

“Mike led the way up the tunnel, just barely wider than his shoulders. More explosions echoed through the hallways, and Mike knew the whole mountain would be filled with flames and poisonous gas within seconds. As they approached the intersection, he had to decide which way to go . . .”

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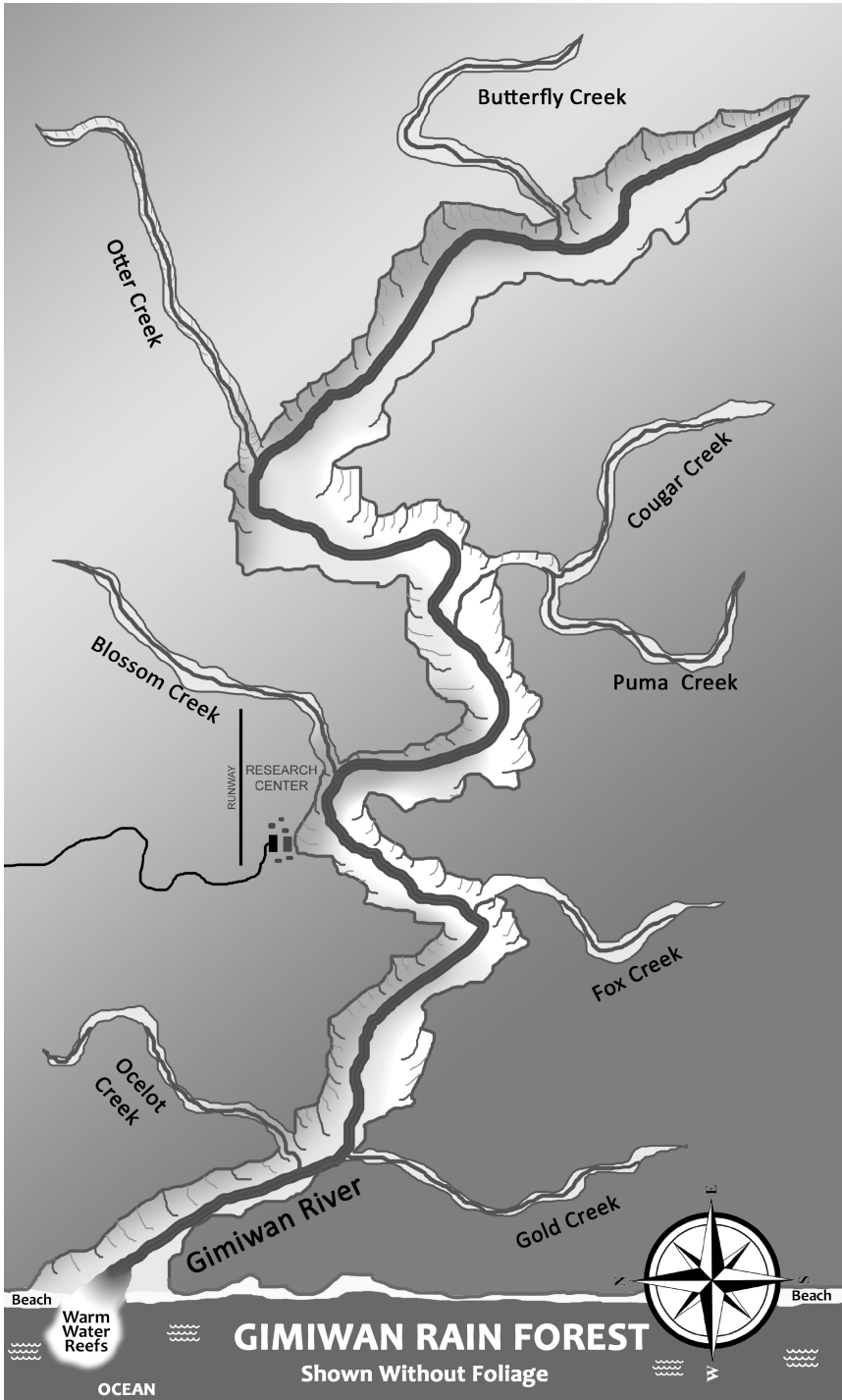
“I love your books! The Mike and Josh books are so good. I love the saying, ‘There's Nothing Wrong with doing Right.’ It has helped me through a lot.” (Website review)



“One Christmas I didn't tell the kids a new Mike and Josh book had been released, and wrapped it up. It was the gift of the year! Our college-attending daughter even joins us on FaceTime when we read.....so fun!” (Website review)



“We have the entire Danford series because Ytreeide doesn't disappoint!!! Great for all ages 5th grade-Junior!!”
(Amazon review)



Mike Danford Adventure Series #8

**JUNGLE
DOOM**

ARNOLD YTREEIDE
with
ELAENA SANDROS

Jericho Quill Press

JUNGLE DOOM

by Arnold Ytreeide

with

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For Mama Jessica



Chapter One

Sea Creatures

Every time he sucked in a breath, seventeen-year-old Mike Danford heard a mechanical click and what sounded like two lips flapping together, followed by a sound similar to blowing up a balloon. Every time he exhaled a breath, he heard and felt large bubbles passing by his ears.

