

Chapter Fourteen

The Second Floor

I had been wondering for a while of how we were going to get up to the upper floors. Neither Bonnie nor I saw any stairs anywhere until we went back to the room with the crypt and saw hidden stairs in the back of the room. Bonnie and I looked at each for a moment wondering the same thing why did we not see these stairs while we were in the crypt the first time? Perhaps I said to myself we did not look hard enough though I had thought we had done a pretty good job looking through the room. The tombs were mostly sealed minus the one that was opened after Bonnie tripped.

We walked to the back of the room and began walking up the stairs. Odd I said to myself was the fact that as went up the stairs it started to get significantly colder despite being in a temple where the temperature should have stayed pretty constant. A few minutes later we arrived on the second floor and Bonnie and I noticed that ice was starting to form on the back end of the columns.

“This places is getting odder and odder,” Bonnie said.

I thought about her words for a moment. It was indeed odd. I took my flashlight and looked down the corridor and saw that all the columns had the same appearances. Although I did not go into the first room quite yet I took a peek inside and saw that the room was nearly completely frozen. The floor was covered with ice as was the walls and everything else I saw.

“What is the matter?” Bonnie asked.

“Everything is frozen here,” I said.

“Frozen,” Bonnie said.

“I’m going to check it out,” I said.

“And I’m right behind you,” Bonnie added as we entered the room.

Although I already knew that the room was frozen by the quick glance I had got moments earlier I was still shocked when we entered. So was Bonnie. She perhaps was even more shocked than what I was. Neither of could muster any words for a few minutes as we took a glance at this room.

The room we were now in I saw was at one point a laboratory. What kind of laboratory was it you might ask? I am no expert but judging from its appearance-that it had many tables, containers, areas to do experimentations on I would have guessed this might have been a lab where the jungle people or villagers developed their medicines. I remembered talking with Baris and he once told me that in the temple that had been an area where the villagers and jungle people worked together to find cures to different diseases or toxins that had kept coming back so often. This appeared to be that lab. Bonnie and I continued to look around the lab for any more clues. Everything was going smoothly until I heard Bonnie scream a moment later.

“AIEEEE,” screeched Bonnie.

“What is it?”

I had asked that question before I turned and saw what Bonnie was looking at and finally, I understood why Bonnie was frightened. It was one of the jungle people frozen stiff. However, this jungle person did not look like the jungle people we had killed in the village. Those had faces that looked like skulls. This jungle person had a similar body that the ones we fought in the jungle, but he had a face that looked like ours. He was dark colored like the villagers and like the ones I had seen in the past. I was not sure how but I knew he was not very old either. He had the appearance of a young man to be no older than twenty.

Sadness fell onto me as I continued to look at the frozen jungle person. What could have surprised him and frozen him like this I asked myself. Seeing the frozen jungle person only brought out even more questions which frustrated me. I was only hoping to get closer to the resolution but as I was quickly finding out I was perhaps further from the truth than what we had been.

“What could have done this to him?” Bonnie asked.

I started to reply but as I looked up I saw the door leading to the next lab open up and as it did I saw two skeleton warriors enter. These skeleton warriors appeared to be the same size as the jungle warriors that we had fought in the jungle were. The only difference was that these warriors did not wear anything and were armed with only a small sword and shield.

“There they are,” one of the skeleton warriors shouted.

“The boss said to get them,” the second skeleton warrior added.

“Oh boy,” I said.

Bonnie was rather fortunate as she ducked just a second before the sword that the first skeleton warrior threw reached her. She had missed death by mere inches which did not please either of the skeleton warriors.

“Bonnie hide. I will take care of these,” I said as I took out my sword.

Bonnie wasted no time hiding underneath one of the lab tables as I began marching to the two skeleton warriors both of which appeared eager to fight me. Out of nowhere to my horror the first skeleton warrior snapped his fingers and caused another sword to appear in his hands. Now, this is a little difficult I said to myself. Difficult but not impossible. I again remembered the words Baris told me as we trained on a situation where I had to fight more than I person.

