

## *Chapter 7*

### *“LiES”*



Sarantos was too late. Charlie was a blur, snatching up the precious gold.

The Professor wanted to close his eyes and wish what she had just done away, but he knew it wouldn't matter. He'd have to face whatever came down on their heads. He hoped nothing would literally come crashing down on their heads.

The cavern shook violently, sending jolts from his feet through his body and into his head, breeding a slight pounding.

Charlie backed up until she stood next to Gorilla. Without a second thought, he stepped in front of her, blocking any attack that might come her way. The kid had style.

Sarantos wasn't going to just lie down. Still weak from a tremendous loss of blood but he pulled himself to his feet. He then moved to stand next to the kids. It wasn't easy. The ground was angry.

The three of them stared at the short beady-eyed statue.

Charlie whispered, "I'm sorry, Professor."

"Me too," said Professor Sarantos in a quick throaty tone.

"You couldn't have possibly known," said Gorilla, throwing comfort Charlie's way.

The ground stopped moving. They all stood, waiting in silence for something. Anything could happen and it might come from any direction.

But what happened next was something no one expected.

The hairy creature smiled wryly, stood up and declared. "Fools, now you perish."

The Professor was quick on the draw and snapped his whip around the creature's little body. He hurled it into the air and momentarily turned to smile at Charlie, whose mouth hung wide open.

"Doc," the kid screamed.

The Professor felt his whip go slack, and then it stiffened into an unusable state.

“What the?” The Professor looked bewildered.

The creature moved faster than he could’ve ever imagined and was soon looking him in the eyes, an inch from his face. He pushed Charlie behind him and stood firm. They had nowhere else to go.



Its shaggy head spun around. The furry creature leaped at Charlie, who held the priceless golden gem. Gorilla awkwardly grabbed her arm pulling it so hard that they both luckily tumbled out of harm’s way landing on the cold cavern floor. You only have fun when you’re winning.

They were running out of time. Achieving the greatest archaeological feat of all time might soon be rendered meaningless.

The years flew by in a heartbeat. Time betrayed them. If this was where they would draw their last breath, in a cankered cavern, in a faraway distant world, on this ultimate quest... but no one would be the wiser??

Sarantos mind flashed. His superiors, or so they thought they were, would have years of future entertainment at their beck and call laughing at the loser Professor who had gotten lost on an epic adventure searching for fairies. Good God, he couldn’t have that happen to him.

The hilarity of his disappearance would be nothing but lies. The world laugh day and night until the end of days.

He turned and saw Gorilla wrestling with the rabid creature while Charlie was pulling out her gun. The tiny thing was fast and furious.

He did what anyone would; he leapt on top of it, screaming like a madman.

Holding down one hand onto the cavern floor, he pulled his knife and sliced off its legs. The bellows of that small hairy creature pierced thru his exploding eardrums, burrowing the pain deep into his brain.



Gorilla was a quick thinker and pulled out his own knife and while Professor Sarantos sat on top of it pinning it in place, he grabbed the creature's hands and did the same.

Problem solved.

The paltry thing couldn't move anymore and screamed uncontrollably until Gorilla put an end to its suffering by slicing off the head. Did that really just happen? This felt wrong. These scars will never be erased.

Charlie had tears rolling down her cheeks, overflowing like a waterfall and spilling onto the cavern floor. After a few minutes, she slowly took her hands away from her ears.



“My heart is so heavy right now. It makes me sick. I'm angry. That was horrible, but the alternative would've been worse,” she said with a soft voice that choked back a tiny wailing sound. She was trying to rationalize their actions.

Gorilla moved towards her and put his arm around her shoulder. “It's okay, little bunny. No more tears. We only need one more gem. Bushwa, it's weird the last gem is the diamond just like before.” Micky shook his head while still holding Charlie, and his eyes narrowed, before he said, “Doc, what if it's not in a cave? Where else could it be?”

The Professor was worried about losing the gems so he placed the ruby in first and then the magnificent yellow imperial straight into the slot dedicated for it.

