

## **Cave Women on Mars vs. The Fiend from Beyond Space**

**By Scott Heitkam**

### **Chapter 1**

I am being hunted.

I realized that fact when I heard those twigs behind me crack. There usually is nothing out in this area of the forest heavy enough to crack anything.

Unless it's the Liak...

Once the Zil began allowing their males to help hunt and gather food, the Liak have spent more and more time and effort hunting them down, either killing them or taking them back as slaves for their mines. Some of the more cynical of the Zil have commented that it was all because of my father.

I stop walking and casually look around, trying to make it look like I'm searching for some Zoltan berries. I notice some droppings to the east, but they look so old and dried up I can't imagine a beast has been around here for months. That means *my* predator must be Liak.

My father was always telling me tales of a distant planet that he was from. A reason why I was treated so poorly by some is that I am half-alien. No one who doesn't know my father's tale can figure that out though, as I look like every other male on the planet. My father tells me that I was born in the Earth year 1987. He spent most of my childhood trying to teach me and the Zil how to calculate days, months, and years. By his calculations, the current year is 2005. For the past 18 years, the Zil tribe has been changing at great speed. My mother and father have been teaching the tribe that if females allowed males to be more than pets, our tribe will grow and prosper into a great civilization. My father talked of amazing places on Earth called "cities," where millions of earthlings, both male and female, lived and worked together to make life more comfortable for everyone.

I slowly start walking towards the north and start picking up speed and I go. I start darting to the left, run a bit, and then dart to the right. I know these woods like the back of my hand.

As my parents preached their gospel of equality, it formed a crack in the Zil tribe. There were many who were repulsed by the idea of hunting and working directly with males. Many tribe councils were convened and resulted in a large population of the tribe deciding they were better off going to the Liak. Ever since the defections there has always been great danger for the Zil tribe in these woods. For females that defected

know these woods well, and have showed most of the hiding places to the Liak. Any Zil, especially the males, are in great danger in these woods.

I stop again and look around. Silence. I think I'm safe again. It's still early morning; I can still see the stars faintly. I'll use them to navigate home. I start walking back to the tribe when suddenly \*Twack!\* an arrow hits the ground next to me.

## **Chapter 2**

"A Zil male!" shouts a smoky female voice from somewhere close in the forest. "You can run all you want, but your blonde hair sticks out like a bullseye in these woods. With all the things your tribe is teaching you males, you'd think camouflage would at least be on the list."

I look up I the trees and notice a familiar, smiling face.

I smile back. "Torgana, you should thank Goddess I didn't have my slingshot with me. All I would have seen was a Liak, I wouldn't have seen you."

Torgana drops down to the ground. She pulls an arrow out of her quiver, puts it in her bow, and levels the loaded weapon at my head.

"I think Goddess smiled upon you this day by having you *forget* your slingshot." She lifts her left eyebrow and smirks.

"Yeah." I say, using my hand to lower her bow down, pointing it to the ground. "She must have been grinning ear to ear."

Torgana is a Liak. She and I met when I was out hunting over a year ago. I was the first Zil male she had ever seen. She told me that the stories told to her about the males of the Zil tribe was that of disloyalty and stupidity. She asked why I was not begging to be brought back a slave as she had been told Zil males did.

I had told her that I too had heard many terrible things about the Liak tribe. She looked like what I expected: Black long hair, black hunting outfit, and black boots. But I had been told by many from the Zil tribe that the warriors from the Liak tribe were bloodthirsty barbarians, who would as soon kill you than to look at you. Curiosity was never in their description.

"I was actually, before you rudely interrupted me," I coyly say, "out looking for some food for us. I was hoping we could both sneak away from home soon and have another meal together."

Torgana smiles a genuine smile this time. She is the most beautiful female I have ever seen.

“So are we going to do this until we are caught? I may get a severe whipping, but they would kill you where you stand.” Her smile faded into a serious look.