“Remember this young man. Being a warrior is not about being the strongest although being strong does help. Being a warrior means many things. For one it means that you can think on the fly. It also means that you are aware of your surroundings and you are aware of your opponent. There will come a time when you will be in a situation where you must face multiple opponents or opponents that are far stronger than yourself. In that case, the first thing and most important thing to remember is to keep them in front of you,” Baris began.

“In front of me,” I said.

“Yes, in front of you. Never let them get behind you. A warrior that lets an opponent sneak up on them is a dead warrior,” Baris said. “And if you do face a stronger opponent like the Jungle Master reflect their strength back on them. Often young Alex battles are not won because of strength. They are won because of courage, determination and being able to outwit your opponent.”

“Outwit them?” I asked.

“Yes Alex. I don’t want to say this to make you despair but in truth it does need to be said. You will not beat the Jungle Master by sheer force. You cannot fight him strength on strength and expect to win. The Jungle Master has all the powers of the jungle. He can heal himself at will and even resurrect his own people,” Baris said. “There are also no known toxins that can affect him. Given they are all plant based he is immune to them.”

“So how do we beat him?” I asked.

“With courage and determination,” Baris said.

The two skeletons slowly began approaching me. I had no doubt of their intentions but as Baris taught me I needed to be patient and let them make the first move. The first skeleton took his sword and swung it at me and as it did I quickly jumped out of the way. I quickly retaliated

by knocking its head off with a single stroke. The second skeleton saw what happened rushed at me and also took a swing. I used my shield this time to block his attack and to my surprise the skeleton got knocked back in the process and as it stepped back I also sliced its head off. The skeletons fell onto the ground and quickly began to disintegrate after this.

“Bonnie,” I shouted.

“Yeah. I am here,” Bonnie said as she stood up.

“We need to be more careful and proceed with caution. Remember your training as well. Something tells me that when we are attacked again, and we will be, there will be more than two,” I said.

“Understood,” Bonnie said.

Bonnie and I continued to look through the rooms on the second floor. Some of the rooms were labs like the first room but we also saw some of the rooms were recreational, some were for business and some had other uses for them. Honestly, it would take too long to describe in detail the hundreds of rooms we explored on this floor but know that many of them were similar in appearance and use. No matter what the rooms were used for there was one thing they all had in common. They were all frozen and they all had some frozen jungle people in them. Some of the rooms had more frozen jungle people in them than others but everyone of the rooms had at least one in them. Fortunately, despite my fears we did not run into any more skeleton warriors at least on this floor. When we got to the third floor, which we had yet to get to, that might be a different story altogether. Before going to the third floor Bonnie and I decided to take a short break as we knew we had been exploring for many hours and was getting exhausted.

“Well, Bonnie whatever we’re looking for it has to be on the third floor,” I said as we sat down for a moment. Out of my pouch I took out a small sandwich I had made for the journey. I broke it in two pieces and gave her one of them.

“Thanks,” Bonnie said.

“You still have that ring,” I asked.

“Sure,” Bonnie said as she handed me the ring.

I looked at it. The ring was indeed a key I said to myself. But a key to what? Bonnie was correct when she said there were so many things that we did not understand though I was certainly trying my best to piece things together. The frozen jungle people, the skeletal warriors, the skeleton jungle looking people, the Jungle Master, the villagers were all variables but to what I asked myself. There was no apparent connection except for the fact that the problems were somehow connected to the temple we were exploring. We had not yet explored all of the temple but I began to feel though we were not ever going to get the answers we sought. Still, I did my best to bury my doubts as I began to think about the third floor. Yes, the third floor I said to myself. Whatever answers that we did not have would surely be up there. There was no where else they could be. The temple could not grow in size and from what I could tell there were no other hidden passages. Bonnie and I ate our small lunch as I continued to ponder these questions and got us ready to explore the third floor.