The sounds came from his Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus – or SCUBA gear. He was diving with his best friend, Josh Roberts, just off the rocky coast of the Gimiwan Rain Forest, fifty miles south of his hometown of Seacrest.

Normally when the boys wanted to explore underwater they'd take their four-person submarine, Jonah. But this time they needed to be near shore, in just twenty-five feet of water, so SCUBA equipment let them get close and personal with the sea life they came to study.

A strong current again tried to pull Mike's regulator mouthpiece out of his mouth. He bit down on the rubber a little harder. The regulator was connected to a yellow tank on his back by a half-inch rubber hose. A rubber-and-glass mask covered the top half of his face keeping him from inhaling through his nose.

Mike kicked a little harder with the long rubber fins on his feet. He wore a wetsuit made of quarter-inch foam to protect him from cold water, but here at the mouth of Gimiwan River it was almost too hot. The stream flowed out of a nature preserve in a steep canyon, and was heated by hot lava far underground. It was exactly because of this that he and Josh were studying the sea life.

"It's an anomaly," Josh had said, "and I love anomalies. Especially when they have to do with wildlife."

"What's an uh-nomelly?" Espen, Mike's foreign-exchange brother for a year, had asked.

"Uh-nom-uh-lee," Josh explained. "It means something strange, odd, out of the ordinary. Like you."

Espen had given Josh a fake laugh and said, "Very funny."

Then Mike had agreed to accompany Josh on an expedition to explore the anomaly.

Now Mike was glad he did. On the other side of his face mask he saw brightly-colored sea life moving with the current. Instead of the normal black rocks usually found in the area, there was red, pink, blue, purple, yellow, and white coral. He was used to seeing grey and silvery fish in these waters, but here saw bright, tropical yellows and blues, oranges and reds, including a school of clown fish.

Josh looked over and Mike gave him two big “OK” signs with his hands, both to tell his friend he was doing fine, but also to communicate how impressed he was with the dive.

Why didn't I bring a camera! Mike thought. He knew the answer – because this was Josh's idea and he didn't think there'd be anything interesting to photograph. *I should have listened to him when he said –*

Mike sucked in his breath and stared. In front of him he saw the strangest thing he'd ever –

BOOM!

A bright flash! Mike fell into a giant hole in the water. He smashed against the coral, then the water flooded in over him. His regulator was ripped from his mouth. He grabbed it, shoved it back in, and pushed the button to clear it of water.

He lay there, trying to suck in a breath, but there was no mechanical click, no rubber lips smacking together, no bubbles pushing past his ears.

He tried to kick toward the surface but started to convulse. He kept sucking, but no air entered his windpipe. His brain buzzed, his lungs burned, then everything went black.

Someone was trying to choke him. Mike felt the cold, bony hand on his windpipe, squeezing until Mike couldn't draw in a breath. *No! He's trying to drown me!* Mike realized as he felt the water around his body. *I gotta fight!*

Mike began punching with both fists, but everything was dark and nothing made sense. Whoever was trying to kill him grabbed his arms while still choking him. Suddenly Mike's eyelids popped open. Salt water poked him in the eyes. Bright sunlight punched him in the face. At the same moment he sucked in a huge breath of air. He choked, coughed, pushed away the hands trying to kill him.

“Is oh-kay! Is oh-kay!” someone was saying in a funny accent. Mike kept fighting, even while his chest wheezed in and out.

Mike's eyes started to focus, and the world began to make sense. He was lying on his back in the water at the edge of the beach. Above him was the face of a boy about his age with dark brown skin, looking down at him. The boy was now holding both Mike's wrists. He kept repeating, "Is oh-kay!"

Mike stopped struggling. He coughed, hard, several times. The boy let go of Mike. "Just breathe in an out," the boy said in his accent. "Help is on the way."

Mike swallowed, then lifted his head. His ears were ringing, his body screamed in pain, but he was alive and breathing. He was on the beach, on the sand, half-in and half-out of the water. He tried to speak, but coughed instead.

In the next moment it struck him. "Josh!" he wheezed. He tried to sit up.