“Kid you’re right. It may not be in a cave. It’s just too damn easy. Gorilla you and Charlie look at that precious imperial. I think this one has a perfect cut and shines like finely blown glass. This is worth far more than the other one we left in my study, at least I hope that’s where it is.”

The two students moved closer to the sword. Charlie wiped her cheeks again and leaned in, lifting her eyebrows strangely when she saw the gem.

Gorilla grinned and nodded. “Doc, I know you’re right on this one. Magnificent, I bet it’s worth a bomb.”

“We could sell that to fund other expeditions, Professor,” said Charlie.

Her comment made him cringe. “Are you mad? We can’t get the gem out. Once I inlaid the gems into the sword, the only way to remove them is to use it. No dealer in their right mind would buy them, knowing they couldn’t be removed in proper fashion.”

“Man, you’re all wet Charlie. The Doc and I aren’t in it for the money. Besides, the historical value is beyond price. I’m worried it’s cursed. I thought we were all faithful to the cause, instead I feel a hint of betrayal from you, Charlie.”

She shook her head and jerked away from his comforting arm.

Charlie raised her voice, “What does that even mean? Unfaithful to the cause? What is the cause you’re referring to, oh noble knight?” She hit him in the head unapologetically.

“Hey, don’t do that, Charlie. And you know the cause.”

She had enough. Charlie came at him with her fist out, face red, saying, “Applesauce, you’re talking like you’re beat.” She put her face right next to his. “Now, frat boy, why don’t you tell me exactly what cause I’m unfaithful to, and I’ll let you know if I am or not.” It was like changing a tire on a moving car.

The Professor had been mesmerized by the imperial, but her loud voice caused him to jump back.

“What’s happening with you two? Knock it off! I thought we’d gotten past the silly stuff and moved to the grown-up stuff. Gorilla, Charlie was just offering her opinion on the gem, nothing more.”

Charlie pushed her lips up to her nose in a gesture that made Gorilla laugh.

Somehow over his laughter, Gorilla blurted out, “You win, sweetheart and with that face what say I become your flapper?”

She had been semi-laughing too, but when he said he wanted to be her boyfriend, her face changed color instantly. She stared at him and then walked over to the golden nuggets.

Gorilla raced over to Charlie and took her arm. “Aw, come on bearcat don’t be such an alarm clock, it was just a joke, anyway.”

She scowled at him and changed the subject. “I wonder if those are real golden nuggets?”

The Professor joined them, picking up several pieces of differently sized gold. He examined them from all angles. They smelled authentic. “If I had to guess, I’d say these are real alright.” He grinned and patted Micky on the back.



“Gee Doc, it looks like we discovered the motherload.” A lot of times, luck takes you to some very weird places.

Charlie’s eyes gleamed. She held up a piece of gold while playfully stroking her hair and said, “And how. I’d say our ships come in. Too bad we don’t have a ship to haul it out of here.”

Micky said, “Yeah. But don’t you think this is all wet? Why would someone leave all of this here?”



The Professor blinked straight at Micky. “Gorilla, you could be right. Why? If it were me, I’d keep it here and come and get it when I needed it. Whoever made the sword might have used this gold to live on. No taxes. No banks.”

“That makes sense,” said Charlie.

“Maybe so, but I say we get as much as we can in our packs and hit that boat.”

Gorilla’s enthusiasm got them both to agree. The three of them collected what they could take with them without weighing themselves down too much.

“I think we should also take some hair back with us of that creature, maybe even a bone and tooth. We need all the proof we can get that we were in another world. And besides, we can study them for scientific purposes.”



Charlie grimaced. “I elect Gorilla to do the dirty work and collect those items, it turns my stomach just thinking about it.”

“You’re a silly girl. What are you doing in this line of work Charlie if you can’t even collect a few bones off a corpse? They won’t bite back.”

“Baloney! I can dig fossils with the best of them and research anything anywhere,

but this is something different. Taking apart a creature that still has fresh meat on its bones is where I draw the line.”

