

# Chapter Sixteen

## A Stunning Discovery

Bonnie and I went back to the throne room. All that had been still was. None of the jungle people were released from being in suspended animation and the ones that were frozen were still frozen. We did not see any more skeleton warriors either which was somewhat a concern. Where did they go? I mean, if they served the Jungle Master and the Jungle Master had been defeated, they surely would have been released from his grip? No, I did not think that was the case. They had decided to hide and flee which was all good I said to myself unless they decided to flee and attack the village. The village I again said to myself. Fear again crept up into my mind until Bonnie pulled out of her pouch a sandwich she had made and broke it into two pieces. We continued to walk until we got the throne room a short time later.

“Look Alex,” Bonnie said. “I’m sorry for back there.”

“Sorry for what?” I asked.

“For getting terrified of snakes,” Bonnie said.

“Bonnie, it’s no sweat. We’re all scared of something. Remember we’re a team and you helped me when I was terrified of those bees and wasps,” I said.

“Yeah,” Bonnie said as she remembered the duel. “I guess I did.”

“Not only that,” I added. “You were the one to beat the Jungle Master. Not me. You.”

“Thanks,” Bonnie happily said. “You do help make me feel better.”

“Bonnie, we’re a team. You have been more of a help than you realize,” I said. “You do need to learn to be a little more confident. Just be yourself. Don’t try to be someone you’re not to try to impress me and others. Honestly, I am already impressed with you.”

“You are,” Bonnie asked.

“You bet,” I replied. “I’m impressed because you overcame your fear. Despite how you felt about the snakes you still fought them and fought the Jungle Master.”

“Thanks,” Bonnie said, as she nearly fell again.

“Hey,” I said as I looked at the marks on her arm and neck that were getting bigger. “Are you sure you are alright? I mean, that does not look good.”

“Ahhh,” Bonnie shouted as we sat down on the floor. “I thought the medicine would take care of it.”

“Here let me help you,” I said as I grabbed the pouch off her hip and began sprinkling some of it on her arm and neck. I sprinkled it onto the worst part of the wounds. Although it appeared to have some effect on the wounds temporary I began to suspect it would not last. Whatever the Jungle Master had doused with her was more powerful than the medicine I was putting on her.

“Thank you again,” Bonnie said as she took the pouch back.

“Always for a friend,” I said.

“So what now?” Bonnie said.

“Now we got to figure out what these rings are for. I meant they have to be something,” I said.

“Look it this way Alex. The rings represented a bond. A bond between a man, Jarrick and a woman, Kaarina,” Bonnie said.

“And two thrones,” I said before turning back to Bonnie. “Last time I looked at the thrones I saw a coin.”

“A coin?” Bonnie asked.

“Yeah,” I said as I pulled the coin out of my pouch that I had. The coin was made of silver and on one side of the coin I saw a man or figure that I knew represented the people of the jungle. The Jungle Master I said. But not the doppelganger that we had fought. No, the man on the coin was the true Master of the Jungle. On the opposite side of the coin I saw was the image of a young beautiful woman. The woman I had no doubt was the Queen Mother. The ruler of the villages. This coin like the rings I had no doubt represented the union between the man and woman as well as the two peoples. But what do with them I asked myself? I knew there was a reason we found the coin and rings but I was stumped as to what that reason was.

“Hey,” Bonnie said. “Did you not say that the Jungle Master and the Queen Mother stood here and exchanged the rings?”

“Yeah,” I said as Bonnie now stood beside me. “You don’t think we need to do that ceremony.”

“And get married,” Bonnie said. “Alex, we’re too young for that even as much as we may want to and besides there is no one around to perform the ceremony even if we were going to get married.”

“Still,” I said quietly to myself. “I wonder.”

“Let me see the ring with the emerald. That was the one you said the Queen Mother gave the Jungle Master,” Bonnie said.

“Yeah, it is. Still, she was the Queen Mother. He was the Jungle Master. There is no hint of royalty in that title. When we talked with the people, they said she had married the King and that together they gave birth to Princess,” I said.