The other boy held him down. "Josh? What is Josh?"

Mike coughed several times. "My – my friend!"

The boy looked up, searched the beach, then stopped. "Mimi!" he yelled. "*Il y a un garçon sur la plage là-bas ! Allez l'aider !*"

Mike heard feet running through the sand. The boy looked back into Mike's face. "My sis-tar will help your friend."

"Wha – what happened?"

The boy shook his head. "I do not know. The water – it just go 'kaboom!'" This time Mike could identify the accent as French.

Mike heard the rotors of a helicopter pounding the air and looked up. It was the big Coast Guard chopper stationed near Seacrest. It landed on the beach half way between him and Josh. Two medics jumped out. One ran toward, Josh, the other came straight to Mike. He dropped his bag and dropped to his knees.

"What happened?"

"I do not know," the boy told the medic. "The water – it just go 'kaboom,' straight up into the air."

"Was he unconscious when you got to him?"

"Yes, he was. He was not so much breathing. I try to do the jaw thrust, but he fight me. I finally got it and he start to breathe"

The medic rolled Mike onto his side, then lifted Mike's eyelids one at a time. "What's your name?"

"Mike. Michael Danford. How's Josh?"

"Is that the other guy?"

Mike nodded.

“Don’t know yet. We just got here.”

“Oh, yeah. Of course.”

Mike could tell that his own voice was hoarse and raspy. The medic listened to his chest as another crew person ran toward them with a stretcher. Mike looked up at the French boy and finally realized he hadn’t been trying to choke Mike, had instead been trying to save him. “Thank you,” he croaked. “Sorry I fought you.”

The boy smiled. “You are well-come. And I would fight too if I could not breathe.”

“What’s your name?”

“Etienne.”

“Thank you, Etienne.”

Before he could say more, the medics transferred Mike to the wire stretcher. They lifted it, jogged across the wet sand to the chopper, and slid him inside. Josh was already there, on his back in another stretcher, and still unconscious.

Mike heard his own medic talking to the hospital over the radio as the door of the chopper slid closed. “Possible post-immersion syndrome, victim is a seventeen-year-old male, otherwise . . .”

Mike couldn’t hear any more because the rotor engaged and they took off. He looked over at Josh, unconscious and pale. He grabbed the sleeve of the medic and yanked.

The medic pulled one side of his headset away from his ear. “Yeah?”

“Don’t worry about me,” Mike said as loudly as he could. “Take care of Josh!”

The medic shook his head and yelled over the engine noise. “He’s okay. He just got knocked out. You’re the one we’re worried about.”

“Why me?” Mike asked, but the medic had replaced his headset and was talking on the radio. *Probably talking to the hospital*, Mike decided.

It was a twenty minute flight to Seacrest Hospital. Though Mike couldn’t see out the window, he knew they were landing on a big red “H” on the roof. *Been here, done this* he thought. Both he and Josh were wheeled down to the Emergency Room. Along the way, Mike felt like Etienne’s hand was still clamped on his throat.

Both boys were taken to the same treatment room. Mike saw a nurse helping Josh, but two doctors and several other people hovered

around Mike. "Please," he gasped, "I'm okay. Help my friend!"

The face of a middle-aged man filled Mike's field of view. "Mike, I'm Doctor Arroyo. We're taking good care of your friend, but right now we're more concerned about you. You have what we call post-immers . . ."

Mike began choking. He couldn't get any air, and panic took over. His whole body convulsed in giant spasms, then everything went black again.

It was the most boring song Mike had ever heard. One note, over and over, like water dripping from a faucet. *Will somebody please choose a different song!* He thought he had said that out loud, but then realized there was something sticking out of his mouth.

Mike opened his eyes.

First he saw his mother. Next he saw a nurse. Then he saw a giant tube running into his mouth. He felt it with his hand, then realized there was also a smaller tube coming out his nose.

"Don't touch that, Mike," his mom said as she stepped over next to him.

He pulled his hand away, then looked around with just his eyes. He was in the hospital, he realized. A room with lots of monitors and a big, glass wall.

"You're in the Intensive Care Unit," the nurse said. Then he realized the nurse was Josh's mother. "You had a little accident this morning," Mom Roberts said.

He remembered.

Josh!

Mrs. Danford saw the look on his face and understood. She stepped outside the glass door. A moment later his dad entered, pushing Josh in a wheelchair. Josh had a white bandage wrapped around his head, and was wearing a hospital gown. "Good to see you, bro."

Mike tried to smile, tried to say, "You too," but could only nod slightly.

