

*Chapter 3*  
*“The Doctor”*



“Run,” Professor Sarantos allowed his voice to carry. No matter what form of creature could be within hearing distance, the words would be forceful and commanding. Unfortunately, the sound echoed weirdly off the cave walls, bouncing around until it moved down every cavern passageway, alerting both men and dinosaurs alike that dinner was available.

Why did he do that? What was he thinking? He didn't have to bellow because Charlie and Gorilla were outrunning him with ease. They were younger.

The natives were fast too. Even though he and the students had a head start, the naked warriors with colorful paint scattered all over their bodies with spiky spears in their hands were in hot pursuit.

“I smell fresh air,” Gorilla raised his voice and took off down one of the less lit and tinier openings he could have found. He soon disappeared somewhere into its blackness.

Holy crap! That kid was mad and goofier than anyone he'd ever met. He had no time to urge him to stop. The kid was now unfortunately on his own. Charlie turned around, motioning for the Professor to hurry. She then fell back into the fickle fate that had already claimed the kid.

He eventually caught up and peered down the crevasse. It was only big enough for one person. This did not bode well, but he too smelled the fresh air. So in he went. Life is about accidents.

The walls were slimy, somehow helping to push him along. As crazy as it seemed, he pulled out a vial and scoop up some moss. It surely had tales to tell, maybe even of how old it was, and it could probably also be evidence when he returned home.

The damp darkness brought a sadness out in him he thought he was past. He remembered the last days of her and Marley. It had been a blur and happened so fast. He couldn't help her see how much she meant to him, but she wasn't the

adventurous type. She was a classy dame, but he needed something different, a woman more like the youthful Charlie.

He chocked a little. It was too late. She was not coming back and none of it mattered anymore. He would have to appreciate the good memories, because that's all he had.

“Professor?”

Charlie was calling him, and his mind kicked into overdrive. These kids needed him and here he was daydreaming about something else.

Her voice wasn't urgent, but more of a question to see if he was still there, still with them.

“Yeah. Charlie, you okay?”

“Shucks Professor, everything's jake. Just seeing if you're catching up.”

“Where's Gorilla?”



“Oh, he’s outside waiting for us. It’s amazing Professor, like another world inside this world. Flowers everywhere, and waterfalls.”

He didn't understand that; it made little sense. The time periods were almost on top of each other, unless they got everything wrong. Research was routinely difficult, but he always believed science was accurate.

Charlie was in front of him and grabbed his wrist, pulling him forward. He could smell water and hear it rushing to crash down on the unsuspecting rocks below.

Light hit his eyes, and he stepped out into a field of exotic flowers blooming with intense color and fragrance. Charlie had been right. Waterfalls of burning turquoise color fell all around the landscape, in at least four different levels.

There were ferns as tall as he was, palm trees, coconut trees, and some strange-looking fruit trees that filled his eyes as far as he could see.

“What the hell?”

“I know, Doc. I don't think all the scientists in the world knew their onions very well. If they had, we would have expected this at some point. I wonder what the Babe would say, hey Doc?”

The Professor walked forward slowly, inhaling the flowers and taking in exactly what he was seeing, but he couldn't get it to click in his head.

Charlie said, “Hey, Professor, do you think we've crossed over into another time frame?”

“I honestly don't know, Charlie,” the Professor said.

But their answer came quick enough when the ground shook and trees dropped off in the distance.

“Oh, boy, Doc. Even if we ended up somewhere else, we didn’t go far enough. How are we supposed to find the gems?”



“I’m thinking under the waterfalls. If it were me and I know it wasn’t, I’d place them under the waterfalls. Did you notice the crevasse we squeezed into had markings?”

Charlie didn’t believe her ears. “What’s that you said, Professor?”

“They marked the cave like someone needed to remember where it was at, and I don’t think the cannibals would do that.”

“Probably not, because we would’ve already met our doom,” said Gorilla.

“Stop it, Gorilla. I could go for some noodle juice about now,” said Charlie.

Gorilla laughed and waved his hand in her direction. “Oh, you’re just silly and English. I think all you Brits do is want your noodle juice time. Don’t you ever drink coffee?”

“Silly little boy,” replied Charlie back at him.

“What’s that mean?”

“Just that, you don’t understand the calling of a great cup of tea. It relaxes me and helps me think. Neither of which you are capable of doing!”

The Professor was looking around but then turned towards the two arguing students. “If you two don’t stop this bickering, I’m leaving you here. Now lets start with the nearest waterfall and move our way around.”

