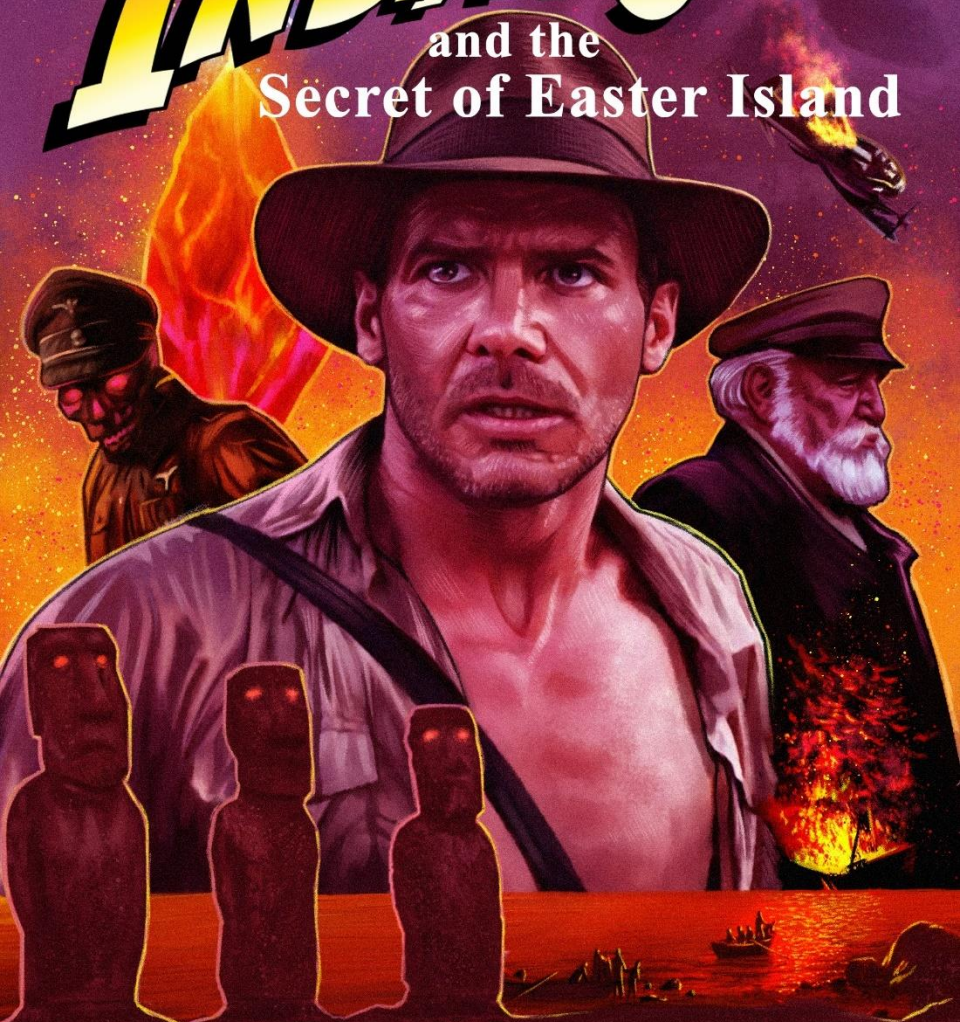


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WOLFGANG HOHLBEIN

INDIANA JONES™

and the
Secret of Easter Island



Translated by
RACHEL SCHNEIDER

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INDYMAG Publication

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**INDIANA JONES
AND THE
SECRET OF EASTER
ISLAND**

By Wolfgang Hohlbein

Translated by Rachel Schneider



Chapter 1

The Island of the Gods

Only ten minutes before, he wouldn't have believed it; not for everything in the world, even if the manufacturer of this airplane, the chief engineer, and even the Wright brothers and Otto Lilienthal had gathered together and sworn on their children it would happen. It was simply *impossible*. No airplane could withstand this fall, not to mention the passengers.

Tressler had, in his moment of confusion, used the phrase "emergency landing", but it *had* been a fall; a textbook fall. Jonas had stopped counting after the seventh or eighth roll how often the airplane flipped over. It had taken all of his strength to cling to something so as not to slide through the machine and hit his head, as the unlucky Meyers had. He had still seen, even through the black swell of the storm, metal shimmer in front of the window; and at least one of the whirling pieces of rubble had a suspicious similarity to the right half of the tail unit, which really should have been at the end of the plane with the left half. No- they *couldn't* survive this fall.

