

The
Magical Eggs
on
Dragon's Lair

The Key, the Coin, and the Ring
Book 2

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Chapter 1

It has been nearly three years since the twins, Evette and Adam, first encountered the magical eggs on their island home, Dragon's Lair. Just as the eggs had promised, and with the twins cooperating, Evette who was always good at schoolwork started to excel in the arts and sports. Adam became the top student in the school for English, mathematics, and science. Both received several awards throughout their school years. The parents, Tom and Mary, were ever so proud of the twins.

The people who lived on Dragon's Lair were worried. The government was going to build a dam further downstream. This would mean the lake in which Dragon's Lair sat on, would be flooded as well. Only the tallest of the mountains on Dragon's Lair would be seen in the future. For the people on Dragon's Lair, there would be no more homes, no more school and other important buildings, no beaches, and no more caves to explore. The people on the island protested and wrote many letters to the government to stop the dam from being built. But all the people received was a stern reply.

The dam will be built. We need the water. The area is the best location to build the dam.

The twins, like the rest of the people on Dragon's Lair, were desperate to save their island and homes. They felt defeated and betrayed. Nothing they could think of was going to shift the minds of the politicians sitting in an office far away from their island. Everyone was given notice.

“You have one year to move out of your homes. You will be given new homes on the mainland, on the far side of the airport.”

Nobody on Dragon's Lair wanted to live close to the airport. It would be noisy and smelly. Everyone thought the new home location was horrible.

Adam sat on the sofa at home. He had gone through all the letters and their replies about the flooding of Dragon's Lair. Evette saw he was deep in thought. “A penny for your thoughts,” said Evette as she entered the room.

Adam looked up. “I really don't want to move out of Dragon's Lair. What is so wrong with this place that it has to be drowned?”

“Nothing. Someone wants to make a memorial for themselves at the expense of other people's lives.”

“We've got to find something to stop the flooding of the island. Letters have failed. Petitions have failed. Protests have failed. We have to find something that is

unique to stop this dam from being built,” said Adam as he tidied all the letters on the coffee table.

“I have an idea,” said Evette.

She looked around the room to make sure both her parents didn’t hear what she was going to say. “Let’s go exploring. Caves, mountaintops, the riverbed. Something could be found to put a stop to this very bad idea of drowning Dragon’s Lair.”

“What do you have in mind?” asked Adam.

“We have already explored all the smaller caves at the shoreline. We have never disturbed the buried chest of drawers, which is the doorway to the dinosaur era. We don’t want those creatures running around. There is nothing to save, not even creepy bats or cave-dwelling creatures. Nothing. We haven’t explored the mountaintops running between Northville and Eastpit. How about we do a weekend trip. If John and Jane can come along, that will be better.”



O Chapter 2

n Friday afternoon, the twins met Jane and John at the base of the mountains at Eastpit.

They slowly walked up the path that had been used by everyone. The path stopped half a kilometre up. A clearing designed for campers was no larger than twenty metres by fifteen metres. One group of campers had already set up camp. Adam pointed to the back part of the clearing. “It looks like we have to use this part.”

By the time they had finished setting up camp, it was getting dark. They set up a campfire and ate their meal. Jane nodded her head towards the other camp. “Those people are not back. I am going over to their tent and see if they left any notes saying where they intended to go.” Evette looked concerned. “What if they come back while you are inside?”

“Tell them the truth. They hadn’t come back, and we were looking for clues as to where they could be.”

“Okay,” replied Evette. “I am not comfortable about going into someone’s camp. I’ll keep watch while you are inside.”

Evette stood outside the tents while Jane went inside the largest tent. She came out almost straight away. "Four sleeping bags and nothing else. No names on the bags either."

She went into the next smaller tent. She was inside for a few minutes before coming out. "They left a book with a map. I took a picture of the map. The tent has most of the food and general camping stuff. It looks like they intended to stay away for a short time. There was a tray of bottled water with four bottles missing. They are highly organized. Everything was labeled for meals. One set of afternoon rations was gone. That was today's afternoon tea. They left the camp just as we started the walk up. I think we should call the police and report them missing."

"Give them another twenty minutes and then make the call," replied Evette.

Back at their own camp, Jane and Evette mentioned the missing group of people. Adam looked at his watch. "It is getting late They should be back. It is too dangerous to walk around here in the dark. They could be lost or injured. If one person is injured, they all could have stayed with the injured person. But I have a hunch, they are lost. I will phone the police and report them missing."

"What if they all turn up in the middle of the night?" asked John.

“Then it will be a relief. They can tell the police what happened and call off the search. It will be a happy ending.”

The next morning, Evette, Jane, John, and Adam were woken by the noise of people coming in their direction. Two police officers had arrived with a small group of searchers. Evette spoke to the newcomers about the campers being missing all night. Jane went into the tent and brought out the map she found. The group was studying the map when they heard footsteps coming from a small trail. It was the group that was missing.

The policeman looked up and smiled at first and then frowned. Only three people were there.

“Hello. We were about to start searching for you. What has happened to one of you?”

The oldest of the group, Bob, said, “We found some caves we had never seen before and doubt anyone else has been in them. The entrance is only two metres tall and about a metre wide. Then it opened into a large cavity with a slow-moving stream winding through stalagmites and stalactites. It was just beautiful. Then there was another section which led to a cave deeper inside. The access was much narrower than the first. When we passed through that tight access, the new cavity was much bigger than the first. It was completely empty. When someone spoke, the voice would echo so much.

“On the way back from the second cavity, Leigh badly twisted her ankle. Actually, we think it was broken. We managed to pull her through to the first cavity which had stalagmites and stalactites and the slow flowing water. Then we strapped up her ankle. It was much too dark to come back and too dangerous to carry Leigh back. We camped in the cave overnight. When we were all ready to leave, Leigh insisted on us leaving to get her medical help. Ben wanted to stay with her, but she demanded we all return. We placed her within easy reach of the cool slow-moving water. We gave her some Panadol to ease the pain and made sure she had food. I can lead you back to the cave.”



When the search group reached the cave, all were surprised to see Leigh had moved from the supply of water to the cave entrance. She smiled at the searchers. “The Panadol put me to sleep. When I was dopey, I thought Ben or Bob pulled me to entrance to save rescue time. I forgot

they went back to get help.”

Ben looked firmly. “We left you by the water early this morning. Nobody moved you.”

“Funny. I know I was sleepy, but I am sure I heard muffled sounds and I did feel someone, or something moved me. It doesn’t matter. You are here now and going home seems like a nice idea.”

When Leigh was assisted up, she frowned. “Hold on a second. I think my ankle is better.”

“Not possible,” said Ben. “Swelling does not go down that quick. Your ankle was like a football.”

Leigh unwound the bandages which were already quite loose.

“See. The bandages just about fell off by themselves.” She wriggled her toes. “Ouch. Okay, I am not that great, but I think I can move with crutches.”

One of the rescue people said, “No. Climb on my back. We will have to take turns carrying you back. Too much pressure on the ankle could cause more damage. Climb on.”



Chapter 3

When they reached the camp site, the waiting ambulance took Leigh to the local hospital. Jane, Evette, Adam, and John decided to stay at the camp for the rest of the day. Any short journey would become hazardous as the sky was growing dark much earlier than usual. Storm clouds were forming. John was nervous about staying when a storm was brewing, but he didn't want to feel like a coward. He thought, *It is only water and wind. No big deal. Really.*

The group ate an early meal just in case the rain came and made the wood too wet to make a fire. They cleaned up and bunkered down.

The wind picked up speed. It began to whistle. The clouds became darker. Scarier. There was barely a drop of water. Adam and Evette popped their heads out of their separate tents and gave each other an assuring wave. They crawled back into their separate tents.

There was a loud crack of lightning. The sky was lit up as if it were daytime. Jane and Evette just looked at each other. "Wow, that was powerful and bright." Jane

popped her head out of the tent. She looked across to where John and Adam were camping. She darted over to the boys' tent and invited herself in. "Hey. Did you see that lightning?"

John nodded. "Yep. It must have been awfully close. I . . ."

There was another bright flash of lightning followed by a loud roar of thunder. Evette suddenly appeared in the same tent. She was puffing.

"Come outside and see something really weird. I really mean weird."

The four crawled out of the tent. Evette pointed to the sky. "Look. Watch carefully and you should be able to see it."

There was another roar of thunder along with another clap of lightning. The lightning was just a few seconds, but it was enough for the group to see flying shadows in the dark clouds. "Did you see those shadows?" asked Jane.

John shook his head. Adam didn't say a word. He was still looking into the sky trying to find something that shouldn't be there. He pointed. "What the . . ."

They all looked to where he was pointing. Jane yelled, "**Duck!**"

Everyone ducked down, holding their hands over their heads. The creature's wings flapped over head on

it swoop towards the group. Then there was a loud, *Ark. Ark. Coo-coob* sound.

“Get in the tent!” yelled Adam.

The friends were panting and looking at each other with wide eyes.

“What was that?” asked John.

Adam hesitated with his reply, “A dinosaur. A Pteranodon. Nasty. We could be its dinner.”

John scoffed. “Okay, pull my other leg now. Dinosaurs died millions of years ago.”

Adam shrugged. “I would have said that years ago. That roar of thunder was the noise to disguise the dinosaurs escaping their confines.”

Seeing the others were still concerned, he changed the subject. “My grandmother was the biggest spinner of tales when it came to thunder and lightning. It was to calm Evette and me down. It worked for a long time. Gee, we were dumb. We swallowed every word. Looking back, it was kind of cute, if not fanciful. She would say the roar in the thunder was just God moving his furniture around and the lightning was just the fluorescent light being turned on so God could see what furniture he was moving around.”

Evette and Adam chuckled at other funny things their grandmother would say when thunder and lightning occurred. Evette giggled. “We were so dumb,

and we believed every word. God moving his furniture around was her favorite for thunder. Sometimes it was Zeus playing drums to annoy his wife and children. The arguments about Zeus's drumming were so big that they tried to kill him with swords. The lightning was created in the swordfights. The swords would hit with such force, sparks would fly. The lightning we see were the sparks coming from the swords. Of course, it is electricity—very dangerous if you were unlucky enough to be struck.”

Jane said, “Going back to dinosaurs, what makes Adam believe that thing which tried to attack us was a dinosaur?”

Adam sat up and leaned towards Jane's face. “Frogs, crocodiles, alligators, and birds are leftovers from the dinosaur era. Gee, you even eat some of them.”

“I do not!” refuted Jane.

“You do. Who ate most of the chicken tonight? Look at their feet for starters. Tyrannosaurus Rex feet in miniature,” said Adam.

Jane picked up Adam's pillow and slammed it over his head and continued to do so as she spoke. “The trouble with egg heads is you can never win an argument. They always have the last logical word.”

Adam laughed as he continued to protect his head from Jane's onslaught of pillow attacks.

“Okay, wise guy, explain what we saw. It wasn’t a big chook, but it had a pelican-like beak. It wasn’t a bat but had wings like a bat, jumbo bat wings. Well, what was it?”

“I told you it was a Pteranodon.”

“Okay. I see we are running around in circles. Who votes it was a Pteranodon?”