"Guess what? I have a concussion!" Josh said as if it were an award he'd won. "But that's good because you don't! The last thing you needed was another concussion." Josh talked some more, but Mike mostly couldn't make the words make sense inside his head. Some machine was pushing air in and out of his lungs, and the tube in his

nose was annoying.

His dad and Josh left, then his sisters Katie and Amy came in. They were supposed to be in college, but had skipped out when they heard about Mike's accident. "Not like it's the first time you've been in the hospital," Katie said, "but sooner or later you're gonna do something really serious to yourself."

His sisters left, then his mom came back in, followed shortly by a doctor he didn't know. The doctor looked at the monitors, looked at his chart, then said, "You ready to get that tube out?"

Mike nodded his head rapidly. With the help of Mom Roberts, the doctor took some tape off Mike's cheek, said, "When I pull, you cough," then he pulled.

The huge tube slid up through Mike's throat. He coughed as ordered and the tube slipped past his vocal cords and out. The doctor checked his throat, then Mom Roberts pulled out the smaller tube. "This was feeding you, Mike," she said. The tube tickled as it came out through his nose.

"Any questions?" the doctor asked.

Mike nodded his head, and croaked out, "What happened?"

The doctor sat on a stool with wheels and rolled over next to the bed. "When whatever happened to you underwater happened, you sucked in some water. The water hit your larynx – your voice box – which caused it to spasm and close off your airway. That's what first caused you pass out. It's called a 'post-immersion syndrome.' Some people call it 'dry drowning,' but that's not a medical term."

Mike's eyes opened wide. "I drowned?"

"Technically, yes. But the boy on the beach somehow knew what to do. He performed a certain technique which initially relaxed the larynx and allowed you to breathe."

"Etienne!" Mike coughed. "I'd forgotten about him."

"Yes, well, he saved your life. Then, in the ER, your larynx went into spasm again, which is why we put the tube in your throat. You've been sedated since then. I'm going to have you breathe a mixture of helium and oxygen, which may help, but you'll be here for the next forty-eight hours in case your larynx decides to shut down again."

Mike nodded, then drifted in and out of sleep. Every time he opened his eyes, it seemed, someone different was in his room. A dozen different nurses and technicians, his parents and sisters, Josh and

his mom, or one of his friends was always there when he opened his eyes.

One time when his eyes opened he saw their family friend and Mike's godfather, Admiral Buck Norton, sitting next to his bed. It looked to Mike like the admiral had been praying over him. They talked a while, then Mike asked a question to which he figured no one else would know the answer. "When the explosion went off, instead of being pushed through the water, I fell onto the rocks and sand – no water. How can that be?"

"That's how underwater explosions work," Buck answered. "The explosion creates a big hole, or bubble, in the water under the ship – or in this case, under the SCUBA diver. The ship – or diver – then falls into the hole and breaks in half because there's no water there to hold it up."

Another time when he awoke there was a seventeen-year-old indigenous boy standing over Mike, going over his medical chart with the doctor. "Ricky!" he croaked. Ricky Two Arrows was a friend and paramedic from across the mountains on the Coyote Indian Reservation.

Ricky looked up. The first thing he said to Mike was, "I've ordered a pair of handcuffs online. From now on I'm gonna be handcuffed to you twenty-four seven, since you can't seem to stay out of trouble."

Mike tried to laugh. "That might get a bit awkward when I get married."

Ricky shrugged. "We'll work it out."

On the third day, Mike was feeling much better and there had been no more spasms in his throat, so he was moved to a regular room. Josh had been discharged the day before, and now walked in wearing normal clothes, and with just a square, white bandage on his forehead. Mike greeted him with, "What happened?"

Josh sat in a chair and put his feet up on the bed. "Nice to see you too."

"Hi Josh. Good to see you. What happened?"

Josh shrugged. "No one knows. There was some kind of explosion, but neither the police nor the Coast Guard can figure out what exploded or why."

Mike shook his head slowly. "How is that possible?"

Josh shrugged again. "We may never know. But that's not the

important thing here. You *know* what the important thing here is.”

Mike frowned and looked away from his best friend. “Not this time. There was nothing.”

Josh put his feet down and leaned in toward the bed. “Uh uh, not gonna buy it. We both know you saw something strange that’s gonna take us on some wild adventure, so what was it?”

“It was nothing. It was stupid. It wasn’t real. So there’s no sense talking about it.”

“How about you let *me* be the judge of that?”

Mike turned back toward Josh and lowered his voice. “You’re gonna laugh at me, so promise you won’t tell anyone else.”

“Okay, I promise.”

“Well, just before the explosion, I thought I saw —”

A knock on the open door interrupted Mike. He looked over and saw a group of strangers he’d never seen before in all his life.