But they had done just that.

The airplane landed roughly and sank into the shallow waters of the lagoon, a bit torn and missing a decidedly larger number of parts than just half of the tail unit, but still in one piece, and besides the

unlucky Meyers and Selder, who had broken his right leg, they were all covered only with scratches and cuts and bruises; they had all come away incredibly well. However, there was no place on his body that didn't hurt, burn, or feel numb.

The uneven sound of heavy footsteps made Jonas look up. He knew that Bell was coming up behind him even before he turned around and looked into the face of the white-haired old man. The Englishman heavily favored his left leg, but that wasn't due to the fall, instead a splinter of a grenade that he had taken as a medical officer during WWI. During the last few days that they had spent together in the dirty hotel on Pau-Pau and on the airplane, Bell had gotten on his nerves with his war stories, so that Jonas had nearly forgotten his good upbringing a few times and become violent. Now, he was very glad that he hadn't. He replied to Bell's nod with a smile and simultaneously made an inviting gesture for him to sit down next to him.

"How is Selder?" he asked as the Englishman sank down next to him in the grass and jerked his stiff leg over.

"He says otherwise, but I know that he's in a lot of pain," answered Bell, worried. "If he gets a fever, then I don't know whether I can do anything for him."

Jonas' expression grew worried. He liked the young Australian, and he had seen his leg. It wasn't a smooth break. If there were complications, then they would lose him, because their first aid kit lay, together with part of the airplane and a large part of their luggage, a hundred miles away at the bottom of the ocean. They didn't even have anything to ease the pain with, let alone fight an infection. He was nearly certain that they would lose Selder.

Still: Two of twelve. Bell had seen to the others, but they only had cuts. It truly could have been worse.

"And how are things with Miss Sandstein?" he asked.

"Fräulein Sandstein," Bell corrected him. He smiled briefly. Like all Englishmen, he had difficulties with the German "ä" so that it

sounded like “Fraulein”. “You know how strange she is. She is fine. I think her arm is only sprained, not dislocated. She is a strong little woman, our German Fräulein.”

“The Germans are all rather strong, aren’t they?” said Jonas. He sent Bell a side glance with those words, but all that he noticed on his face was a tired smile.

“Yes. They also build damn good airplanes.” Bell turned with a head movement to the dented Junkers in the water. “Thank God. Otherwise we would all be dead.”

“Maybe we will be anyway,” Jonas whispered.

Bell looked at him, surprised. “What?” he asked. “That’s a completely new tone for you. I always thought that you were an optimist.”

“I often have been,” Jonas growled. He took a handful of sand and threw it off of the ledge, but the wind grabbed it and turned it into a tumbling, quickly dissipating cloud before it touched the ground. “It doesn’t look very good for us, Mr. Bell,” he continued in a somewhat more gentle tone.

“We’re alive, aren’t we?”

“But that’s about it,” answered Jonas. He pointed to the west. The sea stretched, blue and smooth, like a gigantic, riffled mirror, for as far as the eye could see; and, as far as he knew, this horizon continued unchanged for thousands of miles. “Do you know where we are?”

“Of course,” answered Bell.

“Oh? Then you know more than I do.” Jonas smiled, but there wasn’t much real humor in this smile. “I’m rather certain that this island isn’t even on most maps, Bell. We might be the first people who have ever been here. We are at least a hundred miles from all shipping and flight paths. Our radio lies at the bottom of the sea, along with most of our equipment. We have nothing to eat, no medicine, practically nothing, and our navigator broke his neck, but, other than that we’ve really been lucky.”

“There’s certainly enough to eat on this island,” answered Bell. He sounded somewhat defensive. “And we don’t even know that this island is uninhabited. It is rather large.”

“True,” answered Jonas drily. “Perhaps there are also cannibals here.”

Bell looked a little pale. “You have a great knack at getting along with people, has anyone ever told you that?”

“Many times,” answered Jonas. He stood up, nodded quickly to Bell, and began to carefully balance down the embankment. He had the feeling that he would get into an argument if he stayed, and he didn’t want that because, in the end, Bell couldn’t help it. No one could. The storm had broken without warning. They wouldn’t have had a chance, not even in a bigger airplane. No one could do anything about that.