Torgana and I had been meeting deep in the woods, away from both tribes, for several months now. We would leave messages and meeting places carved on trees and spend as long as we could together. I had taught her all about the idea of “love” that my mother and father described to the others in our tribe. Ever since the defection, the remaining females have allowed themselves to “fall in love”, as my father described it, with some of the males in the tribe. After many secret visits in the woods with Torgana, we both realized that we were “in love” with each other.

“My father told once that ‘love’ is the greatest force of all.” I say to Torgana, “He said that when you feel love for a woman- er- a female, that you should not let anything stand in the way of that love.”

“But what good is love if the one I love is dead?” asked Torgana. She starts to get tears in her eyes, “I am what you have taught me is “in love” with you Christopher. I want to be with you when I’m not around you.”

“And I you, Torgana.” I say.

Torgana drops her bow and she and I embrace. She and I share a long passionate kiss.

“Oh, what an amusing scene to stumble upon...”

I hear a sinister female voice right next to us.

### **Chapter 3**

A Liak warrior appears from behind a nearby tree. She has her bow at her side with an arrow loaded, but makes no attempt to raise it to a threatening position.

“Snara!” cries Torgana when she sees her fellow tribeswoman. Torgana pushes away from me and she and I face Snara, I can’t think of what to do next. I wish I had brought my slingshot.

“Torgana...and a Zil male! We all knew you were up to no good, disappearing and reappearing with no food or slaves. A true warrior is never that sloppy.” A cruel smile spreads across Snara’s face and she crosses her arms. Torgana has told me about this

warrior many times. How fearful she is of her. How that, if Snara wanted, she could defeat the Liak chieftain herself and take over, but for reasons only know to Snara, she has never tried.

“Snara why do you not draw your bow?” asked Torgana, “You could have killed Christoph--this male before we even took notice!” Torgana says this more perplexed than worried. I’ll chalk that up to being a born warrior. Wishful thinking?

“Oh you named him too!” said Snara mockingly. “Yes, indeed, I could have dropped him where he stood many moments ago. Alas, I want to save that pleasure for my subordinate.”

Both the Zil and the Liak tend to work in pairs, a harden warrior training a younger more inexperienced warrior in both hunting and war. Snara speaks aloud to the forest.

“Subordinate! Kill the male!”

I brace myself for the inevitable. After a few moments, with my eyes shut tight and Torgana gripping my right wrist, perhaps out of fear, I hear another shout.

“Subordinate! Kill the male! Come out of the woods and kill him!” Snara has started sounding irritated. I open my eyes to see Snara looking around the woods. I look at Torgana and make a motion with my head trying to say “Let’s run!”

Torgana looks at my with the saddest look I’ve ever seen and shook her head “no”, as if there was no use.

“Subordinate!” Snara is fuming with rage. “ARGH! I will not be ignored. If she will not listen I will kill you myself!”

Snara lifts her bow up and pulls back the arrow ready to be released right at me.

“Kill....the.....Male....”

A low female voice is heard coming from behind me and Torgana.

“Subordinate! Where in Goddess’ name were you?!” Screams Snara.

“Kill...the...Male...”

Torgana and I turn around and see another Liak warrior. She looks terrible. She is pale and sweating like a waterfall. She is lumbering towards me very slowly. I start backing away from her.

“No you don’t male!” Snara says. I turn back and she has her bow still pointed at me.

“Kill...the...Male...”

“Snara, what is wrong with her?” asked Torgana.

“We were separated in the woods. She was fine the last time we were together.” Snara starts to sound perplexed, but then regains her anger. “It’s no matter! As long as she kills the male, she will be taken care of back at the village.”

Snara’s subordinate grabs my head and just stares at me.

“Kill...the...male...”

“NO!” Torgana throws her arm up between the strange warrior and me, knocking her arms up and freeing my head. Torgana dives on me and throws me to the ground as an arrow sails past us and hits the subordinate. It makes a \*Thunk\* sound, like hitting a tree, and the arrow ricochets away.

Torgana and I look up from the ground to see the warrior change from a Liak warrior female into a strange looking monster with shiny round eyes and a soft brain-like head. It has a large monstrosity of a mouth but has a small hole close to where the nose is.

As we are staring, too shocked to stand, we see arrow after arrow flying and ricocheting off of it as it starts reaching out for us.

