

By now every one of Mike's fingers and toes felt frozen. His muscles cramped, and it was hard to make his fingers grab onto the rocks. He reached forward, found a handhold, and transferred his weight to that hand. But the cramped muscles didn't hold. His hand slipped off the rock and Mike felt his body being carried away in the torrent.

Comments from readers about the Mike Danford series:



“My non-reader son loves these books. I highly recommend, waiting for more from Arnold Ytreeide.”
(Amazon review)



“Loved it! Kids loved it! So good!” (Amazon review)



“Great read for middle schoolers. The content is invaluable for maturing young men.” (Amazon review)

Mike Danford Adventure Series #6

**SEISMIC
SECRETS**

Arnold Ytreeide

Jericho Quill Press

SEISMIC SECRETS

by Arnold Ytreeide

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For Elmer & Dot -
Rock Hounds
Hikers
and Guides to my
broadened education

Chapter One

Premature Death

Seventeen-year-old Mike Danford and his best friend Josh Roberts walked along the stretch of wet sand on the ocean beach next to their hometown of Seacrest. Icy green water tickled their bare feet, and sand scratched between their bare toes as the waves rolled in and out.

“Isn’t Doctor Quinn about the nicest guy you’ve ever met?” Josh asked.

“Nicest and smartest,” Mike answered as foamy waves splashed up to his ankles.

The sky was blue and the sun was hot. Seagulls circled overhead, and baby crabs dashed in and out of the surf.

“I think we should name our next invention after him,” Josh added.

“Perfect idea! We can call it the Q-mobile or something.”

Both boys laughed, then Mike looked to his left, out toward the ocean. “Hey, does that look kind of funny to you?”

“Does what look funny?” Josh asked.

“The water. It looks – lower. Like someone pulled the plug on the ocean and it’s draining.”

Both boys gasped and looked at each other, horrified. Their heads snapped back toward the ocean, and the terror in their minds became a terror on the sea: a giant, green wave rose up from the depths about a thousand yards offshore.

“Tidal wave!” Mike screamed.

They both turned and sprinted for the rock cliff at the edge of the beach a hundred feet away, but they both knew they’d never make it. Even if they reached the base of the cliff, it would take

them several minutes to climb to the top – minutes they didn't have. And even if they made it to the top in time, it wasn't nearly high enough to avoid the monstrous wave that chased them.

“Run!” Josh screamed, though he knew it was hopeless.

“Mommy!” Mike yelled as he looked over his shoulder. The wave was right above them now, towering higher than a sky scraper. The leading lip, at the very top of the wave, started to curl, and Mike knew it was over.

A second later the last sound Mike heard was Josh yelling for his mommy too.

The stunned crowd, in their suits and dresses and funeral clothes, sat in the cushioned chairs staring straight ahead. “Mike Danford is dead,” the speaker said, sounding like he was on the verge of tears. The eyes that had been staring straight ahead now looked toward the floor. “And so is his best friend, Josh Roberts.” He let that fact hang in the air a moment before he continued. “And why? Simple. Because they were stupid.”

At this, most of the heads in the room snapped up and looked at the speaker. “Yes, I said because they were stupid. And so were we. We knew the danger! We knew we had to take action to prevent it!” He paused, lowered his voice. “But we didn't. And now . . . now two brilliant lives are gone. Mike Danford and Josh Roberts are dead. And nothing will bring them back.”

A long silence followed as the audience took in those words. Finally, somewhere in the front row, a young man cleared his throat and then spoke. “I couldn't help noticing, Doctor Quinn, that before we died we decided to name our next invention after you.”

The room burst into laughter. Doctor Quinn grinned widely, then made motions with his hands. The voice of Dr. Anika Gurin, standing next to Dr. Quinn, spoke the words his hands formed. “I thought as long as I was telling a story, Mike, I might as well put in a plug for myself.”

Sitting next to Mike on the front row, Josh said, “Yeah, and I especially loved the part where we cried for our mommies.”

More laughter, then the crowd settled down for what was still a serious discussion.

The crowd was made up of the Seacrest mayor, city council

persons, emergency services leaders, and others interested in what Dr. Quinn had to say. They were meeting in the council chambers of city hall, and were facing a large screen on the wall – a screen that still held an animation of a gigantic tidal wave frozen just above the heads of the two computer-generated characters that Dr. Quinn had named Mike and Josh. He had asked the mayor to hold this emergency meeting of the town council once he had seen some alarming data the day before.

