

The Submarine

Jed brushed the dirt off the carton, He'd been resisting the urge to eat anything all day. He wasn't sure how long it had been, but food supplies were becoming more difficult to find in the local abandoned homes and stores. Prying the crate open with his knife, he sifted through the expired cans of soup and spam - he hated spam in general, but when it was three years old and beyond its expiry date..he really hated it.

As he looked closer at the can's expiration date, Jed began to wonder "how long it had been exactly?" The Bomb had dropped years ago (he wasn't sure how many) and the state had been shut off and quarantined from the rest of the world for fear of spreading possible radiation poisoning.

He'd heard various rumours, some bad, some good, but nothing concrete. Tales of help stations, where you can be processed and nominated for extraction. But he hadn't a clue where they were - and even if they did exist, he wasn't fond of the idea of wandering around in hope of stumbling across one. No, he was safe here in the shipwrecked submarine - washed up on the edge of town near what used to be a popular beach.

Now the beach was just a memory of what it once was, fragments of happier times littered the rooms of the Sub. Jed had collected them in his travels to town and walks along the beach, Sunglasses, children's toys - even a broken wristwatch. Unfortunately the watch could no longer tell the time, but Jed kept it anyway - it brought him a strange sense of comfort, almost like an umbilical cord to his connection with humanity. He hadn't seen or spoken to a person in what must have been a year, and his previous interactions were not positive ones, usually ending in conflict and fighting over rations etc.

"Better to stay safe here in the sub" Jed thought. People are only out for themselves, I have to stay vigilant, stay safe. Then one day maybe (when I have enough supplies, protection) I'll hear some more concrete intel on those help stations - and head out on that trip. IF they exist at all. Jed opened the can of spam and bit down on the soured meat, He quivered and instantly repulsed at the taste of it - the sting hitting the back of his throat with a musky, acidic taste.

"Ughh, god..I can't live on this for the foreseeable future" Jed thought, as he gagged on the greasy meat. It might be time to make a trip into town, gather supplies - anything..anything but this. If I do run into any hostels, I'll offer them some of my spam, that should be enough to repel them. Jed laughed to himself, It was strange to think a shred of his humour had survived in a place like this.

As Jed packed his supplies and headed out onto the beach, he hesitated as he left the sanctity of the submarine. He didn't like to leave the Sub, it had come to feel like a warm security blanket in this harsh and dangerous world. Nevertheless he had prepared as best as he could and was ready for the path ahead.

Later that day, Jed was on his way back from the town. He had spent all day rummaging through abandoned buildings looking for substance and had come across some uncooked

rice (which would go nicely with the soup back at the sub) as he crossed the threshold back to the beach, he made his start back to the submarine. Back to safety. Back home.

As Jed rounded the corner to the edge of the beach, he spotted the silhouette of the submarine up on the bank. A warm feeling filled his chest as he embarked on the final stretch of his trip. As he started to make his way down the beach, something caught his eye. Was it the wind blowing a shadow across the ground? Some useless debris scattered across the sand? Before he could ponder it further Jed heard a sudden sound come from the Submarine. "Someone is in there," Jed thought. "I should have never left...stupid thing to do, I know better than this"

Jed crouched low to the ground and began to crawl towards the side of the sub. Keeping out of view, Jed made his way to a rusted hole underneath the backside of the massive submarine. "Maybe I can get the jump on them" thought Jed "nobody knows this sub better than me, and I'm sure as hell not giving it up to any stranger".

As Jed rounded the corner of the submarine's steps and upper walkways, he spotted the figure downstairs in the main entrance of the submarine. The figure was going through Jed's carton of spam cans that he had abandoned this morning when he left on his quest. Jed couldn't make out the figure - It was humanoid, but he couldn't determine what the figure looked like, A large coat covered the body of the figure, with a mask and goggles obscuring any clues to the intruders identity, gender or age.

A wave of panic and paranoia hits Jed "what if this person is part of a group? What if they bring back more people? Will they take the sub? My home? They can't stay here!! This is my home!! Mine!!"

Before he realised what he was doing, Jed jumped down from the rail and, swinging a lead pipe he had stowed away in the sub, cracked the figure in the back of the skull.

The sickening thud of metal colliding with bone resonated through the hull of the submarine and for a moment time seemed to stand still as jed looked down at the motionless figure, face down on the ground in front of him.

Jed, his hands shaking - dropped the pipe on the ground. He wasn't a violent person and the sight of the motionless body along with the trickle of blood that began to leak from the head of the figure disturbed him greatly. He tried to justify his actions to himself "I can't take chances, I can't be weak, this is the way things are now" no matter how many times he repeated it to himself, it didn't seem to justify his actions or put his mind at ease.

Slowly, Jed turned the figure over and pulled the mask and goggles up from the slain stranger. A young girl maybe, sixteen years old. Jed's stomach turned over on itself and he began sobbing intensely. "This was it, there's no going back" he thought to himself. "What Have I become?"

Jed heard what sounded like a scream and raised his head. Was it coming from the girl? "Is she still alive?" Jed thought in a moment of hope..no, he turned to the girl. No breathing, her lifeless face beginning to haunt him. Another sound, was it human? It had been so long since Jed had heard another human voice, he wasn't sure.

Then, his answer. As Jed scanned the horizon of the beach he made out more figures, all dressed like the girl and heading towards him. "Oh no, Are they out looking for her?" Before he could make a move, the figures (now closer) locked eyes with Jed. He froze still, just him, the girl motionless in front of him and the submarine.

The End