Nevertheless- if they never got out of here, and if they didn’t do so *soon*, then three years of work would come to nothing. It was infuriating! He had done everything. Created a perfect cover. Fooled enemy agents by the dozens and seen through and overcome all imaginable (and a couple of unimaginable) security measures- and this damn storm came and ruined everything!

He dismissed these thoughts and walked with long strides across the fine white sand towards the airplane. It was a really splendid beach, Jonas thought sarcastically, snow white and untouched and a good mile long. The water was so clear that one could still see the seafloor fifty meters from the shore. A perfect place to take a vacation. But they could now; and, if they were unlucky, for the next fifty years as well.

From the airplane rang a loud, arrhythmic pounding and hammering, and as Jonas waded through the knee deep water to the door, a pair of oil-smeared, strong hands came over the edge of the open motor compartment, followed by two barely less oily arms and shoulders and an only slightly less dirty face which Jonas only

recognized from the red and white bandana that was something like Tressler's trademark.

"Hello, Jonas!" the pilot greeted him and brushed his hands through his hair. A wave-like movement ran through the black smear on his face. Jonas assumed that it was a smile. "How does it look?"

"I was about to ask you the same thing," Jonas replied, but nevertheless answered Tressler's question: "Perkins and a couple of others left an hour ago to explore the nearby area. But they haven't come back. Is that a good sign? *You*, after all, are the specialist on these islands, not me."

"Thank you for the compliment." Tressler pulled a grimace and swung, groaning, out of the mechanical innards of the airplane. Jonas automatically pulled a step back as he landed, splashing, in the water and crouched down there. Tressler's attempt at washing away the machine oil and dirt on his skin with nothing but salt water wasn't very successful, Jonas thought.

"Most of these islands are uninhabited," Tressler continued after a while. "And even if not, we probably don't need to worry about them. The Polynesians are a very friendly people. At least, they were before white people found them and *civilized* them." He rubbed his hands together forcefully beneath the water. Dark veils began to move through the glass-clear salt water like smoke, until he was sitting in a black cloud as if he had stepped on an octopus. His hands weren't a bit cleaner as he finally straightened up again.

"I would try it with sand," Jonas said.

Tressler seemed to seriously consider this suggestion for a moment, but then he shook his head. "That isn't necessary," he said. "I'll have to keep working at this thing for a while. My hands would just get dirty again."

Jonas studied the dented Junkers thoughtfully. The sight of this plump machine hadn't really awakened any trust at all even when it had been working. The idea of building an airplane out of corrugated *iron* could really only come from *German* ingenuity.

“Will it fly again?” he asked.

“The motor is fine,” answered Tressler. Jonas looked at him doubtfully, and the pilot continued hastily: “At least nothing is broken that I can’t repair in a couple of hours myself. I’m worried about the torn rudder.”

“Will we be able to get out of here or not?” asked Jonas. His voice sounded sharper than he had meant it to. Tressler blinked, confused. But he didn’t concentrate on Jonas’ unnecessarily rude tone, instead simply shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t know,” he answered. “I know only a bit about motors, but I am a pilot, not a mechanic. Perkins is an engineer and will help me throw something together, but whether it holds and whether we get up in the air and *stay* there, only the gods know.”

Suddenly he laughed, stepped over to Jonas, and placed his hand on his shoulder. “Chin up. I’ve been in worse situations and come out of them unscathed. And if all else fails, we still have one comfort.”

“Oh?” asked Jonas angrily. He had to control himself so as not to roughly push Tressler’s hand away. “What’s that?”

Tressler grinned. “Now, this is a paradise-like piece of land,” he said. “We could survive here for years if we had to. There is an overabundance of food on this island, fresh water, and barely any wild animals, and the weather is almost always good. And we have a great advantage.” He grinned. “I’ve read Robinson Crusoe at least five times. How about you?”

Three days later, Jonas began to wish that he had read it at least *once*. They had explored the island as far as it was possible for them to, and Tressler, with help from Perkins, had repaired the airplane- at least as far as it was possible to. The result of their troubles looked just like their future chances: Adventurous, but not very trustworthy. Jonas didn’t feel well at the thought of getting on board of this airplane, the back of which was made of rope, roughly cut corrugated steel, and all other possible improvised materials.

Perhaps they also wouldn't have to do it. Tressler had remained rather short on words whenever Jonas had asked about his work during the last couple of days.