“I’m not saying this is a major *threat* to Seacrest,” Dr. Quinn continued, with Dr. Gurin translating his sign language. “I’m saying this is a major – and immanent – reality. *This is going to happen!* Not ‘if,’ but ‘when.’ And the ‘when’ is any minute. Any hour. Any day now. Certainly within a year.”

A gasp swept across the group of leaders. “Within a *year?*” Mayor Andrea Brinkley said. “Are you sure? How can you know that?”

Dr. Quinn thought a moment, then his hands started motioning again. “When the Kurovians set off their tectonic weapon machines,” Dr. Gurin said, speaking the words those hands were signing, “they changed the structural integrity of the tectonic plates themselves.”

Mike glanced over at Josh, who looked back and nodded his head. They had both been at the bottom of the ocean in their Deep Submergence Vehicle “Dove” and had seen the damage their enemies had done to the coastline.

“After a careful survey of the entire seabed,” the doctor continued, “and with the help of Mike and Josh and their DSV, we have measured, and calculated, and tested those changes. Everyone on my team, along with several other experts I contacted, all agree that these assessments are correct. The coastline next to Seacrest will suffer a major earthquake in the very near future.”

“How sure are you about the tsunami?” one of the councilmen asked.

Dr. Quinn nodded to Captain Leland Washington, head of the Seacrest fire department and old friend of Mike’s. The captain cleared his throat. “As you know, I was assigned to lead the tsunami task force several years ago. The bottom line is that it’s impossible to know for sure when one will strike. Any given earthquake of sufficient size may or may not produce a tsunami.

But I've looked at Dr. Quinn's figures, and I agree that a small version of the earthquake the Kurovians tried to start will be completed by mother nature very soon. When that happens, there's a high probability it will generate a tsunami of enormous size."

"How enormous?" a councilwoman asked.

Everyone looked to Dr. Quinn, who signed his answer. "The biggest tsunami in history was 1720 feet high. This one could easily be 800 to 900 feet in height."

The mayor let that sink in for a moment, then added, "And that's the problem. Seacrest sits at the bottom of a bowl cut in half. The top edge of the bowl is 700 feet above us, and it's less than a mile from here to that wall. We're sitting right at the bottom of the bowl where it runs into Admiralty Sound. If a mega-tsunami hits, everyone in Seacrest will be trapped, and everyone in Seacrest will be washed out to sea and die. Even if we had fifteen or twenty minutes of warning, there is simply no way to get all the people to safety."

An uncomfortable silence filled the room for a minute, then the same councilwoman said, "I'm assuming that since you called us together tonight you have a plan to protect Seacrest?"

Mayor Brinkley half smiled, half frowned. "Yes and no. I have a plan to *make* a plan. It will take years to come up with a comprehensive plan for this situation, and have engineers and politicians check it and approve it, then many more years to implement it. So," and here the mayor turned and looked directly at Mike, "my plan is to propose that this council formally hire Mike Danford and Josh Roberts to come up with an immediate evacuation plan. Quickly. Like right now. And then tell us how to implement it."

Mike and Josh looked up in shock. Mike had been curious as to why they'd been invited to this meeting, but had no idea they were the topic of discussion.

The first councilman who had spoken laughed out loud. "You want to hire a couple of punk kids to solve this problem?"

No one else in the room laughed, but Mike turned beet red in embarrassment. He knew that the man – his name was Vogel – had never liked him. Even so, his remark seemed overly cruel.

"I believe Mike and Josh have proven themselves capable

many times,” the mayor answered. “We wouldn’t even be sitting here if they hadn’t stopped the Kurovians. Twice. These young men have saved our town, they’ve saved our citizens, they may well have saved our country. Have you ever done that, Mr. Vogel?”

Now it was Vogel who turned beet red, but in his case it was anger. “I don’t have to prove myself!” he shouted. “I’m an elected official of this town, and I don’t have to have some medal to know that this problem will take experienced engineers and scientists to solve. Not a couple teen-age boys still in high school!”