Gorilla said, “Fine Professor, lead on, but do you honestly think you will walk under the waterfall and there they will be, one, two, three, little gems waiting there for us to find.”

“What thoughts do you have, apprentice? I hear nothing out of you except jabbering like the monkey’s in the trees. Are you coming or what?”



“Bushwa, don’t be a bimbo, Doc. I just think it’s highly improbable, that’s all.”

The Professor started moving through the tall ferns, carefully observing anything in his field of vision.

“If I were you two kids, I’d get out a weapon of sorts, anything could jump out at us.”

“Smart thinking, thanks, Professor,” said Charlie.



Professor Sarantos pulled out his gun. Charlie was behind him with a kitchen knife she'd brought along to cut fruit, and Gorilla had a vintage knife with a long leather-bound handle.

Even though the distance didn't seem too great when looking at the closest waterfall to the cave entrance, it was.

Cutting through the brush, leaves and watching out for unknown dangers made the journey an extended un-vacation.

The smells were intoxicating and made him want to stop and sit amongst the beautiful colors enjoying the moment and not worrying about the world he came from or the threats that lie behind them and in front of them.

"Stop." Charlie's voice was stern, quiet, and urgent.

Neither one of them questioned her, and both came to a complete stop.

She pointed. A snake the size of four baseball dugouts combined was hanging from a tree that looked like it could have coconuts on it, but it was too high to tell.

"Bushwa," said Gorilla, "my knees are shaking."

"Hush," said Charlie.

It looked pretty far away, but in this place, wherever this was, anything was possible. It was as wide as his desk back at home, and right now the Professor wished he was back there.

"Your knees should shake, kid. The width of that creature could eat a man, easy. It looks distracted..."

Before he could say anything else, the bright yellow snake moved like lightening and snatched a small dinosaur that, unfortunately for it, had been looking for food below it. All three watched in horror as the snake lifted its giant mouth into the air and slung lunch down its throat in one vicious gulp.

“I need to iron my shoelaces; I almost went right there. Look at that dino protruding from its sides, that was no small mammal. At least the size of a horse, don’t you think so Doc?”

“Yep, at least the size of a horse, kid.”

Charlie said, “Well, what disturbs me is how many more are out there looking for lunch and how big they could be. We need to be careful. With these high grasses, we wouldn’t see it coming from the ground or the trees. Forgive me Professor, but I wish I was home in bed and had skipped out on this adventure.”

“Nothing to forgive, I feel the same. Sorry I got you kids into this.”

If anything happened to them, it would be his fault. He couldn’t have that on his conscious the rest of his life.

“Hey, Doc, I came on my own free will and I won’t let dinosaurs, giant snakes, or naked cannibals be an alarm clock. We need to get to the cave. I’m sure you’re right. We could be out of here in no time.”

He liked Gorilla. The kid drew a smile from his lips. While nodding, he patted him on the back.

“Thanks, kid. You’re right. We have to keep each other alert and in good spirits. Who knows, maybe I could shoot one of those snakes for dinner?”

Gorilla said, “Yeah, I heard snakes are nutritious, but Doc, that would be a whole month’s supply of food.”

“It sure would be. We need to get behind that water and make more weapons. Let’s proceed cautiously. I’m going in front and you two kids stay close together behind me. I’ve had more experience in adventuring, however it didn’t involve creatures extinct for billions of years, but together we can overcome anything.”

Charlie said, “Sorry Professor, Gorilla’s right we chose to come on this trip. So, let’s go. I carved tools before when my grandfather taught me. It just might come in handy...”

“Yes, it might,” said Professor Sarantos.

He started forward, watching for movement of any sort in the brush, or in the trees. He moved a few feet then stopped and listened. It was the only way they could move through here without being surprised. Actually, it was all they had, and a surprise could still pop out from any direction.

The three of them drifted, listening, spying, and closing their eyes when they stopped to eavesdrop intently for any sound they might be missing. The trees swayed. So far so good. Soon the waterfall drowned out every noise except its own fierce pounding. He hoped that the noise would also keep them safe from other mammals that depended on sound for food.

After another ten minutes he could feel the splashes of the water touching his skin, hair and clothing.



He felt a tap on his shoulder. It was Charlie.

“Professor look over there under the waterfall some large stones leading up behind it. We might get in over there. You want me to check it out?”

“No, we’ll all go together.”

He had to get close to her ear for her to hear him over the roaring waters. Charlie turned and told Gorilla straight in his ear too.

The Professor was determined to get there quickly but carefully, so he picked up his speed, just a little.