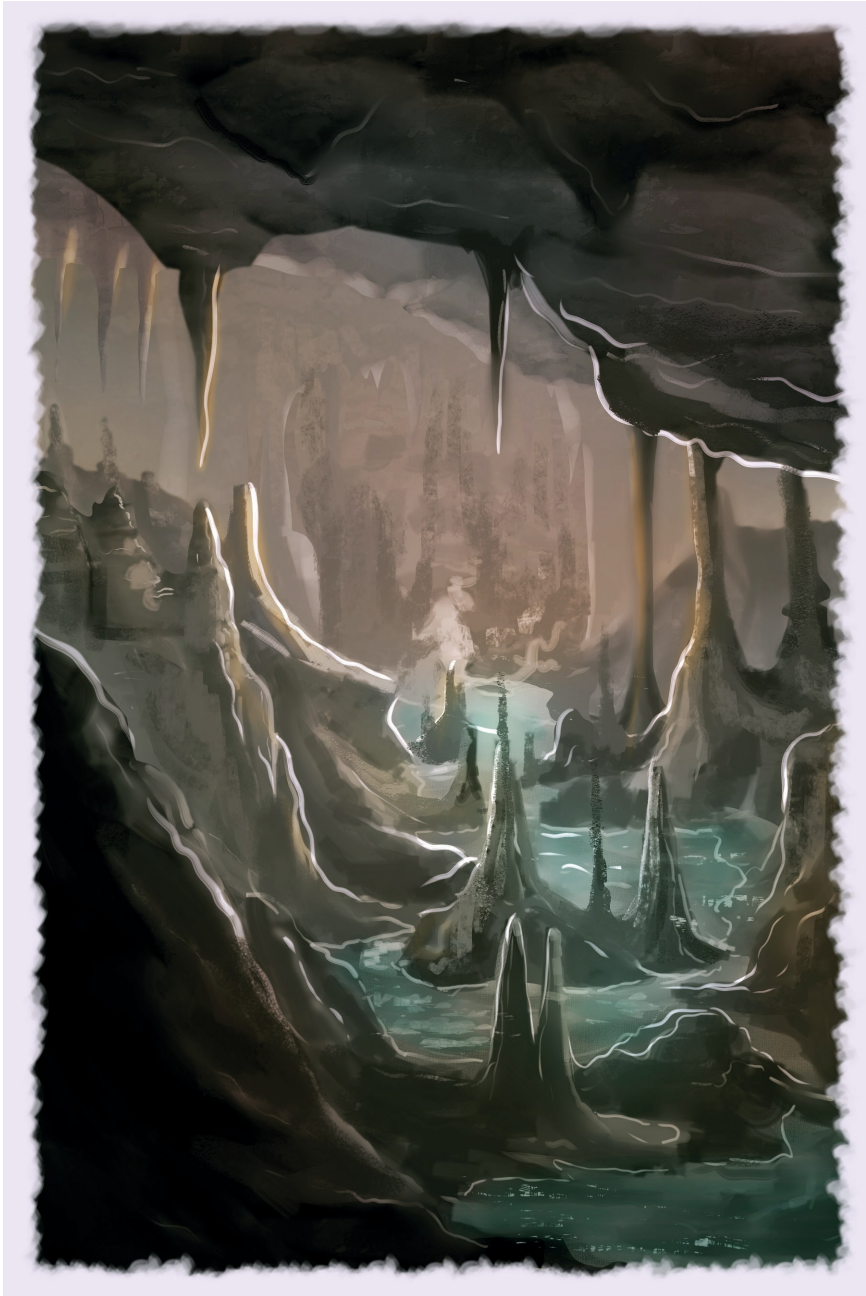
Adam and Evette put their hands up.

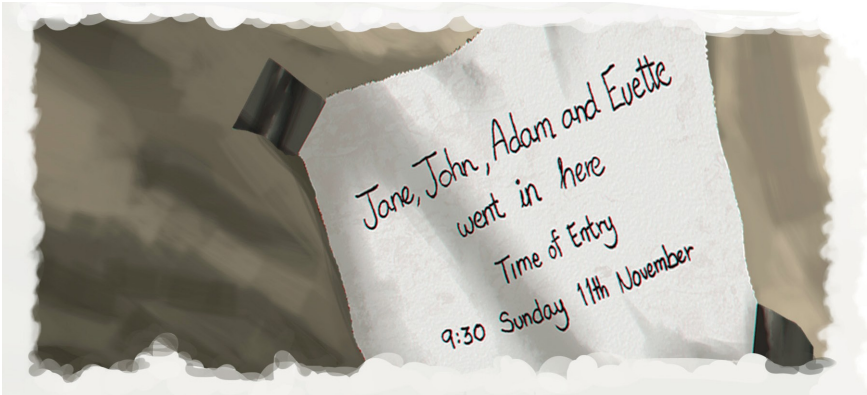
“Yeah. I thought you would back Adam up,” John said to Evette.

There was a short shower. Evette said, “That was just enough to make the ground slippery and muddy. What are we going to do tomorrow?”

Adam replied, “I would like to go to that cave the others found. We will make that the starting point. Next weekend we can explore other parts of this place.”

Jane thought for a few seconds before speaking, “Leigh said she thought she was carried out when she was doped up with Panadol. If something did carry her out of the cave, then what was it or who was it? I would like to know.”





Chapter 4

Adam, John, Evette, and Jane tidied up their camp. They left a note stating where they were going. Adam tried to use his phone to send a text to his parents. He groaned. “No reception.”

He put the phone back in his backpack after switching it off. “Let’s go.” He pointed to the path the other campers traveled the day before.

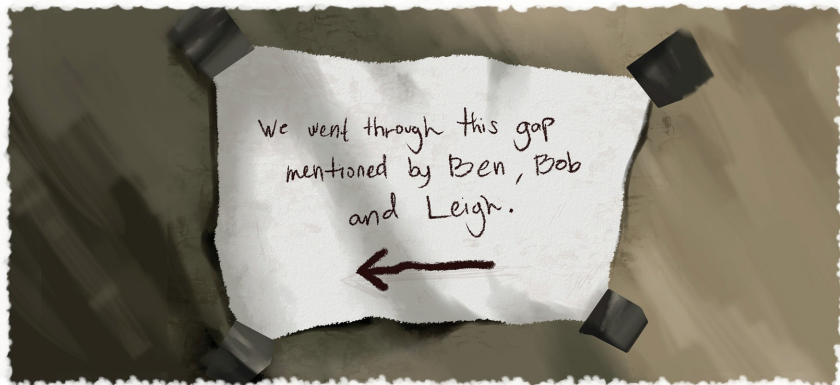
It was close to nine in the morning when they reached the cave entrance. They sat down to have some snacks and a drink. Jane used heavy duct tape to fix a note to the entrance. It read,

Jane, John, Adam, and Evette went in here. Time of entry 9:30, Sunday, 11th Nov.

“There,” she said, “Just in case something happens; a trail for searchers to follow.”

Evette looked at the note. “I really don’t think we need it, but if you feel better with it up there, then that is okay with me.”

They moved single file through the first tunnel. Just as they were told, it opened into a cave full of stalactites and stalagmites. They refilled their bottles of water at the slow-moving stream meandering its way around the structures. They stared at the beauty. Adam moved his torch around to look for the other tunnel. He spotted it tucked away in the furthest corner. “The next tunnel is over here!” he called to the others. John shone his torch in the same direction and walked closer. “It is very narrow, and it is a crawl though.”



Evette wrote a note, giving directions to any person searching for them.

We went through this gap mentioned by Ben, Bob, and Leigh.

She taped the note to the wall and added an arrow.

They started to go through the tunnel. Jane said, “I can see why Leigh did her ankle in. Different sizes stones and levels of dirt makes going through a bit dangerous.”

They came upon the large cave Ben told them about. Their voices echoed even when they whispered. Talking became one word at a time. Evette pulled out her torch and walked around the edges looking for other possible openings. None. She aimed the torch higher up, just over her head. “I see something of interest,” she said.

They all walked to her position. She shone her torch up again. “I see a ledge. Shall we go up and see the cave view from there?” Adam dug two steps into the wall for foot holds. He climbed to the top first and then helped the others up. They looked down at the cave below. “Wow. This place is so large, our torches don’t reach the other side,” said John.

Evette shone the torch around the ledge. “I can’t see anything which could lead us anywhere else. No other ledges. No other possible tunnel openings. Just nothing but a nice view of below. Let’s go down.”

The four friends moved down to the cave below. Jane crossed the cave to the far side. She tripped on what she thought was a stone. She screamed as she fell through a trap door. In a blink of an eye, she was out of sight. The others heard her scream but were too slow

to see her disappear down in a trapdoor. Evette and the boys ran to where they heard Jane scream. Worried and confused, they turned on all their torches and looked around desperately. Evette began to fret and called out Jane's name as loud as she could. **"Jane! Jane! Where are you?"**

The group waited for the echoing to die down.

Adam thought he heard a sound coming from below his feet. He turned to the others. "I think I hear her voice. I think it is below us! Listen." They were silent. There was a soft muffled sound. They all looked down and were puzzled. Evette said as she took her backpack off her back, "I am going to write another note and stick it on the wall. If we get lost or injured, the search party will know we were here." She wrote, **"Jane, John, Adam, and Evette were here. Time 10:30, Sunday, 11th Nov. Jane disappeared. We heard her voice under our feet. We are standing in the approximate location of her disappearance. We don't know what happened to her. She was here one second and gone the next. We are searching for her."**

Satisfied she had all the information in the note, she taped it to the wall.

The boys were searching the ground for possible clues to Jane's disappearance when Evette screamed and disappeared. Shocked, the boys called out, **"Evette!**

Evette! Where are you?”

Again, they heard a muffled sound coming from beneath them. John asked, “Where was she standing?”

Adam went to the wall where the note was placed. He added, **“Evette disappeared just after writing this note.”**



John joined Adam at the wall. “Okay,” he said feeling scared. “People just don’t disappear into thin air.”

Both boys took a step back and tripped over the same stone. They disappeared into the floor below.



Chapter 5

Adam and John tumbled on top of each other. When they stood up to see where they were, they were surprised to see Evette and Jane huddled together. They were shaking. Evette said through tears, “That was scary. How did you find us?”

Adam tried putting on a brave face to calm Evette down. “We didn’t. It was an accident.”

“What is this place?” asked John who was also trying to disguise his fear.

“Don’t know. But someone was here before us as they built a trap door,” replied Jane through her sobs.

When the girls calmed down and the boys were feeling a little braver, Adam shone his torch around. He gasped in disbelief at what he saw on one side of the new cave they were in. He encouraged the others to follow. He pointed to a basket full of gems—all were in their raw state. They all picked up a few gems and placed them in their pockets. “Just take enough to fill half your pockets. Carrying too much could be a big problem when trying to get out.”

He looked around the gloomy cave. “If we ever get out.”

There was a noise. Voices were coming from the other side of the cave. No one in the group could tell if they were female or male voices. The friends searched for a place to hide. They found a large rock where they hid behind. It just wasn’t big enough to hide all four of them properly. There was no time to look for more cover. Silently, they watched.

A man and a lady wearing black clothes were almost invisible in the dark. They turned on two powerful lights which lit up most of the cave. The man looked around the cave and up to the ceiling. “The trap door activated the alarm.” He looked at the ground. He swore. “Hello. Hello. I see two distinct footprints. Maybe . . .” He began to follow the footprints. “Four new helpers have arrived.”

He took out a torch and shone it to where the group of friends were hiding. “I see you. Come on out.” He made himself clearer. He whistled.

A ferocious dog came bounding out. The dog sniffed the ground and went directly to where Adam, John, Jane, and Evette were hiding. The dog snarled while waiting for an order to attack. The man said, “He won’t attack if you come out peacefully.”

Adam whispered to the others, “The beast is trained. I think the man is telling the truth. Let’s stand up.”

Slowly the four friends stood up with their hands in the air. The man beckoned them over. He stared at each of them and held out his hand. "The stones please. I don't like thieves." The friends each emptied out one pocket. The man returned the gemstones to the basket. "Now, the other pockets." The friends emptied out the other pockets." The man carried the basket over to the group. He watched them put the gemstones back in. He gave the basket to the lady. Then he patted each pocket on the four friends. Feeling that the group had returned all the gemstones, he nodded. "Come with me."

The friends didn't move. The lady pulled out a gun and aimed it in their direction. "Move to where he says. No funny business. I don't have a problem using this." She signaled with her gun the direction the friends had to move.

They went behind a group of rocks. The man pushed a button. A door painted to look like the surrounding rock wall opened. They were directed into another tunnel which led to another cave.

The friends gasped at what they saw. There were small unicorns pulling carts holding small crates of dirt to a large wash area. The dirt in the crates were lifted by a mini crane and emptied into a large tub. Water squirted out of a tap to wash the dirt away. Small elf-like people used their hands to sort through the muddy water. Evette could see they worked in fear as a well-trained guard dog supervised.



The man spoke to the Adam and John. "You two get to work using picks to carve into the walls of this cave." He handed them two picks. He ordered, "Start over on the far wall."

To Jane and Evette, he handed two buckets. "Your boyfriends will load the dirt into the buckets and then you carry them over to the wash area."

The lady who was pointing the gun at them now handed them a bucket each. "Start," she ordered.

When it was rest and food time, the friends were handed some sandwiches and water. Adam said in a whisper, "This is slave labour. We have to get out of here and free the . . . unicorns and, I think they are elves."

Jane nodded. "That dog is a problem. Get him out of the way, then we can do something about this."

