

DEEP

I woke to the sound of a submarine. I sat up in bed. It was 1:00 in the morning. I thought that it was strange for someone to be out, especially in the Lavant Islands, where it's dangerous to be out too early. The hum of the engine faded as the submarine got farther away. I had a feeling that this was somehow important, but I dismissed the thought and lay back down in bed. Yet, I could not sleep. I went to the window and caught a glimpse of the submarine as it melted into the sea and disappeared. I got back into bed and was put to sleep by the endless sound of the waves crashing against the rocks.

“Beep, beep, beep” went my alarm clock. I was very tired but somehow I managed to get out of bed and get dressed. I had overslept and my father would be waiting for me in the Xerene mines. Xerene is a rare mineral found only in super heated under water caves close to the earth's core. The heat, pressure, and water, mixed with an element known as Xia create Xerene. Xerene is the most important mineral on planet earth. Everything from phones to power plants runs on Xerene.

I raced to the dock, put on my diving suit and dove in. The external temperature gauges showed the water was cold, but I couldn't feel it because of my insulated diving suit. I put out my flippers and started my descent towards the abyss. As I was swimming towards the caves I felt a small change in the water current. In an instant I whipped out my electro-spear, but I was not fast enough. The shark devoured my electro-spear and got a nasty shock which only enraged it. I scrambled for my pulse gun and pulled the trigger, nothing, it was jammed. The shark lunged at me, and as I moved out of the way the tube supplying oxygen into my helmet got snagged on the shark's tooth. Water started to slowly fill my helmet. I started to swim to the surface but the shark attacked again. As the shark attacked I dodged and grabbed the shark's fin. The shark attempted to shake me off, but I held on tight. I knew I could not hold my breath much longer and let go. I swam as fast as I could (which was really fast) trying to get to the surface. I was almost there when I saw the shark bearing down on me. I, Jack Prince, was going to die. Then, something amazing happened, the shark stopped in its tracks as an electric stun harpoon was sticking out of its side. Swimming up from the abyss was my dad. We swam to the dock and patched up my oxygen tube. Then it was back to the caves.

Xerene was scattered around the cave. I picked up a piece holding it in my glove. I could feel its warmth, (256'G which is hot enough to burn through metal) and the electric blue rock

glowed in my hand. By 5:00 p.m. we had harvested four pounds of Xerene and packed up for the day. "Good work today Jack" said my dad. When we got back, we had a dinner of Nemis Squid. After dinner I went to bed. I couldn't sleep. It was weird for an Ocoru to attack a human. Now that I thought about it, Oscuro sharks were supposed to be hibernating now at the bottom of the Hondo trench. Something must have spooked it!

The next day my dad wasn't feeling well and was unable to go to the mines, but he told me to go without him. This time I took the sub to the mines just in case there were any sharks out. As I made my descent towards the mines I heard a large rumble, and I fell out of my seat as something large slammed into the sub. I grabbed for the controls but was thrown sideways as the sub turned on its side. I crawled towards the controls and managed to get to the joystick. I fought with the joystick for control of the sub, but could not manage to level the vessel. Without thinking, I grabbed a helmet and jumped into the air lock. Water filled the chamber and I was out. I looked up and saw that on top of the sub was a massive rock. I grabbed my stun gun and fired once, twice, three times, but the stun gun could not disengage the rock.

Then I had an idea! I pulled off my helmet and jammed my oxygen tube into the rock. I increased the air pressure to 25Q per cm³ and swam away. Bang, the rock was blown into oblivion. I grabbed my banged up helmet, put it back on, and swam back into the sub. When I was about half way there I was hit by something coming from below. I figured it was part of the rock until I saw it was 10 meters long and was in the form of a snake. Its skin kept changing color as if to confuse its prey, which I guess in this case was likely to be me. Our eyes locked. Looking into its dark beady eyes I knew it wouldn't hesitate to kill me on the spot. So, why wasn't it attacking me? Instead, it turned and fled! I realized my mistake too late. I turned around and saw the biggest squid I had ever seen. I thought about swimming away, but knew it was faster than me. So, I did something really stupid, I lunged at the squid. The squid did not expect this and had no time to prepare so I pulled out my knife and slashed it across the eye. I grabbed the squids' sensory fin, and although my little knife was too small to badly hurt it, I thought it may be enough to drive the squid off. I struck a final blow to its sensory fin and it swam away.