He told Gorilla to monitor the water just in case something was lurking in it. They needed no surprises from there.

They moved closer to the rock outcrops that led up towards the waterfall when the water billowed up and a sea serpent with a spike on its head pulled itself from the water and stood on the other shore across from them.

The Professor kept moving, hoping the sounds wouldn't allow it to hear them.

Stepping carefully on the slimy rocks, the Professor lifted himself up trying to keep his balance, then looked for something to grab onto. The walls wouldn't work. Their slickness was worse than the steps.

He reached for a strong-looking vine that was hanging from a tree. It might work as an anchor, so he proceeded up towards the main waterfall hoping to find a cave opening.

Once he knew the vine would secure him, he turned and took Charlie's hand, helping her onto the rock too. Then she held the vine, and they both assisted Gorilla. The steps were so large the three of them could stand easily on each one, so they proceeded climbing in this fashion until they spotted a dark opening behind the water.

Moving cautiously but feeling a little excited, the Professor pushed forward.

The sea creature had moved into the deep jungle, never noticing them at all. Sarantos was glad for those small favors.

“Professor, it looks like something moved in the cave.”

“How can you tell that? What like a shadow? I didn’t see anything,” said Gorilla.

Professor Sarantos took a deep breath.

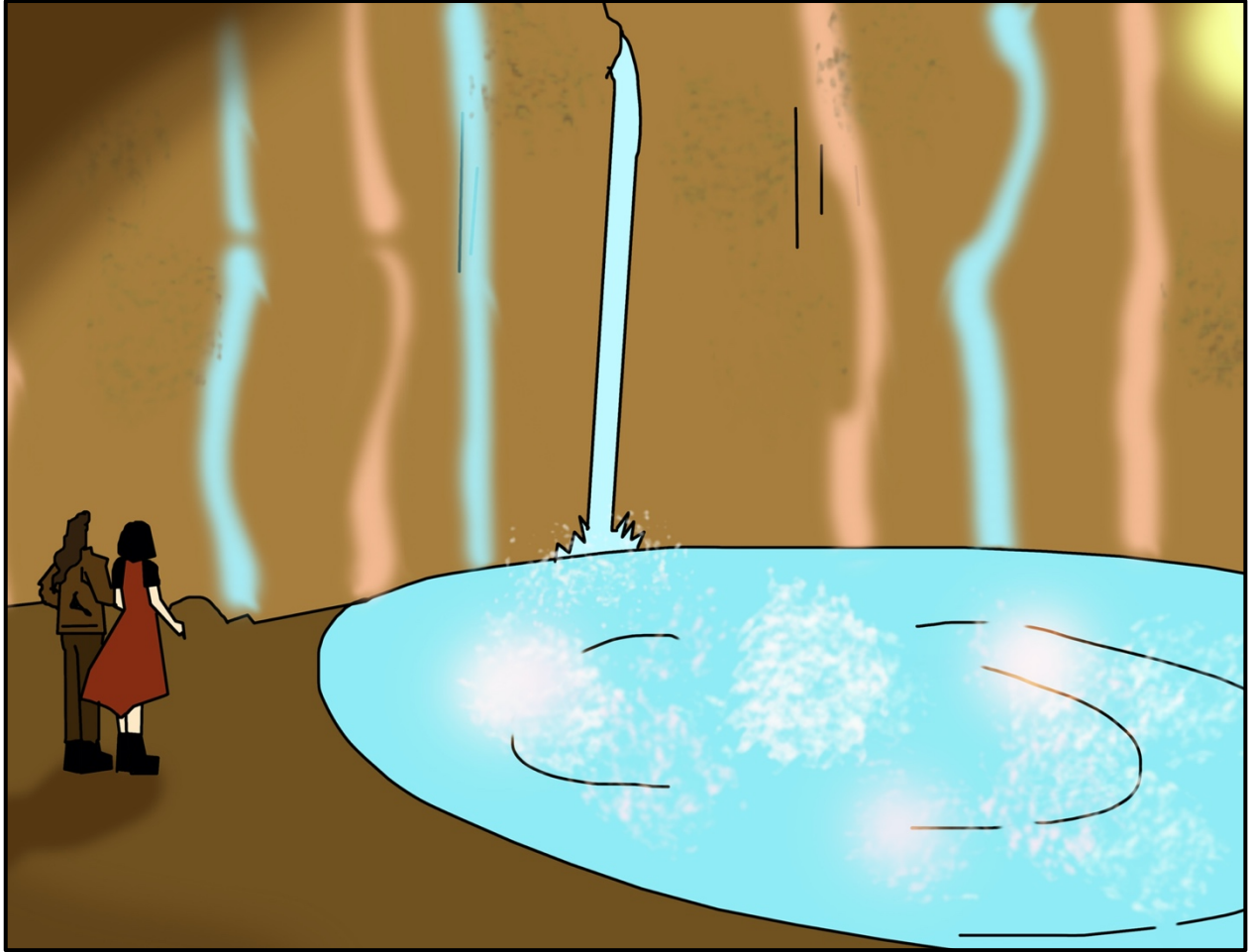
“We need to be cautious,” the Professor said and took out a very long dagger. He’d put his gun away before they started the climb, because he didn’t want it to get wet.