But they also couldn't stay on the island. At least not for nearly as long as Tressler (and also Jonas, to be honest) had believed at the start. Their situation didn't look very rosy. Selder had died that morning, and the island was neither as large nor as fruitful as they had hoped. The jungle, directly behind the campsite they had set up, stood across the beach like a seemingly impenetrable wall, but it wasn't even a mile wide and ended in a cliff that seemed to split the entire island. They didn't know what lay on the other side because the wall was at least thirty meters high and so smooth that a climb without proper equipment was unthinkable.

Jonas took a deep, appreciative draw on his last cigarette, tossed the butt into the fire, and threw a glance around. With the exception of Tressler and Perkins, who were still working on the airplane down on the beach, they all sat together, and had for a good hour. Barely anyone had spoken a word before now. Selder's death had hit them all hard. Not because he had been an especially good friend. In fact, they were all strangers who had only been thrown together by a whim of fate, and, despite the situation they were in, three days wasn't enough to form any feelings of connection. His death had shown them how vulnerable they were. Their surroundings looked at first like paradise. But a broken leg meant death here.

Jonas sat right next to Adele Sandstein, the small German lady, who was perhaps the only one he had grown closer to in the last few days, next to her Bell, Stothem, a Dutch businessman who had barely said anything since their emergency landing (he hadn't said much before it either), Anthony and Steve van Lees, two Australian brothers, twins, even, who were as different as two men could be and who argued almost constantly, and finally there was Stan Barlowe and his wife, who was at least twenty years younger than him, a dumb creature whose entire vocabulary seemed to consist of only two

sounds: Hysterical screeching and ridiculous giggling. A fine troop to create a new outpost of civilization on an unsettled island at the edge of the world, he thought sarcastically. Perhaps it would be less dangerous to trust Tressler's patched-together airplane...

He pushed the thoughts aside and turned to the two Australians. "How far did you follow the stream?" he asked. At midday they had noticed a trickle that could barely be given the name stream. But it would take care of drinking water. The two dissimilar brothers had offered to follow its course; perhaps to find a lake or a place where they could build a long term camp. It was so picturesque here, but if one looked closer, they could see the traces that had been left behind on the jungle by the storms and floods of the last year. A good place for a couple of days, but not for weeks or even months.

The two men's answers consisted only of a nod from one and a shake of the head from the other: Yes, they had followed the stream, but no, they hadn't found anything that would help them somehow.

It was Bell who finally voiced what they were all thinking. "We should send someone over the rock wall. Perhaps the other side looks better."

"Maybe someone lives there," said Barlowe.

"Yes," said Jonas sarcastically. "Perhaps we rediscovered El Dorado and just haven't noticed it yet."

"Don't be so cynical, young man."

Young man? Jonas looked at Adele Sandstein for a moment, confused. If he survived the next month, he would celebrate his fiftieth birthday. But anyone who reached the age that Adele Sandstein had should have a right to call *anyone* a young man, even if he was only a bit younger than Methuselah. "Fine," he growled. "It wasn't meant that way. We're all a bit nervous."

"That may be," said Adele Sandstein forcefully. "But that is no reason to forget your good upbringing, Herr Jonas. Or get rough. I think that Herr Barlowe is right."

"And how did you decide that, if I may ask?" Jonas wasn't the only one who looked at her and tried not to appear too mocking. And

Fräulein Sandstein seemed to notice this, because her eyes flashed angrily for a short moment. But she continued to keep herself perfectly under control.

“I mean,” Jonas continued with a gesture around, “none of us have found any traces of human life on this island so far. Have you?”

“I have, in fact,” answered Adele Sandstein calmly.

If she had pulled a hand grenade out from under her dress and thrown it into the fire, the shock could have barely been greater. All of them stared at her. It was so quiet that one could have heard the proverbial pin drop.

“What?” asked Jonas finally. He tried to laugh, but he simply couldn’t. “You found... tracks, Miss... *Fräulein* Sandstein?”

“When was this?” asked the older of the two Australians.

“And where?” asked the younger.

Jonas lifted his hand hastily and silenced them. Then he repeated what the two brothers had already asked, which got him an angry glance from the two Australians and a no more amused one from Fräulein Sandstein. She answered nevertheless.

“This morning, when I was down on the beach. You were all sleeping, but I was already awake. At my age, one doesn’t need much sleep, you must know. I didn’t want to disturb anyone, so I went down onto the beach. And I saw the tracks there.”