Adam sighed. "What can we do?" Adam looked around. "There is nothing to distract the dog. I am going to take a risk. There are stones in the wall. I will get a few and toss them around to see what the dog does? With luck, it will mistake the stones for balls and chase after the stones. Evette, you are the fastest runner. I want you to run as fast as you can to the door we came through. The door on this side opens electronically. Go through the doors, through the tunnel, and back to the cave. Search for a way out."

When ordered back to work, Adam found a few roundish stones and a few flat stones. He threw a flat stone at the dog to draw its attention. The dog looked at Adam with menacing eyes and a drooling mouth. He threw another stone at the dog. The dog spun around. He was ready to start attacking when Adam threw a roundish stone. The dogs ran after the stone. Evette ran from the wash area to the door. It opened. She ran into the tunnel and back to the cave. To Adam's surprise, the dog returned the stone and was wagging their tail, asking for more. Adam threw the slobber-ridden stone again. This time, Jane ran to the door and was followed by three elves.

Adam gave John a nod. "Your turn. Can you make the distance? We are twice as far away."

John looked nervous. "I better. But what about you?"

"The dog must think it is reward time." He opened his backpack which was leaning against a wall. "Let's see if the dog wants a bit of dinner. We both move slowly towards the wash area." The boys slowly fed the dogs bits of jerky as they moved towards the wash area. They were at the wash area when Adam threw the stone again and two bits of jerky. The dog was a bit confused and ran for the stone first, then stopped to turn for the bits of jerky. Adam and John ran for the door. The remaining three elves followed. The door slammed behind them.

As soon as the friends and the elves were safe, one of the elves beckoned them to follow. The elves went through a small tunnel which went upwards. Adam, John, Evette, and Jane had to crawl. After ten minutes of crawling, the tunnel came to an end. They were back at the first cave with the slow-moving water. The elves signaled for the group to leave.

The friends tried to thank the elves but weren't sure if the elves understood. Jane said when they were outside, "It must have been the elves who shifted Leigh out to the entrance."

The group turned at the entrance to wave goodbye to the elves, but the elves had already disappeared.

It was getting dark. The group walked as quickly as they could back to their camp, only to find a rescue team was preparing for a search. Adam asked, "What is going on? Who is lost?"

The police officer in charge gave them a grim look. "You are. You have been away for two days." We found your notes. That was a help. We found the note on the cave wall saying the girls disappeared. We couldn't find any other clues."

The friends were confused. We have only been away for six hours. You say two days? How?"

Their father came towards them. "It has been two days of overdue time."

Adam said in an annoyed manner, “Yeah. Only six hours.”

“Don’t lie to me. Where are your backpacks?”

Evette tried to explain what had happened. No one believed her. Her father was particularly angry.

“Don’t give me fairy tales. You are all a bit too old for that.”

John put his hand in his pockets hoping a gemstone could be found. He smiled and held up a ruby. “Here’s the proof. The people in the cave missed this stone when they made us empty out our pockets.”

The people looked at the ruby and gulped at its size. John added, “The mountains are full of gems, all sorts of gems and different sizes. And the elves and the unicorns are real. We freed the elves, but the unicorns were pulling carts filled with heavy dirt and didn’t try to escape.”

“Okay,” said the policeman. “Now pull the other leg. I get the ruby and other precious stones and you lost time exploring for more. That is natural. It is called fossicking fever.”

The friends protested. Jane added in frustration, “Our imaginations aren’t that great.”

The twins' father said, "We will talk about this at home. Jane and John, both of your parents are at my place. Pack up your stuff and get into the car. You are all banned from coming up here ever again. No ifs, buts, or excuses."



A Chapter 6

dam, Evette, John, and Jane sat in the school library. They had a pile of books around them.

They were searching for pictures and descriptions of fairy tales which had unicorns and elves. Jane found a picture of a unicorn. She brought the group's attention to the picture and read the details.

“A mythical creature in fairy tales. They were supposed to be happy, strong, loyal, and obedient creatures. They were supposed to be a bit smaller than the modern horse. They could have been the size of a Shetland pony.”

Adam looked at the picture. “Hmm. If this is true, the unicorns would have been confused by us escaping with the elves. They are loyal no matter what is served out to them. Bah.”

He put the book down. “Dumb animals.”

John was helping Adam look for unicorns and elves using the library's internet. “Hey, this is strange. Really weird.”

Everyone looked at John. “I'll be damned,” he whispered. He looked at the others. “Okay the cute

creatures are mentioned in the Bible.” Get me a Bible and check it out.

Evette brought a Bible over to the table. “Okay where is it?”

John said, “The first reference is Numbers 23:22 and the second is Deuteronomy 33:17. Adam found the references. “It’s confusing. It is likened to a bull and later to a goat. A dead end. They don’t know what it is either. Goats and bulls have two horns, not one. Only a rhino has a single horn. Maybe they didn’t have a word for rhino back then and mistakenly called it a bull or goat as the closest thing they could relate it to. The biblical unicorn could be a goat, a bull, or a rhino. Not much help.”

Jane opened another book. “It says here, unicorns were described in India, China, and in South America. But that was going back well over 10,000 years ago. Weird. Just weird.”

Adam muttered, “When things are lost in antiquity, it becomes mythical. That would make sense. Over the centuries, the stories get tangled from generation to generation. The storytellers lost bits of the original story or died before the next generation perfected the stories. The new custodians had to add their own ideas to fill the gaps.”

Evette sat in thought before adding. “Just suppose the mythical descriptions are right. Now all our parents and the search team said we were away for two days but

honestly, we thought we were away for six hours. Did we go back in time?"

"Hmm. Okay. Let's go with that very weird thought. Now we did see Pteranodons in the stormy sky that night. What if the events are linked?" said Adam.

"How?" asked John who was very skeptical of the idea.

"Well, I can't figure that out now. Just suppose the storm was like a gateway to the past. It makes an energy field and what if the creatures escape for a while?"

Evette butted in, "No we can't have dinosaurs flying around. That would be terrifying. People, especially children, would be scooped up for food."

Adam smirked. "The dragons just may come out again. Then we would be in big trouble." He made a scary face and raised his hands into a monster stance. "Grr."

Evette jabbed him in the ribs. "Cut that out."

"We can't go back to the upper mountains," said Jane. "We are all banned. But we can go to the caves on the shoreline and look for a passage up to the mountains that way."

Adam and Evette shot a glance at each other. They vowed never to open the doorway to the primeval world. What they saw there was scary. They didn't want to disturb the eggs again if they were still there.

John said in a very decisive way, "I am willing to explore the coastal caves. Anyone coming?"

The other three nodded.



Chapter 7

It was Saturday morning. Jane and John met Adam and Evette at the cave where Adam and Evette found the chest of drawers three years ago. Adam had already told Evette not to let the others know about the buried chest.

They climbed the notches Adam and Evette created years ago. This time, they went higher up taking one ledge at a time. Adam said, “We are much higher than we have ever been before. Still, we see no passageways or caverns and no more ledges. Let’s go down to the base again and plan tomorrow’s climb.”

On Sunday, the group met at the same cave. John led them deeper into the cave. “I haven’t been this deep since I was little. Mum and Dad were with me then. If I recall, there is a small tunnel over here.” He pointed the torch to a corner. A shadow marked the entrance. “Here. Be careful. It gets a bit tight. Mum and Dad had to squeeze through, but Tanya and I were little. We had no trouble.”

They walked through the narrow tunnel. Sometimes they had to take their backpacks off and turn sideways to get through. Other times they doubled over or crawled. The tunnel always went upward, making the climb slower and more, slightly more, dangerous. When they came across a mini cave, they sat down to rest and ate some snacks. As they ate, Adam shone the torch around. “I think this is a dead end as well.”



Jane shone her torch to one corner and walked over to a rock. She grinned. Behind the rock was soft dirt. She picked a clear stone out of the dirt. She walked back to the others. She held up the clear stone. “I am not sure if this is a diamond or clear quartz. It is too hard to tell in this light. Also, I think a professional will determine the results. I found it over there.” She pointed. She walked with the others to the location. More shiny stones could be seen. They dug at the dirt and stuffed their pockets with assorted stones. “Let’s

go home. We have been in here for nearly three hours. We don't want another search party coming for us or have another ban placed on us."

When they were on the beach again, the friends took out the stones and examined them in the fading daylight. "I think most of the clear ones are quartz," said Jane.

"Maybe," said Evette. "There is a gemologist on the mainland. I could ring him up and make an appointment with him. I want someone to come with me. Adam, are you coming?"

"No. It's my judo afternoon."

John said, "I will come with you. I am free."



Chapter 8

After school, Evette and John crossed to the mainland by ferry. They found the gemologist in a quiet street which was a mix of houses and shops. The man opened the door and ushered them into his work room. Evette pulled out the stone she first found. Shyly, she asked, “Can you tell me what stone this is?”

The man did some tests and even tossed it a little in the air as he went from one test workstation to the next. When he walked over to Evette and John, he asked, “Where did you find this?”

“On the beach,” lied John. “Just above the shoreline. In the dirt area, not the sandy part.”

The man nodded. He smiled. “Sometimes people from Dragon’s Lair bring me stones. Most are semi-precious; some are junk, but every so often, something like this happens. A real diamond. It is not a super A grade one which is craved over for high-end jewelry for the very, very rich. It is a class C. It is still of good quality, just not as valuable as a class A. Do you want

me to shape it into a wearable piece ready for any jeweler to set into a ring or pendant?”

John asked, “How much will that cost?”

“About two hundred dollars. It’s a big stone. It will add value to it. At this moment it is worth about one hundred and fifty dollars. Add the cutting cost, three hundred and fifty cost. If you sell it after cutting, then don’t sell it for less than one thousand dollars”. Evette was shaking at the amount of money. She stuttered, “We—We will have to think about it.”

She tugged on John to go outside. After a short discussion and a call to Jane and then to Adam who was just finishing his judo lesson, Evette who had all their agreements walked back to the gemologist. “We don’t have that kind of money to make it into a sellable stone. How about we sell it to you as is, three hundred dollars.”

After a lot of haggling, the gemologist relented at two hundred and fifty dollars. He said, “Kid, you drive a hard bargain.”

John nodded. “She has always been a toughy. If we find any more, we will come back.”

The gemologist chuckled. “I very much doubt it. People generally just find one or two but no more.”

Evette and John laughed. John pointed his fingers like a gun. “If we find more, we will be back.”

“You’re both dreaming,” said the man.

As Evette and John walked out, the man whispered, “Kids.” The man looked at the stone again and placed it in a safe. He thought to himself, *If the island goes under water, I will be out of business. The number of precious and semi-precious stones which come in is surprising. Now kids are starting to find them.* He entered the finding in a logbook: finder, where they found it, and stone. Then he went back through the journal. *This year, I have bought fifty stones from Dragon’s Lair. Surely the politicians still can’t go ahead with the flooding.*

The man sat down and drafted another protest letter. This time he added, **“Dragon’s Lair is loaded with precious stones.”**



He included three pictures of stones with the letter. Each picture showed a before and after cut. He included a picture of the newest acquisition, the C grade diamond. He set about cutting the diamond to be ready for sale. He took another picture and smiled. *This has got to work. The island has to be saved and precious and semi-precious stones could be the reason not to drown the place.* Then he posted the letter he sent a copy to the local newspaper.

Evette, Jane, John, and Adam gulped when they saw how their stone looked before and after cutting. John whistled at the transformation and the price tag. John read out the price to the others, “I am glad we bargained our price from one-hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty. He must have worked all night to cut the stone. Allowing for that, hmm, I suppose seven hundred dollars would be a fair price.”

Jane scoffed, “Since when did you suddenly become an accountant calculating everything down to the last cent?”

“Yesterday. You should have heard Evette haggle with the guy,” said John. “She is a toughy.”

“Yeah, I know she can haggle. You should see her in action at the markets. Some people won’t serve her. She gets chased away.”

Chapter 9

It was the weekend again. John, Jane, Adam, and Evette were at the base of the mountain which had the cave with the gems. John looked at the outside using a pair of binoculars. He saw the ledge where he guessed the gem cave was. “I think we can save time by going up the outside. There is a path, well a rough path to that ledge. We can make that the first stop.”



Jane sent a text message to her mother. It read, **“At Eastpit. Going up a path to the lookout with Evette, Adam, and John.”**

The group took just an hour to reach the lookout. They sat for a while and looked at the view. They could see the main town and its airport.