#### **Chapter 4**

The monster seems to shrug off all the arrows that Snara is shooting at it. It picks up Torgana and tosses her aside. The monster grabs my head and lifts me up by it. I feel hypnotized by its sparkling eyes when something shoots out of its head. I start feeling light-headed immediately. I start recalling a life-time of hunger and feeding. I recall going from planet to planet around the universe just eating and eating, unable to satisfy an insatiable hunger. When a planet is void of humanoid life, I would go to the next. I must keep eating and eating. I’m losing consciousness. Suddenly, I hear a loud \*clunk\* and an inhuman scream and I’m jarred back to reality.

“Run!” Torgana yells. She is standing behind the fallen monster. We start running, passing by Snara with a now empty quiver. She turns to look at us run and looks back to the monster. He is getting up from the ground and starts lumbering towards her.

“You may not slay this warrior today!” yells Snara to the monster and starts running in the same direction as Torgana and I. We three start racing to the safety of a Zil hunting tower build deep in the center of the woods. I race up the ladder followed by Torgana, and finally Snara.

As Snara reached the top, Torgana shoves her to the floor of the tower, putting a boot on her stomach and holding an arrow down on her throat.

“A brilliant move by a skilled warrior,” Snara says with a hint of desperation. “I will admit I have underestimated you, Torgana.”

“What evil did you wrought upon us?” asked Torgana, her own desperation and fear starting to show.

“I have done nothing! I have no idea where that monster came from. For all I know it was a Zil creation!” Snara got a look of realization on her face, “It must have killed my subordinate and wore her skin to get into our village undetected and destroy us all! This is a Zil trick!”

“Quiet you two!” I say. Snara gives a look of surprise of such insolence coming from a male. “When that monster had a hold of me, I saw things. Things from beyond space. This monster is not of this world. He’s an unstoppable eating machine that goes from planet to planet eating all humanoid life until the planet lays barren.”

“How do you know this, Christopher?” asked Torgana, Snara giving a quick sneer at the sound of a male name.

“I was in its head when it was holding me.” I tell them, “but it was in my head too. It was like, for a moment, we were sharing the same mind. I saw many battles on many planets, but nothing could kill it. The only way to stop it is to trap it somewhere where there is no food, and no way off the planet.”

“How do we do that?! How do we get it off our planet? There was only one space ship that ever landed on this planet, and that was 18 years ago.” Torgana says.

“No,” I say. “My father’s ship may be gone, but this alien had to get on the planet somehow too. I was able to see in that monster’s mind where his ship is.”

“Okay, before we go any further, what should we do with...her?” Torgana asked, motioning her head to Snara.

“Torgana! ... Male... If I may make an honorable proposition.” Snara started. “This monster killed my subordinate and donned her skin. It has the potential to destroy every warrior in our village.” Snara looks down at the arrow at her neck, up at Torgana, and over to me. “I propose a truce. We three must work together to make sure that this monster does not destroy us all.”

Torgana looks over and me I say, “What choice do we have?”

Torgana releases Snara from under her boot and arrow. Snara quickly stands up and looks at me.

“I am a Liak warrior until my honorable death,” says Snara, “but this is not about Zil and Liak anymore. This is about the fate of the planet. What is the plan?”

I think for a second and say “My father is the only person I know who would know anything about space ships. If I could get back to the village without the monster following me, I could take him to the ship, and he could use the “com-pew-ter” to send the alien to a dead planet far away.” I think a little more. “The only other problem is luring the monster back to its ship.”

“It seems very focused on its prey,” said Torgana. “Maybe Snara and I can keep it distracted until you get your father, then we can lure it to the ship.”

“That monster killed my subordinate, I demand that I be the one to subdue it once we get to the ship” says Snara.

Torgana turns to me with a concerned look on her face. “Christopher, have you noticed something?”

“What do you mean?” I ask.

“Well, we’ve been up on this tower for a while now and we haven’t seen that monster coming after us.” Torgana looks around the forest. “We didn’t run far...you would think we’d see it heading this way.”