“Think about it Alex. When the Queen Mother, who was widely recognized as ruler of her people married him did he not become King,” Bonnie asked.

“It does not always happen like that, but I suppose it is possible he could have become King at that point. I mean he still controlled the jungle people so he too was king in that regard,” I said. “But if that is the case the rings can only be worn by those with royal blood in them and last I checked neither of us had that in us.”

“How do you know Mr. White Knight?” Bonnie teased. “I mean we are learning new things and truths about ourselves we did not know before. I am finding out I am better with medicine than I knew and you Alex are kinder and even more courageous than I had thought of you before.”

“True,” I said. “We have learned a lot about each other than we did not know before. You would think after all the years of being friends we would not have any surprises.”

“And yet here we are. Shall we try?” Bonnie said as she began to hand the ring with the Emerald to me.

I sighed. Not because I did not care for Bonnie. I did. I sighed because I was getting frustrated at not having the answers or not knowing what to do. It pained me that as leader I just simply did not know what else to do. I took out the ring with the Ruby and held it out to her.

“May this ring symbolize our friendship and love for each other,” I said as I put the ring on her hand.

“And may this ring symbolize my friendship with you too Alex and the love I have. May your courage never be wavering,” Bonnie said as she put the ring onto my right hand.

As soon as Bonnie and I had put the rings on each other’s hands the temple began to shake. I had never felt such an earthquake in my life. Bonnie immediately began to fall and I quickly caught her before she could hit her head onto the ground. I held her as tightly as I could while the earthquake continued. Fortunately, it did not last but a few minutes.

“Are you okay?” I asked as we stood up.

“Yeah,” Bonnie said as she dusted herself off. “What happened?”

“I don’t know,” I said as I turned and saw a huge tunnel appear behind the thrones.

It was odd I said to myself. The tunnel had not been there before, and it appeared like the tunnel was going to take us down into the deeper portions of the temple. Parts of the temple that I knew that not very many people had ever ventured. It was so dark that no light, not even my flashlight that I was now pointing at it, could penetrate it. Worse than that it gave an eerie feeling and such coldness that I had not felt before was coming from it. True, the second floor was icy and frozen but the coldness that I could feel come from the tunnel was even colder than that and, I got a sense of dread and fear coming from it. I cannot even begin to accurately explain the sickening feeling I was getting in my stomach as I looked at the tunnel but deep down I was terrified.

“Are you okay?” Bonnie said. The warmth of her hand touching my face was more than enough for me to get back my courage that I knew was disappearing by the minute as I looked at the tunnel.

“I am,” I said. “I thought it would not work. Unless one of us were of royal blood.”

“That was just my guess,” Bonnie said. “But hey, with all we have found out who’s not to say that one of us is not of royal blood?”

I smiled and so did she. While she may have said those words in jest, the truth was she may be right. Going back to remembering the ceremony between the Queen Mother and the Jungle Mother we were certain the Queen Mother was royalty and though I suspected the Jungle Master was too I still needed proof to confirm it. Whether he was or wasn’t royalty was not a concern of mine now. The fact the ceremony worked and opened up a tunnel to the hidden

deeper portions of the temple even presented more questions that needed answered and that frightened me and plus as I was looking at Bonnie, even though she was not complaining at the moment, I could tell the marks she had on her were getting worse.

“That is one thing I like Bonnie,” I said happily. “Every day I learn something new.”

“It looks like we have been learning a lot. So now what Alex, our brave and courageous leader?” Bonnie playfully asked.

I wished I could be as playful as she was at the moment. In truth I was still terrified. Whatever was in that deep dark tunnel was beyond normal I knew. It appeared that it was draining all the courage and energy out of me. I tried to keep this hidden from Bonnie. I did not want to disappoint her. She after all looked up to me for courage and leadership and if I could not be brave and continue to lead the way then what good was I to her or to anyone else for that matter? Besides, we still needed to find our friend Kasey and I knew we would not unless we went into the deeper portions of temple.

“It looks like we go in. Are you ready?” I asked.

Bonnie nodded in agreement as we began to enter the deeper portion of the temple.