“Human tracks?” asked Jonas unnecessarily.

“How many were there?” Bell continued.

“Two,” answered Adele Sandstein after brief consideration. “At least... I think so. It could have been more. But two, at any rate.”

“But why didn’t you say so?” Jonas didn’t really try to hide his growing anger. At least he had convinced himself that the uncomfortable feeling that continued to spread within him was anger and not fear.

“I... didn’t think that it was that important,” Fräulein Sandstein admitted, embarrassed.

“Not important!” Jonas widened his eyes in disbelief. “You should have...”

“And I was afraid that you wouldn’t believe me,” she continued somewhat more loudly. “The water destroyed the tracks, and... and there was something else.”

“Something else?” Jonas tilted his head and looked attentively at the white-haired old woman. “What?”

He noticed how difficult she found it to answer. She averted her eyes. “The tracks went in only one direction,” she said finally.

“What do you mean?” asked Barlowe.

“They only went into the water,” answered Adele Sandstein. “Not back out.”

“They would have had a boat,” said Barlowe’s wife.

Not only Jonas looked at the slim blond woman in surprise. The explanation was so simple that he was nearly angry that he hadn’t thought of it long ago.

But Adele Sandstein shook her head. “No,” she said quietly. She looked at no one as she continued, instead looked into the fire out of nearly empty eyes. But then... I saw it.”

“What?” asked Jonas.

“The giant,” answered Adele Sandstein.

Tressler and Perkins came up from the beach half an hour later. As Perkins heard about Sandstein’s discovery, he reacted just as Jonas had expected: He just shook his head, tapped his forehead in a gesture of insanity when he was sure that she was no longer looking in his direction, and then sat down wordlessly next to the fire. Tressler didn’t seem very amused. Just the opposite: On his face appeared a nearly worried expression.

“Giants?” he inquired.

“I didn’t see giants,” Sandstein corrected him. “I spoke of *one* giant, Herr Tressler.”

The pilot looked at her seriously for a while, and then looked for longer and somehow... shocked in the direction where the jungle hid the rock wall. But he said nothing, instead finally just sat down silently next to the others by the fire.

Perkins had noticed his reaction. "What's wrong with you?" he asked, grinning. "You don't really believe this nonsense, do you?"

"I... also saw something," answered Tressler haltingly. "During the landing."

"A giant?" Perkins' grin grew even wider. "Or was it maybe a dragon or a seven headed sea snake?"

Jonas silenced him with an icy glance. "*What* did you see, Mr. Tressler?" he asked.

"I'm... not sure," answered the pilot. "Something in the water. It all went so fast, and I had my hands full with getting us down safely, so I barely noticed it, as you can imagine. But I do know that it shocked me." He looked up. "I think that Meyers saw it better. He cried something like: *That can't be real!* or something before..."

"...he broke his neck," Perkins interrupted him. "How practical: The only witness is dead!"

Tressler turned to him with an angry jerk. His hand jerked, and his lips formed a thin, bloodless line. He said nothing, but Jonas saw that his eyes glimmered angrily. He and Meyers had been friends.

"How is the plane coming?" he asked quickly, before Perkins could go on and probably just make things worse.

Tressler's hands sank slowly back to his lap. He relaxed noticeably, and as he turned to Jonas, he believed that he could nearly see the thankfulness in his eyes. "We're done," he said.

"Done?" Bell straightened instantly, and the others also looked at the pilot in confusion.

"As far as we can repair it," said Tressler hastily. "That doesn't mean that it is perfect. But I don't really have replacement parts and real tools."

"But it will fly?" Barlowe inquired.

Tressler remained silent for a moment. Finally, he shrugged his shoulders, but, absurdly, also nodded. "I think so," he said. "I will have to get it up. But it will be dangerous. I don't know how long the ties that Perkins and I set up will last. A strong gust of wind, and..." He made a hand movement as if he was splitting something and left the rest of the sentence unfinished.

"What does that mean?" asked one of the two Australians. "Will we get out of here or not?"

Tressler wanted to continue, but Jonas broke him off with a quick hand movement and then turned slowly to the two brothers. "Of course you can get away from *here*," he said, friendly. "Only I can't guarantee where you will land, my friend. On Pau-Pau or the bottom of the ocean."

The Australian turned visibly pale, but he said no more, and Jonas turned back to Tressler. "So you think that you can get it up?"