Adam counted ten planes. “I really don’t want to live on the other side of the airport. We have only been here for fifteen minutes, and I counted five planes arriving and three taking off. We better find something unique. The gemologist’s article could have started the ball rolling as to why Dragon’s Lair should be saved. But I don’t want it to be a mining pit either. That would be just as bad.”

John looked across to the airport and frowned at the sight. “Come on. We have some exploring to do.”

Jane pointed to an archway. Jane taped another note on the wall with an arrow. **“Jane, Adam, Evette, and John went this way at 9:45 a.m.”**

Let’s go through there. It looks safer than going around the edge of the ledge.” They walked through the narrow arch. The arch gave a few twists. A new cave was to their left. Another note was taped to the wall. **“We went this way in the cave.”**

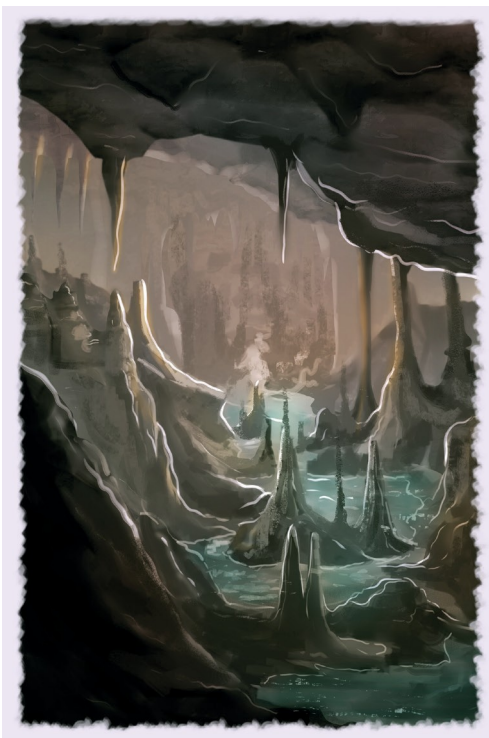
They walked in.

Jane whistled. “I am sure this is the same cave were in yesterday.” She walked to where the soft dirt with gemstones were found. “Yep, definitely the same cave.” She looked around, shining the torch higher up. “Adam, do you have your large led light torch?”

Adam pulled out a large torch. “Shine it up there,” Jane requested.

Adam shone the torch high up to the ceiling. He stared. "I have a feeling we are behind or under the cave with the stalactites and stalagmites. Let's go up."

When the group reached the top, they double checked. It was the same cave with the slow-moving water and the stalactites and stalagmites. "Let's look around more. Keep away from that narrow opening which goes to the next tunnel. We don't want to be slaves again," said John.



The group shone their torches around the cave. Jane and Evette walked around the limestone structures. They examined any new possible opening. Adam and John were examining the slow-moving water, checking out the entry and the exit. Adam shone his torch down a hole where the water disappeared into. He laid on his stomach, his head over the edge and his torch was shining through the gap. He pulled himself up and tried to wipe himself down. His shirt front was muddy.

“There is a new cave under us. It looks a bit dangerous. I don’t think we should go inside.”

John also inspected it. “You are right.” He was pulling his arm out of the gap. He screamed as he disappeared from sight.

Adam yelled out and drew the attention of the girls. **“John! John! Are you okay? Where are you?”**

The girls ran over. **“No. Not again. John! John!”** They all called out. There was no sound.

“I am going in,” said Adam.

“Not before we send a message to our parents. Wait until I send a text.” She went outside. She made a call to her mother, but the signal was weak. It went out three times. Evette was still confident her message got through. Then she tried again to the police station. Again, the signal was weak and had to reconnect a few more times. She was more than certain the police and the rescue team that will follow, after having an idea where they were. She drew up a note and placed it at the cave entrance. Then she placed another pointing down to the water and the gap where John disappeared. “Okay. I think we have done all our note finding trail. Let’s go after John.”

Evette, Jane, and Adam went through the opening just where the water disappeared. They were all wet when they were inside the new cave. They looked around the new surroundings. To the side of the cave,

John was tied to a crude chair placed on what looked like a mound of rocks. He looked unconscious. His head lolled to one side. When Adam approached him, he received a zap of electricity. Adam swore as he was pushed back. “He’s behind some electric barrier. We have to find a switch. Look for a switch. Start searching.”



Minutes later, Adam called out, “I see a door. Maybe the switch is behind the door.”

The girls ran over to Adam. “Look for a key,” ordered Adam. “There has to be one around somewhere.” No matter how they tried, there was no key. Evette whispered to Adam when Jane was a few metres away, “I know we said we will never again open the box with the Key, the Ring and the Coin, but we just may have to.”

Adam hesitated and looked across to Jane who was still searching. “I really don’t want to bring them back.”

Evette almost demanded, “It is an emergency. We don’t have a choice.” Adam flashed his eyes over to Jane. She was still searching but had already moved further away to search another area.



Chapter 10

“**A**bracadabra, box appear.”
“Abracadabra, box appear.”

The box appeared. It floated above Adam’s and Evette’s heads. The hidden drawer slid out. The Key, the Ring, and the Coin jumped out and ran in circles around the box.

The Key spoke. “Hey, you guys took your time about letting us out for a while.”

“Sorry,” whispered Adam and Evette.

The Key, the Coin, and the Ring stopped swirling around and floated in the air. The Ring gave a whistle, “Gee, Evette, you are all grown up. Oh, so pretty. Do you mind if I slip onto your pretty hands?”

Before Evette could answer, the Ring slipped onto her right ring finger. “This is so comfy now.” The Ring sighed and hugged her finger. “Home at last.”

The Coin swirled around and looked at Adam. “How have you been old friend?”

“Good and very busy,” said Adam who was getting worried if Jane was going to look over.

The Coin said, "She can't see or hear us. We put a mind block on her. She is kind of cute." The Coin zoomed over to Jane and went up and down. Then the Coin zoomed back. "Your girlfriend?" asked the Coin.

"Just a good friend," said Adam and Evette together.

The Coin gave Evette a frown, "I wasn't talking to you. She's Adam's girlfriend and you're just a good friend to her."

"Okay. Okay," said Evette not wanting to make the Coin grumpy.

The Key interrupted the Coin. "Adam, why are we in this cave?"

"We need the Key to open the door. Our friend John is trapped behind some electric charged screen. We have to turn the power off to save him."

The Key flew to the electric field and saw John sitting on a chair. He cringed at what he saw.

"You have to leave him here. John has to stay or there will be consequences."

Adam asked, "What consequences could there be?"

The Key shook. "He is sitting on the White Dragon Queen's throne. The old queen is a bit loopy in the head and thinks any male entering her chambers is hers for whatever purpose she desires."

Adam and Evette were stunned. Adam asked, "The White Dragon Queen died centuries ago, didn't she?"

“Well, yes. Well, no.”

“Which is it?” asked Evette.

“Hmm. I . . . err . . . don’t know for sure,” said the Key. “All I know she is supposed to be grumpier and uglier because she has been by herself for so long.” The Key swayed from side to side. “John stays there. If he goes, then she may release her pet birds to take revenge on the thieves.”

Adam asked, “The Pteranodons?”

“Is that what they are?” asked the Key. “Those ugly big things.”

Evette and Adam nodded.

“Key,” ordered Adam, “Open the door or else.”

The Key shook and protested. “Or else what?”

“I will toss you in that shield,” said Adam.

“Okay. Okay. I warned you. There will be consequences.”

“Open the door,” ordered Adam.

“Okay, bossy boots. You being older doesn’t make you any better, just bossier. You might lose some skills.”

“I will face those consequences.”

The Key slid into the keyhole. Click. The Key remained in the keyhole. The Coin flew into Adam’s top pocket. The box hid itself behind some stones.

Adam called out, “Jane! Jane! I have the door open.”

Jane snapped out of her mini trance. “You did?” She walked quickly over to the door.

Adam found three switches on the left side of the door. He pushed each one. The first one turned on some lights—soft lights which lit up a possible tunnel and the cave they were in. Another switch turned on some noisy machinery. Adam shut the switch off again. He pushed another switch. He looked across to where John was sitting. The electric shield was turned off.

John started to move slowly, then he realized he was tied up. John started to call out and wriggle.

Adam and Evette ran to him. Jane shortly followed. They untied John.

“Let’s get out of here,” said Jane.

There was a noise behind them—a shuffling noise which gave them the chills. They all spun around to see the old White Dragon Queen lumbering behind them. Her voice was raspy and loud. “How dare you take my knight.”

Jane and Evette mouthed, “Knight?”

Adam was speechless. The White Dragon Queen came closer and looked at Adam carefully. “A rival knight, eh? Only one can survive a fight to the death.”

John was becoming more alert. “No. No, we are not rivals. Friends.”

“Umph. Knights can never be friends,” she roared.



“We are,” protested John. “Best of friends.”

The Queen examined Evette and Jane. “Maidens with knights. This will never do.” She looked sternly at the girls. “The knights are mine. Do you understand?”

Both girls nodded. Both were too frightened to say a word.

When the White Dragon stepped closer, Evette tried to shield her face. Her hand with the ring caught the White Dragon's attention. "Where did you get that ring?"

Evette stuttered, "Adam and I found it many years ago. We hid it for a long time. We kept it safe. We don't know the owner of the ring."

The Queen took Evette's hand and spoke to the ring, "I order you onto my claw. Ring, you are home."

The Ring yelled back, "This is my home. You are not the owner. You are the thief who took me away from my owner. I want to stay with Evette. She is good and kind, and I love her."

The Queen became furious. "If you don't get onto my claw, I will rip Evette's arm off."



With the threat, the Ring slipped off Evette's finger and onto the claw of the dragon. Instantly, the White Dragon looked younger. She felt stronger, and her skin was less wrinkled with age.

The Queen turned her attention at the new arrivals. "Knights, you say you are friends. Then I will test this friendship. You have a quest. The first one back alive will be saved and be my companion. The loser will be banished to the primeval world until he slays one creature. When he does that, he will be free to go." John and Adam looked at each other with fear. This was a twist they never expected.

Evette and Jane looked worried. "Is this for real?" Jane whispered under her breath.

The Queen looked at Jane with disdain. "Of course, it is for real. Nobody leaves this place until they have completed their tasks." The Queen swung around and pointed at the girls. "You two have a quest as well. The one who wins will be free to go. The loser remains and becomes my servant."

The Queen strode around the group. She examined everyone in detail. "Maidens. Your quest is to find my coin. Many years ago, I had a coin. It disappeared. It was a magical coin."

"What does it do?" asked Jane.

The Queen glared. “To you, it is just a coin. To me, it is precious.”

“What does it look like?” asked Evette. “We need to know so we can identify it.”

The Queen nodded. “Very well. It is round like many other coins. It has writing—writing of the dragons from the Old Kingdom. It talks and can do tricks.”

Instantly, Evette and Adam thought about the Coin hiding in Adam's pocket.

Adam felt the Coin move. It started shaking. Adam placed his hand over the pocket to hide the shaking that was becoming visible through the fabric. To divert attention, Adam asked, “And what is the quest for the knights?”

The Queen rolled her eyes. “The same quest as knights have done before.”

“Sorry,” said Adam. “We are not of this realm. What is the quest?”

She swung around quickly. Her tail lashed against John's leg. He fell to the ground.

“Many years ago, the dragon clan of the west hid a dear friend of mine. He was a magician who taught my special coin to do tricks. He needs to be found and brought back.”



Adam gulped. The only magician he knew was the one he and Evette returned to the nest in the primeval world. *Surely it can't be him*, thought Adam. *Banished to live his days in an egg and only to come out when the tasks of the bronze egg are completed. Please, no repeat.*

The Queen saw Adam was deep in thought. She leaned closer to his face and tried bluffing. “Young knight, I think you know where my magician friend is hiding.”

In a louder voice and her nose almost touching Adam's face, she said louder, "Bring my magician to me. Like yesterday." She shouted, "**Both knights leave now!**"

She gave Adam and John a shove. "**Out! Go! Now!**"

The Queen turned to Jane and Evette. "Now my sweet young ladies, start looking for the coin." Then she roared. "**Out! Go! Now!**"

She pushed the girls out of the cave. Jane and Evette scrambled out and ran.

When the White Dragon left the cave, the Key flew out of the keyhole in the cave door. It caught up with Adam and slipped into his shirt pocket where the Coin was hiding. Adam said, "The box! I forgot the box!" He looked back to the cave only to see the box flying towards him. "Key, Coin, jump into the box." The box opened its secret compartment for the Key and the Coin.