I start feeling a sense of panic and dread come over me as I realized something I should have realized moments sooner.

“Torgana...If we were sharing minds and I could see all of his memories...” I start saying.

“...he could see all of yours...including the location of your Zil village.” Torgana finishes

I look at both female warriors and dart to the ladder and race down.

“We’ve got to get to the Zil village before that monster does! We got to get to my father! He’s the only one who can save the world!”

## **Chapter 5**

I get to the edge of the village. I see my house. Movement inside. My parents are home. I start running faster.

“Wait!” I hear from behind me. I stop.

I look back and see the two Liak warriors stopping short at the edge of the village.

“There is no way we can enter the village.” Snara states, “You’re wild packs of bloodthirsty dogs will tear us apart!”

Torgana looks concerned. “Bloodthirsty dogs?”

I don’t have time to debunk the horror stories that have been taught about the Zil village to these warriors, but I do know that their presence in the village will overshadow the urgency of what has to be done.

“Okay,” I say, “you two stay here and wait for me. I will bring my father out as soon as I can.”

I start running again to my house and push on the door. It’s locked.

“Father! Father!” I yell to the door, “I need your help right now!”

I hear shuffling inside and the door unlocks and opens. My father standing at the door.

“Son, I....I’m sorry. I didn’t know I locked the door.” Father looks very worried.

“Son...your mom is very sick. She just came back from the woods and has been stricken with some kind of flu bug or something.”

A familiar feeling of dread starts coming over me again. I look at my father. “Sick?”

“Yes.” He says, “She’s sweating bullets, and not making much sense. Almost catatonic. She’s lying down in the bedroom.”

I quickly push my father out of the way and make my way to my parent’s bedroom. My mother is lying with her eyes closed. She’s is so drenched in sweat it almost looks like she was just in a lake.

“How long was she like this?” I ask my father, just entering the room. As I finished my sentence my mother’s eyes opened.

“Only for about 20 minutes or so.” My father says, not noticing her opened eyes.

My mother turns her head and looks at me. Her eyes begin to sparkle and she starts getting up out of the bed.

“Eina!” cries my father, “Honey, you better lay back down you’re going to hurt yourself!”

My mother starts coming towards me with her arms outstretched. A large white flash covers her entire body and she turns into the monster.

“What the hell?!” my father yells.

He prepares to fight the monster when I stop him.

“No, Father!” I say, “I don’t have time to explain but I have a plan to fight this monster. You just have trust me and do what I say.”

My father hesitated a second and then says, “Okay.”

I tell my father to follow me out of the house. We run towards the woods where Torgana and Snara are waiting.

“Christopher, what is that thing? What happened to your mother?!” My dad is looking at me and looking at the thing following close behind.

“I’m really sorry father, but I can’t explain it right now.” I say, “We have very little time before that monster destroys us all.”

We make it where Torgana and Snara are waiting. My father stops dead in his track and raises his hands to prepare for a fight.

“No.” I say looking at him in eyes. “These are friends.” Snara gets a look of confusion at the word and takes a quick moment to look at me.

“Follow me! All of you!” I cry as we all race through the forest. After several minutes I find the large clearing which sits a space ship the size of two Zil houses.

“Oh my God!” My father says as he sees the space ship.

It looks like the drawings of a rocket that my father had drawn when I was a kid to show me what a space ship looked like.

“Father,” I said, “I need you to go into this space ship and lock the com-pew-ter system onto a dead planet far away from anything living.”

Father pulls open a hatch on the space ship and climbs in.

I look back into the woods and see the monster coming towards us.

“Torgana, Snara. Let’s get into the space ship too. We have to lure it away from my father and subdue it so it can’t get off the ship before it takes off.” I nod at the warriors

and they nod back. We enter the space ship through the hatch just as the monster exited the woods toward the space ship.

## **Chapter 6**

I shut the door to the navigation control area as soon as my father entered it. Our goal now is to lure the monster to the other side of the ship and knock him out.

The monster entered the ship shortly after we did and started heading towards our end of the ship.

“It’s like he is focusing just on you.” Torgana says.