“She’s right, kid. It’s not for everyone. Are you able to manage it or will you get a little squeamish too?”

The shocked look on Micky’s face that the Professor would even ask him such a question made them both burst out laughing after 2 seconds of awkward silence.

“No, I’m not squeamish, or any other ish word! I can do it,” said Micky as he huffed away.

Micky pulled out his knife and dove into his new task, drawing a massive moan out of Charlie.

“Charlie, how about we check out more of the cave while he’s doing that?”

“Are you sure you’re up for it Professor? You lost a lot of blood? Shouldn’t you be resting?”

Micky threw in his two cents. “She’s right Professor, why don’t you grab a Babe Ruth bar out of my jacket pocket? It’ll help get some sugar back into you.”

“Gorilla, that’s a great idea. I don’t think I could live without you kid. You’ve been a diamond in my belt buckle for years.”

“Shucks, thanks Doc.”

The candy bar wasn't actually half bad, even though it was melted from the heat and stuck to the wrapper. He decided two would be better than one, considering the circumstances.

They spent an hour checking out every remaining crevice of the cavern and found three distinct types of old bones and a strange-looking chain, adding all of those items to their collection. He was almost drooling thinking of what this would mean to their home world, and to the change it would make to his academic life. He would no longer be in the crosshairs.

When they'd finished their separate jobs, they all cleaned up the dead remains of the hairy creature and threw it off the cliff. It would smell and they needed rest.



He pointed at Gorilla. “Kid, if you could stay on guard first, I’d appreciate it. If you can’t handle it, if not, maybe Charlie could be first.”

“No, I’m good, Doc.”

Charlie piped in. “I don’t know how good you are, but you have stench in your hair from rolling around in the remains of your favorite critter.”

“Oh, yea, you’re probably right although I smell nothing offensive myself. Charlie, you go check for food and I’ll shower in that small pond over there. Thankful for small pleasures.”

“Oh, me too, you little stinker,” said Charlie, chuckling as she ventured off.

“Nice, thanks Charlie.”

“Welcome Mister Micky.”

He threw her a glare that might’ve hurt, had she been looking? The Professor noticed the pain in Gorilla’s eyes. He was surely in over his head, a fool in love. Poor kid!

He wanted to show these kids things they hadn’t seen. While that mission might’ve been accomplished on this adventure, maybe they were going to witness the miracle of love too?

Charlie opened a can of beans. They stuffed their bellies with spam while reminiscing about their home world. He hated the stuff, but never said a word. It was all they had to eat, and for that he was thankful.

Charlie asked, “Was the water cold?”

“Nope, it was just a little cool, but at least I’m clean now,” said Micky.



“Dinner?”

“Charlie you are quite the doll. It sounds so elegant when you use that word in that sexy voice.”

“Oh, I try, darling,” she giggled.

After they ate, the Professor took a bath. Charlie would be next. It was refreshing after the exhaustive day of battle, grim heat and sweat. Nothing like water to make you feel alive again and rejuvenate both body and spirit.

He was finally drifting off when he heard the soft whisper of Charlie's voice.

"Professor? You asleep?"

"Almost."

"Sorry, I just wondered if you ever thought about settling down. A man at your age should, you know."

"Once, a long time ago, but what I do got in the way. You know how it is."

"What about that gal we met at your cabin, the one that wanted to come with you?"

"You mean Stella?"

"Yes, that's her name. I quite liked her."

He smiled and said, "Yeah, I quite liked her too."

"Then why didn't you bring her along with us?"

"Oh, no, that wouldn't work. Stella is fussy and bossy and a big distraction for me. Too sexy for her own damn good. We tried it once before. I was deep in the jungles of South America and she joined me there, almost got me killed too!"

"Well, sometimes Professor the years fly by and your life might be ruined without a Stella by your side. Clearly, she was still attracted to you."

He nodded. He thought it's better not to ask why, and it's better not to cry, or to think about things that can't ever be. Maybe he was running out of time?

Exhausted, he smiled as he thought about Stella. Eventually, he fell into a fitful sleep...