During my battle with the squid, I had lost the location of my sub. I could swim up to the surface, but it would be too dangerous. The safest place was the ocean floor where I could spend the time to figure out a way to get back home. Then I hit something. It was a wall of rock. This made no sense in the open ocean. I realized this wall of rock was the side of a trench and not just

any trench. This was the Hondo trench. I knew the smart thing to do would be to swim up, but dad would kill me if I lost the sub. So, I did the not so smart thing, I swam down. When I reached the bottom I panned around and spotted lights. I figured they might be from the sub; thus, I swam towards them. As I got nearer I realized that the light was not coming from the sub, but an entire complex. That made no sense. As far as I knew, nobody lived down here. Who would want to? As I approached the complex, I realized that there were guards that were carrying ultrasonic-electro-harpoon pellet rifles modified for use in water. These weapons were illegal for commercial use. Was this a government operation? It scared me a little but I wanted to learn more and I was almost out of air. I swam forward trying as much as possible not to be seen, but was hit by the beam of a searchlight. Instantly the guards spotted me, an alarm sounded, and they fired at me. I swam away from the direction of the guards while the searchlight continued to pursue me. I noticed an airlock on the complex but reckoned that even if I got to it in time they would keep on pursuing until they captured or killed me. But what if they thought they had, that's it I had to fake my death. They were closing in fast. When I was almost on top of the airlock, I pulled off my helmet and threw it behind me. It happened just like I had planned it. As I threw away my helmet, the guards' fire directly hit it and the resultant explosion stirred up the silt in the water for just long enough to hide me from my pursuers, and allow me to slip undetected through the airlock and into the complex.

When inside the complex I pulled out my stun gun. It would be no match against their rifles, but it made me feel safe knowing I was armed. I found a ventilation shaft and climbed in. I was hoping to make my way to a hangar where hopefully I could locate and steal a submarine to escape. I had had enough of my adventure and was ready to go home! I was working my way through the shaft when I heard voices. I looked through the grate, and saw a man who was bald and looked like he was from the Adalitin Islands. He was lecturing another younger man who was cuffed to a chair. The older man was pointing to a screen. "You see Adam, if that is your real name, the world runs on Xerene, and I have found a way to break the hydrogen bonds between the water molecules and the Xia that make Xerene, using certain wavelengths. When the bonds break, the Xerene releases its electrons, and without its electrons the Xerene has no charge and will not power anything," the old man lectured. The old man started up again. "The Lavant Islands are volcanoes, and I plan to launch 7 rockets into outer space. Each one will launch from one volcano; however, it will seem as if the volcanoes erupted; and thus, will not

arouse suspicion. In the rockets are satellites that will fall into orbit around earth. Using these I will be able to deactivate the New United States and its military weapons. Then my army and I will be able to take over the New United States and the world."

"What about the people on the islands? They never did anything to you," pleaded the one called Adam.

"Sadly, they will die," replied the older man.

"You're mad" I unintentionally blurted out giving away my presence. I immediately started crawling away as fast as I could. "Beep, Beep, Beep" went the complex's alarms. I fired my stun gun at the bottom of the shaft and jumped through the hole it made. When out of the ventilation shaft, I started running down the hall but two guards blocked my way. I fired twice and the guards crumpled to the ground. Stunned, not dead, I told myself as I ran by. I kept running but more guards were in pursuit of me. I turned around and fired at a fuel cell and the explosion threw me high into the air. I landed on my feet and kept running while the pursuing guards were not so fortunate. I saw a hangar bay ahead of me but before I could reach it, bang, a stun dart flew through the air hitting me in the chest.

When I woke up I was in a chair, before the older man I had seen earlier. "What do you want from me" I hissed at him.

"Hello, my name is Doctor Yiannis. I want to know who sent you to spy on me and my operation? Are you working for the C.I.A. or MI6? Who is your employer?"

"You think I'm a spy, no, you've got it all wrong. I'm just a local Xerene miner. I got lost down here and needed a submarine to get to the surface. Your guards fired on me," I pleaded.

"Maybe so, but you know too much, plus you have caused me a great deal of trouble," Doctor Yiannis said in a demonic voice. A pair of hands seized me from behind. I made no effort to resist. I was taken to a cell and given a hunk of meat for dinner. Everything made sense now. The Oscuro must have been spooked and disturbed by the guards, and attacked me thinking I was a guard. The sub I saw earlier this week must have been delivering something to the complex.

The next thing I knew I was dangling from a wire over a pool which contained an Oscuro Shark. On the edge of the pool stood Doctor Yiannis and he bore a triumphant smile. I called him names I seldom use in public. He pressed a button on a remote he held and I started to move downward. My heart was beating as fast as a running cheetah. I wanted to give up and surrender

to death then I thought about my family on the island and knew I had to stop Doctor Yiannis and his evil plans. The shark jumped out of the water at me and barely missed. When it jumped up a second time, I moved out of the way and thrust the wire supporting me into its jaw's. The shark tried frantically to get the wire off. But the more it trashed about the more tangled it became. Finally the wire broke and I was free although in the water with a dangerous beast.