“He must not like it when his prey gets away.” I say.

Snara looks down at her boots and up again. “In a different time and place I would have admired his warrior spirit. But I have no admiration for this evil thing.”

Snara and Torgana press their backs against the walls of the ship as I stand in the middle of the hallway. The monster sees me and slowly comes towards me with its arms outstretched.

It comes closer and closer and I start becoming enamored with its sparkling eyes again. It’s standing right in front of me now. I’m starting to feel light headed again as its hands start reaching for my head.

\*Thunk\*

\*Bam\*

\*Smack\*

The warriors start their attacks, aiming all their attention to his head. He immediately starts to crumple to the floor. The warriors start kicking his head. Torgana pulls out her last arrow from her quiver and is about ready to stab it in the monsters head.

“Wait!” I say.

I grab the arrow from Torgana and toss it to Snara.

She looks at the arrow and up at me. “Thank you, Male.”

Snara slams the arrow down into the head of the monster. It stops moving.

“Christopher, after all we have done to it, how can it not die?” asks Torgana.

“I don’t know.” I say, “All I know is that it will recover from this soon so we need to make sure my father has finished with the computer.”

My father’s voice comes over a loudspeaker in the hallway.

“Okay. This ship is heading for a crash landing on a lifeless rogue planet in the Alpha Centauri system. I have the coordinates lock. There’s no way the monster can change the course. I can’t even change it now that it’s lock.

Head on out ASAP. I’ll be out in a minute.”

Torgana, Snara, and I walk to the hatch and out of the ship.

Torgana and I embrace and kiss. We’re both relieved that this is all almost over.

Snara look towards us with a face of softened confusion.

“Snara, I beg you, please don’t kill Christopher.” Torgana pleads, “You must see now that males can be good. They can be warriors and leaders just like females. He and his father, two males, saved both our villages from destruction!”

Snara stares at both Torgana and me. “There would be no honor in killing this male who saved not only his people but ours. All this knowing that my initial plan was to destroy him. Truly there is no person on this planet, male or female, more honorable than him.”

A com-pew-ter voice comes from the ship. “\*Take off in 60 seconds\*”

My father walks out of the ship. He looks exhausted from all the work he did in the control room.

“Father! You did it!” I say. I run up to hug him. He is drenched in sweat.

“I...did...it...” my father says in a low voice.

“\*Take off in 45 seconds\*”

My father grabs my head and pushes me at arm’s length and I start feeling my head fill with more memories. I see a parade of heroes trying and failing to destroy this monster. I get jarred back to reality again falling to the ground.

“\*Take off in 10 seconds\*”

My vision is blurred I see a black form wrestling with the monster.

I see another blurry black form attack the monster and getting thrown away.

A blur of black rush towards the monster like a torpedo and shoves it into the ship with the black blur along with it. The door starts to close quickly.

“\*3, 2, 1 blast off\*” I hear the calm indifferent computer voice saying.

The ship’s engines start and the ship blasts into space.

I feel someone lift me up off the ground.

I shake the cobwebs from my head. “Torgana?”

I look up to see Snara looking sadly at me.

“Torgana sacrificed herself to save the world.” She looked up at the ship flying into space. “She will be remembered as a hero to my people.”

“My mother, my father, and now my love.” I cradle my head in my hands for a moment, and then look at Snara, “We must honor them by holding all life on this planet sacred. That’s what my father wanted to teach us. Not to destroy each other with petty fighting. That’s what I was starting to understand when I fell in love with Torgana.”

“You know, I’m starting to see that there is very little difference between the Zil and the Liak.” Snara puts her hand on my shoulder. “In fact, I see there is very little difference between males and females.

“I will go back to my village with this new knowledge. I am a very important warrior. People will listen. The road may not be an easy one but I think that you and I can usher in a new way of life on this planet. Free of fighting and oppression. Free for what you call “Love.”

I smile at the thought. It will be a long, difficult road, but like my father said: Love is the greatest force of all.

“Thank you, Snara.” I say as I turn to start walking back towards my village.

Snara calls back to me. “Thank you.....Christopher.”

**The End**