John asked, "They speak? They are animated? How did you find them?"

Adam said, "It's a long story. I'll tell you when we get back down."

"Abracadabra. Box, disappear," said Adam.

The box vanished into thin air. John gasped.

"Cool trick," said John. "How long have you been practicing that?"

Adam just held his finger up to his mouth. “Trade secret. Shh!”

They met Evette and Jane at the bottom of the mountain. They looked around. It was dark. They were on the path home when they saw their parents. John’s father said, “Just where on the outside of the mountains were you all? We went up and looked, but we couldn’t find you. Do you realize what time it is?”

John looked at his watch and swore. “I, we lost track of time again.”

“Lost track of time? What nonsense is that?”

Adam tried to explain, but he realized it was useless. All he could think of was entering deep into the caves on Dragon’s Lair, time either stood still or they were thrown into a different dimension.

When the group arrived at Adam’s and Evette’s home, they were heavily questioned. John was close to exploding and at the end, he yelled out a lie. “We were fossicking and lost track of time. There! Is that good enough?”

His parents’ mouths dropped. “That sounds more like it. Did you find anything?”

Knowing he still had a gem in his pocket from a previous trip, John pulled it out and angrily tossed it to his mother. “I don’t know for sure what it is. Dad can get it cut for your birthday. I was going to keep it as a surprise.”

John's mother, Kate, caught the small stone.

"Where did you find this?"

"In one cave, there are lots of stones and dangers. Now can we go home!"

Jane's mother said firmly, "No more caving for a week. This is the second time you all lost time as you all put it and caused us to worry."

At school, Adam, Evette, Jane, and John sat in a corner of the basketball stand. Jane complained about her parents keeping a close watch. "Evette and I will never be able to find that old coin, more so when mum and dad are picking me up every day after school, well for this week."

Adam just smiled and assured her. "Don't worry. The Coin is with the Key, the one which vanished. Evette and I found it years ago and hid it from the adults, especially the museum mob. Shh!"

Evette said, "We also know where the magician is hiding as well. It is very dangerous to get to."

"Really?" questioned John.

Adam and Evette nodded.

Evette chuckled. "I wonder if Queen dies, is her old skin good for making handbags and shoes."

Jane laughed. "Yeah. She is a bit of work."



Chapter 11

It was Saturday morning when the friends met again. Adam said, “We are going into the cave where people never come back. We don’t go deep into the cave, just near the front. I hope the footholds we made years ago are still there.”

“Wait a minute. We are going into that place, the place of ghosts?” asked John.

“No ghosts,” replied Evette. “And you have already been inside it once. We just didn’t show you where to go. It’s dangerous.”

Adam and Evette led the way to the cave. They scaled the footholds to the ledge and pointed towards the back of a small tunnel. When they reached the back of the tunnel, where the chest of drawers was hidden, Adam gave further instructions. “We now have to remove this mound of dirt. In here is a chest of drawers which act as a doorway to a primeval world.”

Jane dropped her hand spade. “You two have been telling tall stories all day. Primeval world? Get real.”

After twenty minutes of digging, the chest slowly revealed itself. Adam ordered, “Stand back.

Abracadabra, box appear.”

The box appeared and the secret compartment of the door opened.

“Key. Open the chest, please.”

The Key flew towards the lock in the middle drawer of the chest. It slipped effortlessly into the lock.

John and Jane gasped and watched with astonishment. “That was a cool trick,” said John who was now doubting his own eyes.

Click. There was a rattling sound, and the floor shook before the door creaked open.

Evette put her head through the opening and pulled it back quickly. She shut the door faster than opening it. “There is a jumbo turkey right outside. I nearly kissed its bottom.”

The Key squeaked, “Lock the door! Lock the door!”

John and Jane almost fainted when they heard the Key speak. Adam locked the door.

“That . . . That thing can speak?” stuttered John. “I thought you were pretending to be a ventriloquist last time and I played along with it.”

“There is more to come,” said Adam. “Get ready for an adventure of a lifetime.”

Evette said, “I think we should come back tomorrow. I don’t think that turkey is going to leave.”

The others agreed. Adam said, "We will only half cover the chest."

The Key flew into Adam's pocket and said, "Cover it up! Cover it up. If those birds get out, we'll all be dinner."

On Sunday morning, the friends were standing in the cave where the chest of drawers was hidden. Again, they removed the dirt. The Key unlocked the door again. Adam put his head through and checked the surroundings. "All clear. No birds of any kind. No other animals. Stay here. I will get the eggs."

Adam ran to the nest and stuffed three eggs into a padded bag. He ran as fast as he could to the door. Evette slammed the door as soon as Adam was inside. The Key locked the door and then squeaked, "Cover the chest. Cover the chest!" The Key flew into Adam's shirt pocket and trembled. The friends stared at the door when they heard a loud thud. Evette panicked and started covering the chest again but at a much faster speed. "Help me cover this thing."

An hour later, the friends were outside the cave. They were hot and sweaty. John walked over to the cave where the dragon shaped rock guarded the entrance. The others followed. Adam said, "We can't expose the eggs here. Too many people around. The cubby house was dismantled last year. It was damaged by the series of storms. We have to find a quiet place."

Jane said, “There is an old shed just off the main path to the beach. We can go there.”

“I know the one you mean. Is it safe to go inside? It sways a bit in the wind,” commented John.

“There isn’t much choice since the cubby is gone,” said Evette. “Let’s go.”

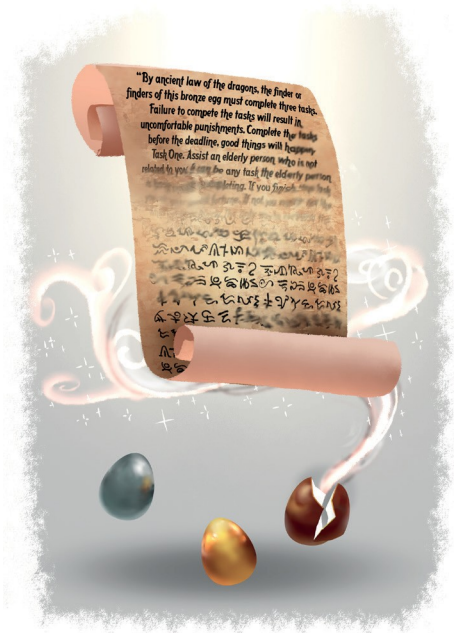
They walked to the old shed which was long deserted. They entered and sat in a circle in the middle. Adam took out the eggs one by one and placed them carefully in the middle of the group. Evette explained, “The eggs are magical. Expect something unexpected.”

“What happens now?” asked John.

“We wait,” said Evette. “While we are waiting, we can have some drinks and snacks. I am hungry. I don’t know about you guys.”

Thirty minutes later, the Bronze Egg rattled and cracked open. The scroll came out. Adam said, “We have done the tasks as required. We need to speak to the Magician.”

The Bronze Egg’s scroll rolled up and disappeared. At the same time the egg squeaked back, “He’s on a holiday.”



Evette and Adam were not convinced. "How did he escape out of the Silver Egg?"

The Bronze Egg rattled. "He felt the vibrations of the White Dragon. Then he said he was going on a holiday."

Adam scoffed, "You mean he really ran away."

"You may call it that. Okay, he ran away. We prefer to call it active avoidance. He doesn't like the Old Girl. Not his type."

Evette said, "I can sympathize with that. She isn't the nicest of characters."

"He disliked her since the White Dragon converted his stage helpers into elves with a spell and hid them away. He was furious."

"Where did he go for his holiday?" asked Adam.

The Bronze Egg went silent and closed up.

The Golden Egg opened. Glitter spewed out like a volcano. "We can't tell you because he didn't tell us where he went."

Evette said, "We have seen the elves and unicorns."

"What? You have seen unicorns and elves?" asked the Golden Egg.

All four of the friends nodded.

Evette said, "The elves were enslaved to work the caves for gems for some bad humans. We freed the elves,

but they returned. The unicorns didn't come. Maybe the carts with crates on them stopped them or they were too placid. The elves helped us out of the cave and disappeared."

The Golden Egg thought about the information. "If we can free the elves, the Magician may come out of hiding. The unicorns are from the ancient world. They are placid and beautiful creatures."

"What can we do to free the elves and the unicorns?" asked John who was now getting used to the idea of talking to eggs.

"There is an ancient coin which the White Queen lost centuries ago. If you find it and use it as payment, the elves will be returned to human form. But a spell is also required. We don't know what the spell is or if anyone can say the spell. As for the unicorns, I really don't know.

"The White Dragon said it was a precious coin which could do tricks.

"Yes, it is precious for keeping unicorns and elves locked up. The Coin can do tricks, just basic magician stuff. There could be more to the coin than she is letting on. The Queen is very sly and dangerous."

Evette was thinking hard. "The White Dragon Queen thinks Adam and John are competing knights who have the quest to return the Magician to her. She thinks we are maids. One of us will be set free and

the other becomes a servant. Now you tell us, not in a roundabout way, do we have to work for you to set everything back?”



The Silver Egg opened to join the Bronze Egg. They bounced up and down tossing more glitter in the air. “Yeah. Double agents,” said both eggs.

They danced around and began singing.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

The White Dragon will be dead.

The mean White Dragon will be dead.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Sing it high. Sing it low.

Sing it loud. Sing it softly.

Sing it across Dragon’s Lair!

Evette asked, “What will happen when the Queen is dead. I mean really happen?”

The eggs stopped singing.

The Golden Egg yelled out, “What is all the singing about? Nothing has happened yet. I really don’t know what will happen if the White Dragon is dead. The main thing is we will have our freedom. Hiding in the primeval world wasn’t fun. You never knew when the big birds or other creatures would decide to have you for dinner or trample on you with their big, fat feet.”

The Golden Egg swirled around the group of friends. It paused over each head and gave a sprinkle of glitter. He said, “The glitter is protection. If you injure yourselves, you will heal very quickly. Bones will take a bit longer to heal.”

Then the Egg floated over the group of friends again.

“To John, I give the ability to see in the dark, just as good as you see in daytime. Also, the ability to walk through doors and walls no thicker than one hundred centimeters.”

The Golden Egg touched each of John's eyes and rammed through John's body. John felt winded—as if he was punched in the stomach.

Then he went to Adam. “I give you the gift of sharp hearing. You will be able to hear through doors and walls up to a half a meter thick. The sound will be just as good as you are hearing us now. Walls any thicker, will be softer, if not muffled. Also, I will sharpen your sense of smell. Not to bloodhound level, but sharper than what you have now.”

The Golden Egg touched each of Adam's ears and bounced twice on his nose.

The Golden Egg swirled around the girls and thought about each. “Aha! Evette, you are already a fast runner and good at sports. I will add physical strength to the list.”

He stopped for a second. “Hmm, okay this is going to be the big one. The ability to levitate up to ten meters high.”

The Golden Egg went inside Evette's toes and exited out of her head.

Evette gave a soft
“ouch.”

“Sorry,” said the
Golden Egg.

Then the Golden
Egg swirled around
Jane.

It looked at Jane.
“Hmm. Difficult.”

He flew around
her a few times,
thinking of what
she needed to have.
“I have it now. You
are going to be
everyone’s back up,

but you can’t have the same power or strength as the
others as it will be far too much for your body to
handle.”

The Golden Egg touched her eyes, ears, nose, and
went through her and around her. When it finished,
the Golden Egg said, “You can do all the things the
others can do but at quarter level.”