I scrambled out of the pool on the opposite edge to where Doctor Yiannis was standing gun in hand. He thought he had won; however, I pulled out of my pocket the hunk of meat from the dinner I had been given earlier. I threw it across the pool at him. Just as it was about to hit him, the Oscuro in the pool jumped out of the water attempting to get at the meat. The shark landed partially on Doctor Yiannis and knocked him out. I had no desire to stay there any longer. The guards were getting ready to fire so I raced to a door running past a spree of harpoon pellets. I found the hangar bay and jumped in a vacant sub, powered it up, and crashed right through the side of the hangar bay. I was pursued by three other subs that fired their torpedoes but my sub was too fast and agile and dodged them all. I fired ink canisters at them and doubled back while they couldn't see. I used my weapon system to decimate two of the pursuing subs. The third was still hot on my tail and I couldn't seem to out maneuver it. When the third sub was right behind me, I hit the brake and then the eject button. My pursuer had no time to stop and crashed into the vacant vessel while I was already swimming towards my island.

When I got home I found a note that said, "Dear Jack, dad is very sick I am taking him to the hospital. I will not be back for a few days. Help yourself to anything in the fridge. Love, Mom." Great, just great I thought. Now I would have to stop a criminal mastermind all by myself. I went into the garage and grabbed two stun guns, one electro-spear, five stun grenades modified for water, one grappling harpoon gun and one sonic-wave generator. Then I jumped into my dad's backup sub and headed for the complex. I set the sub down in a cave near the complex. I went into the complex using the same door I had used on my first time there, being very careful not to be detected by the guards. I ran through the halls but no one dared to challenge me. I found my way to Doctor Yiannis' office. I opened the door and seeing nobody present, I took a few paces inside. The door closed automatically behind me and I realized my mistake too late. A figure came out of the shadows. He was holding a stun stick and made a lunge for me. I dodged him and his weapon but then he came around a second time and hit me clear in the head which knocked me out.

When I opened my eyes I was strapped down to a large cylinder: a rocket. I tried to free myself but it was no use. Doctor Yiannis walked up to me and told me that I had failed in my attempt to destroy his plan. He then walked away as the rocket launch countdown began. I pulled my lucky piece of Xerene from my protective pocket using my gloves. I placed it on the side of the rocket and it burned a hole right through the outer shell. Inside the rocket was a tangle of wires. I pulled out a fistful without knowing what the result would be. 3, 2, 1 lift off! The rocket lifted about 30 meters off the launch pad located in the volcano crater, and then turned on its side and powered down. The rocket's emergency parachute deployed but I knew if I hit the ground at this speed I would surely die. I made another hole with my Xerene and found the area where the space sail was located. A space sail is like a blanket used to sail on solar winds in space. I pulled out the space sail and used my Xerene to cut the straps connecting me to the rocket. The rocket continued to descend and hit the crater's launch pad and exploded. The satellite and I were catapulted by the explosion into the ocean about 50 meters away. I floated down on my makeshift parachute towards the ocean. I landed softly into the ocean.

I swam to one of the other volcanoes, hiked to the top and looked down. I saw a control room that I guessed operated the rockets. I had to get to that room. I observed a transport vehicle that was used to transfer goods and supplies. I slid down the side of the crater and hid behind a rock. When the transport vehicle came driving past I jumped under it and clung to the under carriage. As it passed the control room, I let go of the car. I got up and opened the door to the control room and luckily no one was in there. I shut down the rockets and then called the N.U.S.N. to deal with Doctor Yiannis and his troops.

Then I returned home. I opened the door to my house and there in front of me was an armed Doctor Yiannis. He was soaking wet and the floor under him was caked with salt from years upon years of ocean water evaporating and leaving behind its glittering salt. "You thought you won but I will escape after taking my revenge," he screeched. He aimed the gun. I dropped the Xerene and it was over.

Epilogue

Jack lay in bed thinking about the day he had defeated Doctor Yiannis. It had been nine months now, but he remembered everything like it had happened yesterday. He remembered dropping the Xerene into the salt; he remembered the sound it made as it sent its deadly electric current through the salt to its victim. He also remembered the look on the evil mastermind's face

as more than 1000 DEEMs of electricity charged through his body. He most of all remembered the fall of Doctor Yiannis and he knew it was by his hand.