“I have a sling with me,” said Gorilla, “I’m good at it too.”

“We’ll keep that in mind, kid,” said the Professor.

“You guys stay here, I’m going in.”

They’d reached the opening of the cave; it was as wide as the waterfall and a chill went down his spine before he entered the opening. He saw nothing move, and slowly walked deeper into the cave, but after ten steps it became a slit; again, big enough for only one person. He took a deep breath and went into it.



Light trickled into the crevasse. He wasn't sure what was causing it. Pushing his body forward, the slit soon opened up into a very large cave with a pool of water in the middle. The pool was lit up with pinks and soft blues created by the playful algae draped along the walls like someone had decorated them with a romantic flair.

“Wow.”

“Wow is right, Professor,” said Charlie.

He jumped when he heard a voice behind him, so transfixed he was by the colors he didn't hear the kids come in behind him.

“What are you two doing here? I told you to stay put. You will get us all killed if you don’t listen better.”

“I told her to wait, Doc, but she said what if something happened to you, it got me worried about you. So, we took a vote and we both won,” said Gorilla.

“Professor, I told you I had no patience. Remember the time I had to work out that crazy time frame chart, you know how they arrived at that point. Well, who cares, it was already done, so I didn’t need to waste my time on it.”

The Professor groaned. “Yes, I remember.”

“Look at this place,” said Gorilla as he walked around checking out the hanging algae.

“Be careful Gorilla, you don’t know what’s in here, do you?”

“I got this, Doc.”

The kid was brave, but a bit of a wild card, but then, so was Charlie. What had he been thinking, bringing two kids with him? He knew what he was thinking. No one else would come with him, and in all honesty, no one knew, except his one friend.

“Sure, you do, kid. Look out for that pool of water, it appears calm, but something could lurk under there.”

“Yeah, sure Doc. It looks like glass. What if there’s no bottom, Doc?”

“That’s scary, kid.” He pushed his hat up on his head and wiped the sweat. Although it was cooler in here than it had been outside, he was nervous.



Putting his knife away and taking his gun back out, he noticed Charlie was watching him.

“What’s up Charlie?”

“Nothing, just watching your mind thinking.”

“Oh, I guess that is nothing.”

They all chuckled a bit.

“I might have a go at a snake, so we have some real food for a change.”

“What’s wrong with beans,” asked Gorilla?

“Nothing if you want me to gas us all out of here.”



“Really Professor, that’s just rude,” said Charlie.

“Rude, maybe, but the truth.”

“Well, that happens when you’re old, huh Doc?”

He made a face at Gorilla, for pointing out the obvious. “I’m not that old, kid.”

“I think you are.”

“Well, come over here and lets see who could kick your butt.”

“Hold up, Doc. We don’t need a war in here.”

The kid looked at Charlie and rolled his eyes.

“Are you rolling your eyes at Charlie?”

“No, not me, Doc, but I think you might have jungle fever, or something. I heard it makes a man mad. Drives them right out of their minds.”

He pushed his hat back and felt his cheeks go flush.

“Kid I’m not going mad. I don’t have jungle fever. What I got is Gorilla annoying me fever.”

The kid threw up his arms and said, “Jeez, Doc, everything is jake.”

Charlie came to the Professor's defense. "He has a point Gorilla; I might have that fever too."

"What? Thanks Charlie, why aren't the two of you helping me search this place."

"He's right. Let's check out the walls as best we can with the algae covering it up like a carpet."

They searched carefully for hours and found nothing.

The Professor pushed his hat back and sat down on a small rock.

"I can't believe we're stuck here. I find it hard to believe it'd be this hard, but then it's too powerful of a gift to have put into the wrong hands," said Sarantos.