The Golden Egg hovered a little more and addressed
the friends. “These special powers will not operate
in the human world. They will operate only in this
magical world. They will disappear when the White



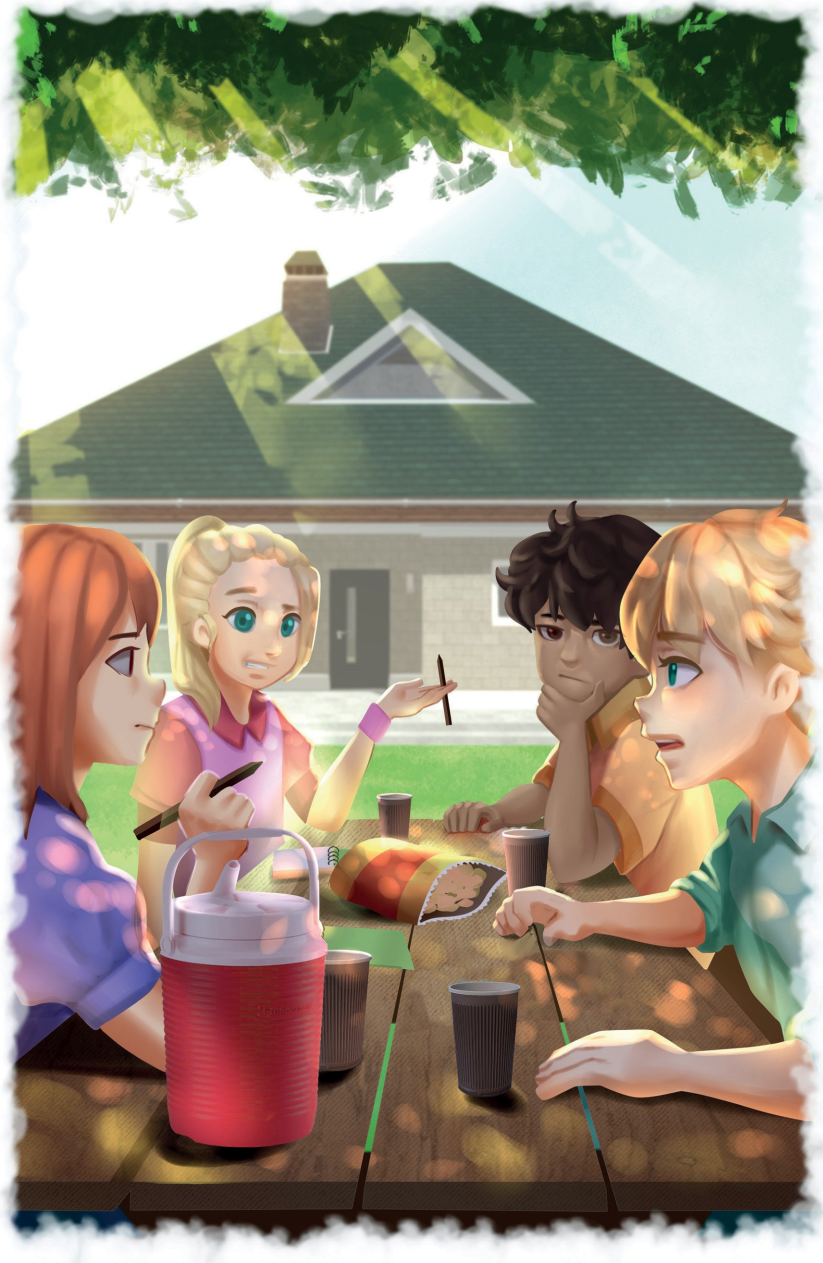
Dragon Queen is dead or when the tasks are completed. Now go home. No talking about this. It has to remain secret. The Wind has ears and is a blabbermouth. We don't want the Wind to tell the White Dragon. Shhh!"

All the eggs closed up and jumped into Adam's bag. Evette said, "We better find a place to hide the eggs. Where is the old box?"

"Under my bed," said Adam.

"Not a good place for the eggs. Put it on the top shelf of your cupboard. Put something in front of it so Mum or Dad don't see it and get curious."

As the friends parted, John said, "We get started next weekend. The school holidays will be coming up soon."



Chapter 12

It was Saturday again. The four friends gathered at John's home under a large tree in the backyard. John had already set up a foldaway picnic table and chairs. He placed a pack of cards on the table just in case someone was asking what they are doing. Then he added a jug of cold water and four plastic cups. He was now ready for the others.

Adam and Evette arrived carrying a small note pad, a pen, a bag of chips, and bottle of soft drink. Jane arrived minutes later with another note pad, two pens, and a tray of four apple and cinnamon muffins. The food was placed on the table. The pads and pens were at the ready.

John sighed. "Let's get started with the job list."

Jane wrote on her pad.

- Jane and Evette's job is to find the Coin.
- The Coin does simple magic tricks and can buy the elves and hopefully set the unicorns free.
- We have the Coin. There could be more to the Coin. What?

Adam wrote on his pad.

- John and Adam to find the Magician. Magician is hiding. He needs his stagehands back for exchange.
- We need a spell. What and where is the spell?

Adam drummed the pen on the pad. “Everything looks simple, but it is really hard. Hard. Hard.”

John added, “Don’t forget the White Dragon Queen’s penalties. Ugh!”

“That’s a huge problem. If we do it right, one of us gets punished. If we do it wrong? Ugh. The magical world is twisted,” said Adam as he recalled being changed into a donkey and a goat.

Evette saw the expressions on Jane’s and John’s faces and quickly explained what had happened in the past. Neither John nor Jane was impressed. Jane added, “We have to do things in order and present everything at the same time.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Evette.

“Well, the Coin is the starting place. Somehow, we have to give back the Coin for elves and unicorns to be freed. The Magician won’t do anything because he doesn’t like the Queen. We have got to plan this really well. The Queen grew younger when she got the Ring back. If she gets the Coin back, she could

become younger, stronger, and more powerful. That would be disastrous for everyone. I really doubt she would keep her promises. Doesn't the legend say she turned an injured dragon into stone? You know the one at the cave entrance," Jane said as she tried hard to sum up what had already happened and her distrust of the Queen. "She just might turn us all into stones or statues. Not exactly my way of achieving immortality. That wouldn't be nice for all."

Adam thought about what Jane had said. "I think we need to present ourselves to the Queen. I have a few ideas. Abracadabra, box appear."

The box appeared, and the drawer opened up. Adam asked, "Coin, tell me more about yourself. What you like, can do, your strengths and weakness, and what you would like to happen."

The Coin floated around the table. "I can do some magic tricks, just simple ones. The Magician taught me. I like being with the Key and I miss the Ring. She was so cute and fun to be with."

Adam stuttered, "Is she . . . she your girlfriend?"

The Coin blushed, "Umm. Kind of." The friends gasped at the idea. Jane drew a heart with the Coin and the Ring inside it. "That is what I like and suppose it could be a weakness."

Adam asked, "Is there a way to make you more powerful or stronger?"

The Coin stopped flying around. “I was told when I was created, I needed to be buried or soaked in something.” The Coin sighed. “It was so long ago that I have forgotten what it is.” The Coin started to mutter to itself, “Let me think. Hmm. Umm. No that is not it. Come on, brain, what is it? No. No. Aha. I got it now!” I need to be soaked in lemon juice for two days. The juice has to be changed every twelve hours.”

“What happens then?” asked John who was finding it hard to think lemon juice was going to add power to the Coin.

“I sparkle like the Ring.”

“Is that it?” asked John.

“Hmm. Yes! I sparkle like a brand-new coin. The juice makes me sparkle and someone can read the information on me. It is a spell. When I say the spell, it is released and does its job.”

Exactly what does the spell do?” asked Jane.

“Now you’re asking the million-dollar question. It has been so long I have forgotten. The Coin felt frustrated and began to sob. “I am embarrassed. I have forgotten. Maybe the Magician knows.”

Jane sighed. “The Magician ran away.”

“Oh! Dear. That doesn’t sound good,” said the Coin. “Let me think, where he could be.” The Coin jumped back into the drawer. As he jumped in, the

friends heard a soft command. “Drawer and key, be quiet for a while.”

The friends looked at the floating box as the Key pushed the drawer open again. “I’m staying out here for a bit. The Coin is muttering a lot of gibberish. It’s driving me mad. Now excuse the pun, the key to the problem is we are all doomed. If the Queen becomes more powerful and does not keep her promises, we are doomed. If we fail, we are doomed. And add to that, Dragon’s Lair will be flooded. Doomed! How frustrating.”



Adam thought about what the Key said. “Are you telling me in a very weird way, that if the Queen lives, Dragon’s Lair may have a slim chance of being saved from becoming a dam?”

The Key jumped up and down. “If you put it that way. Yes. If there is no flooding, the Queen still wins. I think she needs a King for company. Just where do we find a King? If she has a King, then she might do away with the idea of keeping a knight and maiden for company. Where do we find a King?” The Key jumped into the Box’s drawer. “Hey Coin! Where do we find a King?”

“That’s it!” yelled the Coin and jumped out of the drawer.

“When I am sparkling and say the magic spell, I become a King of Dragons. I become a red and white dragon. That is a picture of me on the Coin. A King trapped in a Coin doing small magician’s tricks. That’s me.”

Adam frowned, “Okay, she gets her man. What happens then?”

“I don’t know. I might get turned into a stone. I might become a Coin again. I could—” the Coin sobbed. “I could die.” The Coin sniffed and tried to hold back tears.

Adam blew a puff of air. “Everything is a gamble with the chips all sitting with the Queen. Abracadabra, box

disappear.”

Jane looked at her notes. “Wow. We have some serious stuff here. You are right. This magical world just gets stranger and stranger.”

Evette looked back at her old notes. “We have the eggs, the Coin, the Key, and the Box. We lost the Ring and the Magician, and half our brains.”

Adam opened up the packet of muffins and shared them around. “Have some brain food.”

The friends sat quietly, eating the chips and the muffins. They washed them down with water and later soft drink.

Evette said, “I have an idea. If the Dragon King can hide in a Coin—as odd as it may sound—then the Magician has shown he can hide in an egg, then he might hide in something else. Hide in what is the big question. I will write the ideas down. Give me some hiding places.”

For twenty minutes, the friends put forward all the ideas. The list was over sixty possible places.

“I think that is for the day,” said John. “Help me pack this stuff up, just to the door will do. Tanya and Mum will be home soon. How about we think about what we can do and start looking at these places through the week. Next week is the start of the school holidays. On the first week, I will be on holiday with

Mum, Dad, and Tanya. That doesn't mean I won't be looking for the Magician. How about we meet up after the first week of the holidays.”



Chapter 13

The four friends came to the cave where the stone-shaped dragon guarded the entry. The friends sat just inside—a few metres away from the entrance. The wind howled and flicked sand into the air.

“I think another storm is on the way,” said Adam. There was loud roll of thunder quickly followed by a loud bang as fork lightning ripping across the sky. The friends pulled out their phones and dialed home. They all mentioned they were just inside the cave and would wait until the storm passed.

“That will keep our parents happy, knowing where we are and under cover,” said Jane who was now looking outside the cave to see the wind bending over trees on the mainland.

The friends were sitting in a circle trying to ignore the noise outside. Rain started to fall. It fell in strong wind-blown sheets and in all directions. The friends moved a little deeper into the cave.

John and Adam mentioned where they looked for the Magician. Jane and Evette mentioned some of the

places they looked. All drew a blank. Adam stood up and put on his raincoat. “I am going to see if those Pteranodons are flying about. I am just curious.”

He went outside. He tried looking up at the sky. He couldn’t see any bird-shaped shadows and reported to the others. “We must be too low. We can’t climb any mountain in this weather. It’s too dangerous.”

Adam just sat down with the others when they all heard a noise coming from a deeper area of the cave. They all looked. The dark shape turned into a bright light. The friends covered their eyes from the glare. The brightness faded. The Magician appeared before them.

“Hello. I hear you have been looking for me. I am now returning from my holiday and feel better than ever. Being couped up in the Silver Egg can be a bit numbing. I also needed time to think about the Queen and what can be done before facing her. I have a few new tricks up my sleeves.”

The Magician looked at each of the friends. “The Golden Egg has given you powers which will only work in the magical world. I may call on these powers. Now we need to do some practice and get the acts right. Are you ready?”

The friends nodded.

After several attempts, the Magician was pleased with their progress. “Shall we meet here tomorrow and give it another practice to make sure everything

will work? I will have to think about what the Old Girl could do to throw us out of our practiced plan. It is a plan B, and we may need a plan C. Things may change and we may not need any plans at all.”

The rain was easing, and the wind had died down. The Magician vanished. The friends looked at each other, “Well that was interesting,” said John. “We should head back home before our parents get anxious.”



Chapter 14

The next day, the friends and the Magician went in the cave where they met the White Dragon Queen. They walked together, cautiously, towards the Queen who was sitting on her rickety timber throne. She didn't smile. She thought the Magician, the knights, and the maidens would come in one at a time. But here they were in front of her—all five of them holding hands. The two knights were beside the Magician and the two maidens on the outside. Carefully, she eyed the united group.

