It's a one way door. Luckily for you, we found a way back about a year ago. But it is dangerous and we had already been here too long to go back.”

“How do we get back?” Shawn asked.

“There is a magical stone that will grant the common wish of a group. But it is guarded by traps and beasts that are difficult to get past. Tomorrow you can worry about that though, it's time for rest.”

They said good night and went to bed.

The next morning they woke up early and Ron helped them prepare for their dangerous journey with a map, weapons, and plenty of food. That night they went to bed early to be well rested and ready for what lay ahead.

The next morning after saying goodbye to all their new friends they set out with a quick pace. They hoped to get to the stone's cave before dark. They made good time, and made it before the sun set, barely.

“That cave looks a lot like a mouth.” Maria said staring into the cave in front of her.

“That's nice.” Mark said sarcastically, “Now could you help us with the tent? It's getting dark fast.” After the tent was set up, they ate a cold meal and went to bed.

The next morning they packed and prepared to enter cave.

“Are you ready?” Shawn asked.

“Not really. But I don't have a choice do I?” Mark answered.

“Well then, let us continue.” Shawn said walking into the cave torch above his head.

They walked in silence down the slowly sloping tunnel for over an hour before they found their first challenge: A large circular room with three doors at the back.

“This feels like a trap.” Shawn said standing in front of the door way. “I'll go in first. Don't follow me until I say so.”

He slowly walked into the room, looking carefully for anything unusual.

“I think it's safe.”

As Mark and Maria walked in the a large slab of stone fell over the doorway with a crash. They all jumped and turned around.

“The doorway has completely disappeared!” Mark cried, “We're trapped!”

Maria inspected the doors on the other end of the room.

“They have symbols on them. It's one of those puzzles where you have to find the right door.”

“What are the symbols?” Shawn asked.

“The first door has a X, the second has a mountain, and the third has a bridge. Where is the clue?”

“Every one look around the room for any more symbols.” Shawn commanded.

They looked around the room. Inspecting the walls, floors, and ceilings. Finally Mark shouted,

"I've got it! In the middle of the room there are the three symbols in a circle. If you look on the walls, there are a bunch of small holes in different shapes. At first I thought they were there because the room is old, but now I see it. The bridge and X are pointing towards the holes that make a large slightly disfigured X. Meaning we need to take the mountain door!"

"I can only hope you're right." Shawn said pushing the mountain door open.

They waited.

Maria walked through.

"Nothing has killed us yet, that's a good sign."

They walked through another long tunnel before reaching another large room. In the middle of the room a white shining rock sat on a pedestal.

"It can't be this easy." Mark said, "It's a trap."

He looked around the room.

"I think we need to pull that lever hiding in the corner over there."

"Good eyes." Shawn complimented walking over to it. "I never would have noticed that."

He pulled the lever and a door opened on the far side.

Maria started walking towards the door, then screamed and ran back.

"There is a monster in the tunnel." she whispered with wide eyes.

Behind her came a loud roar followed by a creature that looked like an overgrown mantis. It crawled through the door and charged!

Shawn threw his spear and hit the one of creature's eyes as he leapt out of the way. It stopped for a brief moment and Mark swung his sword, but it bounced harmlessly off the creature's leg.

"It's joints are the weakest spots!" Shawn yelled.

Maria threw her spear at it, but missed.

The creature looked at her with its good eye and started scuttling quickly towards her. Mark yelled and chopped at the closest leg joint. The leg fractured and the creature swung around to face him. Shawn recovered his spear and ran towards it. With a might thrust he put the spear through the creature's neck. It started swing wildly as the group ran towards the exit. They made it though and Shawn shut the door just as a loud crash was heard.

"Is anyone hurt." he panted.

"I think we're all fine." Maria answered.

Mark looked ahead.

"I think we reached it."

Everyone turned and looked. In front of them stood a pedestal with a large white stone that reflected rainbows onto the walls. On the pedestal was written:

"Those who come with no evil, find the way easy."

"We made it!" Maria cried.

They all set their hands on the stone and wished to be home.

Mark opened his eyes. It was night. He could hear his sister breathing in the other bed. He looked out the window at the moon and thought:

It was just a dream. But how I wish we could actually have adventures like that.

With that he fell asleep again.