Charlie said, "You could be right Professor, imagine what the world might be like if you could just time travel anytime you wanted. It could be dangerous, for time that is. You know to alter the course of events. We could accidentally eliminate ourselves."

"What? That's crazy talk, Charlie. We're already here. You can't get rid of what's already here."

"Silly boy, you definitely could. What if I went back in time to the hour before your parents met and killed your father? They'd never meet, and you'd never be born."

"See, can't happen. Look at me, I'm here. I can't cease to exist, because I'm here already, right Doc? Besides, why would you want to kill my father, anyway? That's just mean."

“Oh, I’m not saying I’d want to kill your father, although at this moment it sounds like a good idea, just to see if you’d vanish from existence.”

She chuckled.

“Thanks for all the love, Charlie.”

“You bet.”

Sarantos said, “You two stop this madness or I’ll leave you here and go straight back and take out both of your parents. Both sets!”

The two kids threw daggers with their eyes at their Professor, but his comment did shut them up. Maybe now he could think.

“I need to think. We found nothing, I’m curious about the pool, but not enough to check it out. Be quiet one moment while I have a ponder.”



They both quieted down and found a location to rest.

Soon the silence was deafening, and he could hear his own heart beating madly. He listened to it for a while, allowing the steady pace to settle him down into a Zen-like moment while he thought about how they could check the pool without going into it. He might need a doctor soon, he reasoned.

He had met some men who were into Zen on his previous travel overseas. They had stayed in the same hotel. He overheard their conversation one night and upon asking questions, they invited him to join them at one of their private locations in the mountains of Japan where he could learn more about mastering oneself.

He'd enjoyed the whole experience. It was unheard of in the western world, so he rarely talked about it.

“Professor.”

“What is it, Charlie?”

“I know you need time, but don't you think you're taking a little too long?”

“No, I'm not. I have an idea. I will run my hands along the inside of the pool to see if the gems could be on a shelf or in a tiny opening before we venture out to the next one. We have to check everything.”

“I agree,” said Charlie.

“I agree too, but give me your gun, Doc. If anything pops out of the water, I'll kill it.”

“Can you even fire a weapon?”

“Remember we had this conversation. Darn, you're old.”

“Sure, we did. Okay, take it and watch closely, cause I'm going in.”

“Into the pool, Professor?”

“No, a figure of speech.”

“Oh,” said Charlie.

He was sore but didn't want the young kids to know, so he stood up after distracting them by telling them something moved in the water. It worked.

“Okay, I'm ready.”

He handed the gun to Gorilla and knelt in front of the pool. The water was like glass. He began to sweat.

“Professor, you're sweating. You want me to do it?”

That's all he needed, having a girl do his job. “What? That's mad, Charlie. I'm sweating because it's warm in here especially with the moisture created from the pool. That's rude, Charlie.”

“Sorry, Professor, I meant nothing by it, nothing at all.”

“Fine. Be ready Gorilla.”

“I'm ready.”



Sarantos wiped the sweat from his brow and reached his hand calmly down into the water. It was cool to the touch.



He felt around for anything that would show they placed something in a hole in the walls of the apparently bottomless pool, or a gem that could be imbedded into the sides of the water hole.

He moved methodically and continued this way for what seemed like hours. He didn't want to miss something if it was there.

Who started this quest for other time frames that had allowed for such a sword to be created in the first place?

A lonely soul, or an insane angry control freak.

“Can't you go any faster, Doc? I'm hungry.”

“No, I can't go faster, eat a Babe bar if you're hungry.”

“Yeah, okay, will do.”

Gorilla reached into his pocket and pulled out a bar, offering one to Charlie, which she took gratefully.

The kids pulled the wrappers off and started munching.

Normally the sound wouldn't penetrate his ears like a roaring lion, but today, it was like the roaring lion.

“For crying out loud, the two of you stop making so much noise.”

“Professor you’ll be glad when we get more energy, you’ll need us to help you complete this mission.”

“No, I won’t.” He grabbed his hat as it slid forward and almost fell into the glassy pool.

“Sure, Doc, whatever you say.”

“Wait, I found something.”

He reached around for a moment before pulling a vial from the pond. Stuffed inside it looked to be a piece of paper.

He opened it up and read it out loud.

*“To whom it may concern. Please take on this mission of scientific brilliance that I created only if you have the best of intentions, otherwise it could lead to your deaths or those you love. Stay true and search for Hibiscus.”*

“That’s it?”

“Yes, kid, that’s it.”



They stood there dumfounded wondering what it all meant. Maybe they would need a doctor?

The Professor was sad and worried he couldn't help them.