She stood up and beckoned the Magician to come forward. He let go of the boys' hands. The others continued to hold hands. The Magician took the Coin from his pocket and held it up. "Let me see all the elves. I need to see them first."

The Queen grew more suspicious. "Don't you trust me? How dare you doubt my trust."

The Magician put the Coin in his upper pocket, took a step back, and held the hands of the boys. "Shall we all leave?"

"Yes, Sir," chorused the friends.

They turned around ready to leave.

The Queen yelled, “How dare you turn your backs on me.” She huffed and said something under her breath. It was quickly followed by flames coming out of her mouth and smoke out of her ears.

The group took more steps away from the Queen and didn’t look back. She roared again. No effect.

She got off the throne and ran to the group. With the help of the Magician, the girls and the boys were assisted in levitation. They went three metres into the air. The Queen gasped and flapped her wings, which she hadn’t used for a long time for flying. She barely got off the ground. She fell back with a thud. The group kept moving up and through the air towards the cave exit.

“Okay. Okay!” the Queen said angrily. “I will bring the elves.” She made a whistling noise. The six elves appeared. The group returned to the ground but kept their distance from the Queen.

The six elves that appeared were scared. Every time the Queen whistled, it was always for punishment. When the elves saw the Magician and the children, they were confused. Out of fear, they didn’t say a word and were too scared to greet or smile at the Magician or the children.

Adam whispered to the Magician, “These maybe your stagehands, but there are more elves in the cave

behind the Queen. I can hear their voices.”

The Magician nodded at the new information. “I want to see the other elves as well. No other elves, no bargaining.”

The Queen scoffed and lied. “There are no other elves. They are all I have.”

Adam was going to say something, but the Magician tugged on his hand for silence. “We all know there are more elves. I want all the elves. Now!” He held up the Coin. It glistened like new as it had been soaked in lemon juice. The Queen gasped. “You have revitalized the Coin. Two more elves can be released.”

“No,” said the Magician. “I want all of them.” He put the Coin in his pocket. With the four children, he again started towards the cave exit.

The Queen yelled, “All the elves for the Coin and the two maidens.”

Jane and Evette looked horrified. “The Coin only for all the elves,” said Evette who said it louder than she intended. The Queen walked over the Evette and examined her head to toe. “How dare you bargain with a queen.”

Evette let it slip out, “No queen would treat her subjects with such disdain. There is no regality in that.”

When the Queen heard the comment, she was furious. She roared out fire and almost burned Evette.

“You are so bold. You will be a servant in this realm.”

The queen flicked her tail as she strode around Evette. Evette jumped up to dodge the tail striking her legs. “Oh, my. We do have good reflexes. Hmmm. Very good. I like you for mine work...maybe.”

The Queen patted Evette on the shoulder. Instinctively, Evette pushed the hand away. “Strong too,” said the Queen. “Even better for mine work.”

While the Queen was distracted with Evette, John signaled for the elves to creep towards the cave exit. The Queen spotted the elves going to the exit. She moved as fast as she could while blowing fire out of her mouth. The Queen pointed back to the area in front of her throne. Obediently, they returned. The Queen deliberately stood between the elves and the friends with the Magician. She put her claw out. “The Coin. Now!” she hissed.

“No. The elves must be changed to people again and be at the exit,” said the Magician.

The Queen looked the Magician up and down, stalling for time. “Okay. Elves to the exit.”

When the elves reached the exit, she repeated, “The Coin, please.”

“Not yet. They have to be people first,” repeated the Magician.

The Queen grumbled and looked at the Ring on

her claw. She read the ancient writing, which was the spell, on the outside of the Ring.

“Xotika, Alvor, Elfovia forvanlas till manniskor, kepada manusia.”



The Ring glowed as she said the words. When she finished, the words on the outside of the Ring disappeared.

The elves slowly disappeared into a mist. The mist slowly changed, and the stagehands and the missing people appeared. They were confused at first and then looked around. Too stunned to say anything, they obeyed the Magician. “Welcome back to being humans. Please go through the exit. John will lead you out and down to a ledge with an arch where you can follow him to a campsite.”



Slowly, the people walked out of the cave with John leading the way.

As promised, the Magician removed the Coin from his pocket to hand it over to the Queen. As he was handing over the Coin, the Coin flew into the air and called out, “Catch me if you can.”

The Coin flew in a zig zag pattern across the cave, bouncing up

and down at the same time. Then it flew out of the exit. When the Queen stopped at the exit, she roared with anger. She turned around to see that the Magician and his friends were also gone. The Queen marched through the tunnel where the elves previously stayed. She gasped. The group was there releasing the unicorns from the heavy carts.

“No! No, you don’t” she bellowed. “Leave my precious treasures alone.”

The unicorns shook with fear. They didn’t move. “Unicorns follow me to your stables,” she snarled the order.

Jane, Evette, Adam, and the Magician tried to shield the unicorns, but they did as instructed. The Queen spoke gently to the unicorns as she ushered them into the nearby stalls. All could see her lock the door to the stables. They all returned to the throne room.

The Coin flew back to the main cave with the throne. He teased the Queen. The Queen gave chase to the Coin. Jane used her limited night vision powers to check on the unicorns. She said softly, “We need a key to get the unicorns out.”

Adam said, “You can walk through walls. Can you go in and turn the lock from the inside and get the unicorns out?”

“I have never walked through walls before. I am a bit scared. What if I get stuck.”

“You won’t,” assured Adam. “If the Eggs give you powers, it will work. Try before the Queen gives up chasing the Coin and returns to us.”

Adam gave Jane a shove. “Go.”

Jane just got through the door and turned the lock when the Queen came rushing over. She had noticed Jane wasn’t in the cave with the others. “No, you don’t, my sweet maiden.”

She locked the door from the outside and used her fire breath to melt the lock. Jane swore when she felt the heat melting the lock. Jane walked to the unicorns. She asked, “Is there another door out of this stable?”

One brave unicorn pointed with his horn, as if to say, “That way.”

There was a small, narrow door at the left side of the stable. Jane opened the unlocked door and ushered the unicorns out. She asked the unicorns, “Is there a way out of here? Even if it goes to the mine, it will help.”

The unicorns lined up one behind the other and walked slowly out of the stables. They went behind a cave wall to an entrance leading to the mine.

In the main cave, the Queen kept chasing the Coin. Adam whispered, “Jane is going to lead the unicorns out of here. They are most likely going to the mine first. From there, they can all escape.” The Magician and Evette nodded.

Just then the Queen ran towards them. Evette stuck her foot out. The Queen tripped over it. She summersaulted and landed very unlady-like on the floor. Splat. Slowly the Queen picked herself up and marched over to Evette. "How dare you trip me. I nearly had the Coin."

Evette looked the Queen up and down. "I think you could run faster if you took the Ring off your claw. The weight of the Ring is slowing you down."

The Queen scoffed. "Now that is a lie. The Ring is small and weighs about nothing."

The Ring slid off the Queens claw and teased the Queen, "I think you did enough exercise for an old dragon." With that said, the Ring flew over to the Coin who was catching his breath.

The Ring looked at the shiny Coin and read the words stamped on it. "The King of Dragonia lies within. With the magical words, he will be released to rule again over Dragonia or more commonly known as The United Dragon Kingdom."

Everyone looked at the Ring. The Queen strode towards the Coin and the Ring which flew up out of her reach. The Queen hissed, "You are both mine. Ring and Coin come here."

Both shook side to side and chorused, "No. We are not yours."

The Ring continued speaking, “When we find a way to release the King, you are in deep trouble.”

“Oh! Yeah! Just let him try,” snarled the Queen. “As long as he stays in the Coin, I rule.” She shouted again, “I rule.”

Adam looked around the cave for something to help them all out. Finding nothing, he said, “Abracadabra, box appear.”

The box appeared. The lid opened, revealing the three Eggs. The Queen stopped instantly and looked at the eggs with shock.

“Where did you find my babies?”



Adam replied, “Where you left them a long time ago. In the primeval world.”

“I didn’t leave them there. I hid them in a cave,” said the Queen who was now softening at the sight of the eggs.

“That is where we found them,” replied Adam as the Bronze Egg began to shake and crack open.

The Bronze Egg opened with a spray of glitter. A scroll appeared. The Queen was puzzled. It should be her baby not a scroll coming out. The scroll was written in the ancient language of the Dragon Age. The queen read the scroll. As she read it, the words changed from ancient dragon to modern script.



“By Dragon Law, a king or queen who abuses their power shall be punished.”

“Really? Don’t make me laugh. The King is in the Coin. He can’t do a thing,” snarled the Queen.

The Ring ran to the Bronze Egg and jumped inside.

The Egg squeaked, “What do you think you are doing?”

“Read what is written on me. I can’t twist myself around to read what is there.”

There was another squirt of glitter, and the Ring

was ejected. The Ring appeared floating in the air surrounded by glitter.

The Bronze Egg looked at the Ring. “Hmm. Now what is stamped on the inside of the Ring. Come closer. The writing is small. Hmm, Ah. Mmm. It says, **“Lass ton Rejane frei.”**”

“It has to be said three times.”

“Do you think I am going to say that three times?” said the Queen.

“ L a s s t o n Rejane frei. Lass ton Rejane frei. Lass ton Rejane frei,” said the Magician, much to the Queen’s disgust.

The Coin began to glow. The king appeared.

The King gave himself a bit of a rub on his knees and back. “It is so nice to stretch out. No offence Coin, but it is a bit cramped in there.”



Coin just flew towards the King and whispered, "Are you going to disappear after one week?"

The King gave a wink as the Coin slipped into his claw. The Ring slipped onto a claw. The King patted the two. The Bronze egg closed.

The King closed the box but didn't make it disappear. "I think this is mine. Adam and Evette took great care of the box. By looking after the box, they took good care of me."

The Queen didn't say a word, but the steam was slowly coming out of her ears.

"Now punishment suited to the Queen. Hmm let's see," said the King in a thoughtful manner but he couldn't help recalling Jane's whispered comment to Evette. "The Queen should be turned into handbags, shoes, and belts, and maybe a skirt or jacket."

The King chuckled and thought, *she can spend her days making clothes for the poor. Yes. That is suitable.*

When the Queen heard her punishment, she called out, "What about my babies!"

The King looked at the Eggs. "Not a problem."

The King made sure the Eggs were closed. He muttered the following words in ancient dragon language, **"Magische jajka sla tilbake til drachen jajka."**

The eggs began to rattle. Slowly the eggs cracked open. Little heads popped out first then the rest of

their bodies. Immediately, the King sheltered the babies from everyone in the room. Like all dragons of the past, the first adult they saw was their parent. They all called out, “Daddy!”



“Where’s Mummy?” asked the young golden dragon.

The King lied, “She died giving birth to you three.”
The King scooped up the baby dragons and took them to the next cave for protection.



The Queen walked to the throne and flopped heavily onto it. The throne broke. She sat on the floor with the broken throne scattered under and around her. She looked around at the Magician, Adam, and Evette. She sobbed. “I lost the Coin, the Ring, and the Key. I lost the elves and the unicorns, but worst of all, I lost my babies to the King. I really had a very, very bad day at the office.” She looked up at the others. “Go. Go. All of you.” She continued to cry.

The King returned to see the Queen had stopped crying. “Now, now. You had a good stint ruling over Dragon’s Lair,” said the King who was feeling more conciliatory. The Queen didn’t say a word.

He looked around at the cave. “Dragon’s Lair will now be under the rule of Dragonia. It doesn’t take much to adjust. And you will have to make some garments for the poor, there is no escaping that. The punishment may be reduced if you can tell me where my son is. He came near at the end of the East-West dragon war to be an observer.”

The Queen looked up. “I am not sure if it is the dragon I turned into stone at a cave entrance on the beach.”

“Take me to the cave entrance as soon as these people leave.”

The King ushered the group to the exit and bid everyone goodbye. Outside the cave, the Magician

became more solid and returned to complete human form.

They met the group of people still waiting under the arch. "I thought you would have gone down to the camp," said Adam.

"We all wanted to wait for you," said John.

Adam slowly led everyone down.

When they reached the small campsite, they were surprised to see some rescue teams, their parents, and an ambulance waiting with reporters from other towns. The people were shocked. Fourteen out of eighteen missing people had returned. All were wearing tattered clothes and looking quite thin. The reporters swamped them with questions, but the rescuers pushed six of the long-lost people into an ambulance. More ambulances were called for the other people.