The debate continued for another hour. Mike slid further and further down in his seat, wishing he could be anywhere else as everyone talked about him. Finally one of the other councilwomen asked Mike a direct question. “Mike, I’d like to hear this from you and Josh. Do you think you can pull this off?”

Mike stood slowly to his feet to give himself a moment to think. “This is the first either of us have heard of this problem, so we haven’t even had time to talk. I don’t think anyone can promise to solve a problem like this overnight,” he said. “It’s very complicated, and very serious. The question is,” he paused to think again. “The question is, how can we evacuate every single person in Seacrest in less than twenty minutes. The answer is, I don’t know. I don’t even know if it’s possible. But Josh and I,” he looked at his friend and Josh nodded, “are willing to put our brains to work on it, and see if we can answer that question.”

A murmur spread across the room as most everyone made a quiet comment to their neighbor. Then Vogel jumped up and shouted, “Oh for Pete’s sake! This is ridiculous! The answer is right there in front of us.” He pointed at a large map of Seacrest on the wall. “We tell everyone that when they hear the tsunami siren, they jump in their cars and head up Seacrest Way to the highway. That’s gotta be high enough.”

Some of the murmurs in the room sounded like they agreed with Vogel, but Captain Washington stood and they all quieted. “We looked at that scenario many years ago, and came to the conclusion that it’s the worst possible idea. Seacrest Way is long and steep and full of sharp curves. It would be an instant traffic jam, and take hours to evacuate the whole town that way.”

There was a lot more debate, with Mike and Josh sitting quietly, and then the proposal was put to a vote. One after another,

all the council persons voted “Yes” until it came to Mr. Vogel, who shouted a very loud, “No!” and slammed his fist on the table.

But the motion passed and everyone else cheered. The mayor turned to Mike and Josh and said, “Okay, guys, the ball’s in your court.”

Mike sighed and turned to Josh. “I’m not sure we actually want this ball,” he said.

“Yeah, well, we’d better hit this one out of the park if we want to get a good grade out of Vogel next year.”

Mike laughed. “It’s not so fun to hear your future math teacher call you a punk kid, is it.”

They turned to look at the councilman as he sat at the table, furiously typing on his phone.

Mike and Josh talked with the mayor and two of the councilpersons for several minutes, then Police Chief McNalley walked up to them. “Boys, I just gotta warn you, Mr. Vogel probably isn’t the only opposition you’re going to face on this project.”

“Why is that?” Josh asked. “All we’re doing is trying to help everyone in Seacrest. Why would anyone be against that?”

“Not everyone will see this as helping,” the chief answered. “Some, like Mr. Vogel, will see it as the government trying to tell them what to do.”

Mike stared in confusion. “How can that be? They don’t have to evacuate if they don’t want to, right?”

The chief shrugged. “Of course not. Everyone has the right to be stupid, even if it kills them. But somehow they think if *they* don’t want the help, no one else should get it either.”

Mike shook his head. “Amazing,” he said.

“Well, I just want you to be aware,” the chief said, “and don’t hesitate to call if you need my help. I’ll be watching out for you.”

Next the boys talked to Captain Washington to find out what had already been done about tsunami evacuation. “Not much,” he said. “Every time we come up with a plan, some group or other shoots it down. Usually because it will cost them money.”

Once they were sure they understood their “assignment,” Mike and Josh headed home in Josh’s Mustang. School had just let out for the summer and the air was warm. They drove on a street half-way up the hill between Admiralty Sound on their left and the

rock cliff a half mile away to their right. The lights of Seacrest glowed in the darkness, but there was no moon so much of the city was hidden. Mike sent some texts as Josh drove.

“Do you think we can really do this?” Josh asked.

Mike pulled a couple Jolly Ranchers out of his pocket and handed one to Josh. “I dunno,” he said, looking across the houses that covered the hill. “There are a lot of lives out here, and it feels like they’re all in our hands, so I guess we’d better try.”

They turned a corner onto Mike’s street and Josh let out a low, “Uh oh.”

Mike looked where he was looking. Three cars had just pulled up in front of Mike’s house, blocking the street, headlights facing the house. A dozen people jumped out of the cars, some of them with baseball bats. When they saw the Mustang, they all started shouting and waving their fists and weapons at Mike and Josh.