Just as the last ambulance left, and people were beginning to pack their equipment, Jane's voice was heard, "Come on, my pretties. We are nearly there." Everyone looked in shock. Jane was encouraging the very tired unicorns to reach the campsite. The cameras clicked away, and reporters rushed to see the unicorns. The unicorns nearly bolted, but Jane managed to keep them in line. The scared unicorns huddled close to each other as Jane did her best to calm them down. Evette, John, and Adam ran to Jane to give her a hand.

Jane said to her anxious parents, “I am staying with the unicorns tonight. They need rest and we need to find a home—a permanent home on the island.”

“Her mother looked at one of the rescuers for ideas. One man said, “I can give some of my land near Westpit for the unicorns.” Another man said, “My land joins onto the back of his land. I will give a part of my land to the unicorns as well.”

The next morning, the unicorns were taken to their new home where they could eat, play, and sleep whenever they wanted to. People flocked to see the unicorns. They became a big tourist attraction.

When the distant politicians received news of the unicorns and saw they were a major tourist attraction, they declared that Dragon’s Lair would not be flooded by a dam. The same politicians said they would permit limited mining for gems—fossicking by tourists—and that would only be in one small place on the island. Dragon’s Lair would be declared a national park.

Jane, Adam, Evette, and John made sure the unicorns were housed at night and cared for the rest of their lives. The unicorns were so happy. Baby unicorns were born the following year. Evette, Jane, Adam, and John always wondered what was going on in the cave between the Queen and the King.



Chapter 15

Inside the cave, the White Dragon Queen received the news that Dragon's Lair would be saved from flooding. She grinned in a wicked way and began to make plans. She sat on the steps leading up to her broken throne and thought about everything. Then she suddenly ran through every cave checking if any elves or unicorns were left behind. She stopped when she saw the man and the lady mining the jewels. Their dog growled and barked, alerting his owners.

When the Queen approached all of them, she first cast a spell over the dog.

“Canis, hundo, sobaka forvandlas till einen yunikon.”

It turned into a black unicorn with a white tail, a white mane, and white hooves.

Before the man and lady could do anything, she turned them into elves.

“Manniskor, manusia, dynol forvandlas till einen xotika, alvor, elfovia.”

The new elves stared at each other and then shook with fear. The Queen moved her head closer to her

new additions. “Start working,” she said in her calmest voice.

The elves didn't move. The queen yelled when her face was inches away from theirs. “Start working. Now!”

Slowly the elves began washing the dirt off the gems. The Queen walked over to a basket where previously mined gems were stored. She nodded her approval before removing the basket of gems.

The Queen took the gems to her bedroom. She sorted them out in their colours before placing each colour in a separate jar. She screwed the lids on as tight



as she could. Then she left the bedroom to go to her broken throne. *I wonder, she thought, if a spell could fix this old chair.*

“Stol, kursi for vandlas till einen trone.”

The old chair reassembled itself. “Mmmm. It needs an update,” she muttered to herself.

“Trone. Modernizatsia”

As the old throne spun around three times, it rattled and made banging noises. When it stopped, the throne was larger. Purple velvet padding lined the seat and the back. She ran her paw over the soft fabric. *Nice*, she thought. The old timber arm rests were now in gilded in gold. At the top of the chair was a large pink diamond. The Queen smiled at the renovation. “Fit for a queen.”

She sat on the throne and looked around the room. She whistled loudly. The new elves and the unicorn came running. “Clean up this place.”



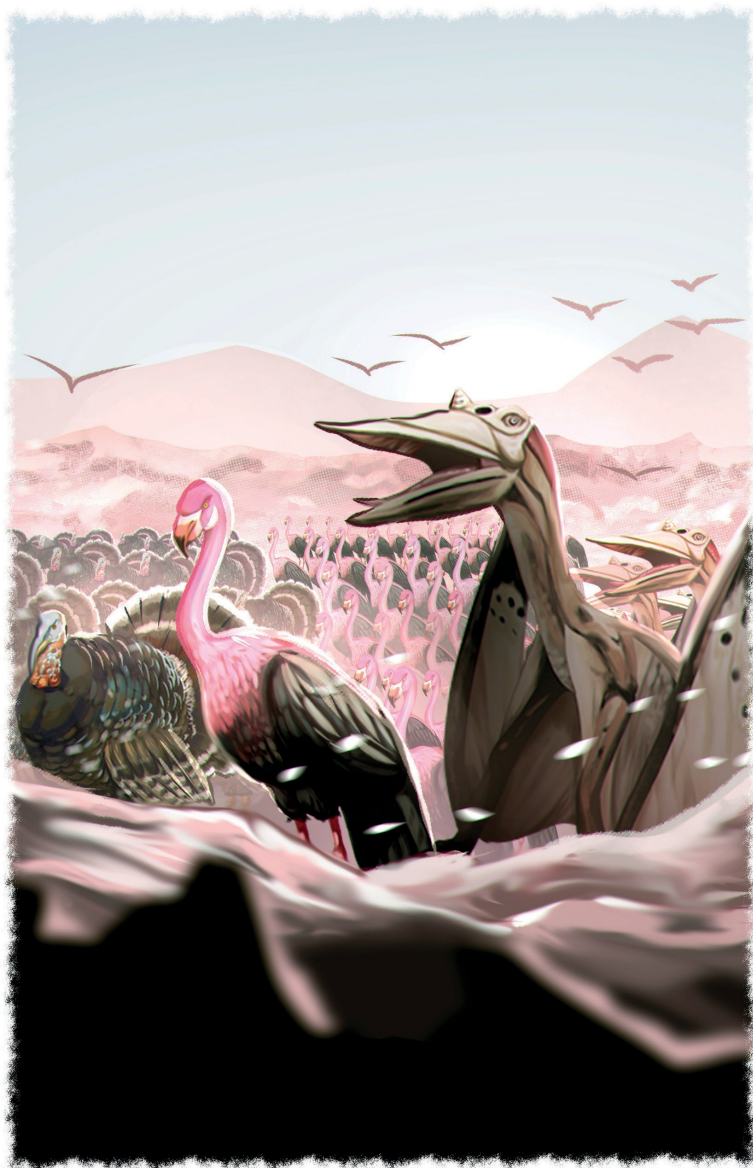
Chapter 16

The Queen walked down a passageway to her small desk in her office. She pulled out a chart showing the different dragon kingdoms. She looked at Mystania, a kingdom she neglected and now swallowed up as a part of the United Dragon Kingdom. *It's time to take my land back and get some more.*

She studied the map carefully. First on the list was Mystania. Next were the islands in Lake Utopia: Knotzoghoud, Zoundzghoud, Izzo-nize, Izbhettar, and Zabhest.

Then she went down the cave system to the side door of the primeval world. She opened the door carefully and walked in. She saw the Pteranodon sunning his large wings. The flamingo lazily looked up to see who was coming. Then the giant turkey gobbled a hello. She whistled. More of these three types of birds gathered in front of the Queen. Immediately, they sorted themselves into their groups.

The Queen gave her order. "Tonight, we attack parts of Mystania lost to the United Dragon Kingdom,



and the islands in Lake Utopia. Be battle ready at six.”

The Queen marched away only to return with her armor.

In the early darkness of winter, the Queen led her forces towards Mystania. The Pteranodons dropped stones over Mystania’s administration centre. The flamingoes used their numbers to enter dragon homes and to peck the dragons into the streets. The turkeys marched in, knocking their big bodies against the homes and buildings. The captured dragons were then guarded by the very old flamingoes.

The Queen led her small army to the north—to Lake Utopia. One by one, the islands fell to her forces.

The Red King received news of the attack. Word went out and the larger army of dragons hastily assembled. He smiled at the quick response—dragons from Dragaonelle, El-Dragando, Dragonaire, and Dragonderry all were there. “Let’s go. This Queen just doesn’t learn.”

The Queen’s army tried to swoop on Dragonderry, the closest of the United Dragon Kingdoms. She gasped. Her Pteranodons were outnumbered and low on stones to drop as bombs. The flamingoes were too tired to do their best in rounding up the dragons on the ground. The turkeys were hungry and were more interested in feeding themselves on the different islands. To them, the lush grasses and fruit-

bearing trees were irresistible. The Queen's forces were demolished. The Queen ran back to her cave, leaving her forces to fight it out or return to their home.

In the human world, there was a huge storm. The wind blew some rooves off houses, trees fell over, and the power went out. So much rain fell it flooded the low areas of Dragon's Lair.

Lightening clashed over the island to scare many adults and children. But the storm disappeared as fast as it came. All people could see when the storm passed was a huge mess of tangled trees and broken houses.

The White Queen wasn't home long when the Red King and his dragons ran to her throne room. The Queen sat quietly with a magazine in her hand. She looked up from the magazine and lowered her reading spectacles. She didn't stand up. The Red King approached her with anger. "How dare you attack the United Dragon Kingdom. How dare you!"

The Queen acted innocent. "What are you talking about? I have been busy fixing my throne and cleaning the place up. As you can see, this is my new throne, and the place was tidy until you and your ragamuffins marched in. Pease leave. All of you make the place look untidy."

The King shook his claw in frustration. His tail flicked with anger, accidentally hitting one of his own dragons.

“Queen. By dragon law, you are supposed to be making clothes for the poor as your punishment.”

The Queen looked over her spectacles. “Oh yeah. I forgot. Never mind. I can’t sew anyway.”

Out of frustration, the King muttered under his breath, “Now you tell me.”

Then he looked up. “Since you can’t sew, how about I turn you into clothing?”

The Queen looked horrified. “No! No!” she roared with her face turning red. She waved her arms and cursed. Then she quickly cast a spell over the dragons in front of her.

“Dragana, drachen bli till petra”

Before it took hold, the King made a counter spell. **“Dragana, drachen mistakast”** Then he quickly added. **“Dragana, drachen bli till bealter”**

The Queen screamed as her dragon skin suddenly ripped off her body. She tried to cover up her nakedness while her old skin turned into belts.

The King grinned. “Let’s see you leave the cave without clothes on.”

The Queen screamed. Steam blew out of ears and fire blew out of her mouth. “Do you know how long

it will take for me to grow new skin at my age?”

The King smirked. “About another thousand years. Just think of it as a facelift.”

The King signaled to his dragons to leave. Over his shoulder the King said, “I will be sending someone up to collect all the belts. To save yourself embarrassment, leave them by the cave entrance. I think the humans will find your belts as limited-edition souvenir.”

Two weeks later, Adam and Evette walked to the very first cave they ever went into. They sat beside the stone dragon. Evette gave the dragon a cuddle. When she did that, she felt a tingle. She jumped back with a start. She looked around as the dragon sent out some glitter. Adam looked around as well to make sure no one else was watching. There was no one watching.

The glitter changed to an image of the Red Dragon King. He said in a soft voice, “My dear friends. Go to the cave where the White Queen lives. You will need to have help. The Queen has created some belts for souvenirs.”

Adam asked, “She really did her punishment?”

“Not exactly. She raided my kingdom and lost. She received the most severe punishment of all. Her skin was made into belts to complete her first punishment”

“Is she still alive?” asked Evette.

“Oh. Unfortunately, yes. But she won’t be making any trouble or making spells. She has been stripped of her power, but they will return in about one thousand dragon years. Her skin will also be back to normal by then.”

Adam said, “One thousand dragon years is like five thousand of our years. We won’t be around.”

“Then it will be up to other brave human teens or adults who live on the island to look after everything.” The King disappeared.



Chapter 17

Ten Years Later

Evette, Jane, Adam, and John are young adults.

Jane looked after the unicorns, which were growing in number. The people were disappointed that unicorns could not be transferred to other zoos around the world. No matter how caring the zoo people were, the unicorns would die. Dragon's Lair was the only place where they flourished.

John and Adam did guided tours up the mountains and through some of the caves. The main attraction were the stalagmites and the stalactites. They never told anyone that they were just above the White Dragon Queen's lair. That was a secret.

Fossicking for gems was limited to one area of the island, just near Northville. No one wanted the island to look like a mining town. Some tourists did find gems and that kept the hopes up for all other tourists.

Evette was at the museum, taking school children around the displays and frequently telling stories about the island. Like the others, she never told any story

about the release of the lost people who were turned into elves and the discovery of the unicorns. They were just discovered deep in the cave system. As for the primeval world, and the key to that scary world was certainly never told.

And storms are just dragons in battles over dragon kingdoms.