The pilot nodded haltingly. He didn't look very excited. But perhaps he was also just tired. He had barely slept at all during the past three days, instead working almost ceaselessly on his airplane.

"And how do you see our chances?" asked Jonas.

Tressler considered for a moment. "If the steering mechanisms hold and I don't take us into a storm... not even one as bad as that. The fuel is still enough for three hundred miles."

"Then we'll risk it!" said Barlowe excitedly. "What do we have to lose?"

"Our lives, for example, Mr. Barlowe," said Tressler calmly. "You haven't heard correctly. I said: *if*. And I said it a couple of times. I don't know whether I can get that crate up anyway." He made a gesture in the direction of the smoke from the fire in the darkness. "Out there are some pretty rough swells, and there are a few hidden reefs. I don't have even a mile to get the bird out of the water. Under normal circumstances that would probably be no problem. But at the moment, chances are 50:50 that the machine breaks as soon as I get it out of the water."

Barlowe stared at him. “And what... does that mean?” he asked haltingly.

“That *we* will stay here,” said Jonas in Tressler’s place.

“What?” Barlowe sounded nearly hostile.

“You heard what he said, right?” asked Jonas. He looked at Barlowe, but he was also conscious of the looks with which the others measured him. At the moment, they were simply much too confused by what he had said. But it wouldn’t stay that way for long. “Apart from the risks of the flight, we don’t even know whether we would manage the take-off, Barlowe. Every extra pound of weight that we take could be too much. Tressler flies and Perkins helps him as a navigator and any other jobs necessary. They will leave when they are ready, and we will stay here.”

“You... you must have lost your mind!” said Barlowe haltingly. “We have an airplane and a good chance to get away from here, and you seriously expect that I’ll stay here and watch calmly as it flies away?”

Jonas didn’t answer immediately. He felt how much hung on the next few words he said. They had all heard how Tressler had calculated their chances, but people in desperate situations tended to underestimate the risks and overestimate their luck.

“What do we have to lose, Barlowe?” he asked as calmly as possible. “If Tressler and Perkins can manage it, then in two days at the latest, a ship or another airplane will be here to get us. And, if not, then at least we’re still alive.” He threw Tressler a quick glance to apologize for these words, but the pilot only nodded. He understood. Perkins luckily hadn’t heard.

“Two days, Barlowe,” said Jonas once more. “Do you really want to risk your life and that of your wife just to get to the filthy hotel on Pau-Pau two days earlier?”

Barlowe still wasn’t answering yet. Something worked in his face. But, at the last moment, Jonas received unexpected help.

“Herr Jonas is completely right, Herr Barlowe,” said Adele Sandstein. “It wouldn’t be very sensible to undergo such a risk. And completely irresponsible. For us all. Our chances of getting away from here grow smaller if we increase the weight of the airplane. That is right, true?”

She looked at Tressler questioningly, and the pilot nodded. “Yes. Every pound of weight could be too much.”

And that was the end. Barlowe continued to protest, but not only Jonas sensed that it was just to save face and not give up without a fight. And the others also accepted- even if against their wills- Jonas and Tressler’s arguments. Finally, Jonas decided to end the discussion and go to sleep. They would have to get up early the next morning as Perkins had suggested completely clearing out the airplane to shed every gram of unnecessary weight. And Tressler would need every minute of daylight he could get for his flight.

Although it had been his own idea, Jonas found no sleep. He lay there for over an hour with closed eyes and waited for exhaustion and tiredness to do their work, but his thoughts were moving too quickly. Finally he resigned himself, opened his eyes, and sat back up carefully; very quietly so as to not wake any of the others.

The fire had burned down to a dull red glow that let off barely any warmth and even less light, but it was still not completely dark, because the sky was cloudless. And in two nights, it would be the full moon, so the jungle was bathed in a silvery-blue, unreal shimmer. The sight was bizarre, foreign- and disquieting.

Since they had been stranded here, it wasn’t the first time that Jonas had felt this. Before, he had simply chalked it up to the circumstances and the fact that he felt nowhere near as calm as he was acting, instead felt just as much fear as the others.

But perhaps that wasn’t the only reason. Fräulein Sandstein’s words- and, most of all, what Tressler had said- disquieted him more than he would admit. Of course he didn’t really believe in giants or similar nonsense. But something... *just wasn’t right here*. He had felt

it from the first moment and was suddenly almost certain that it was the same for the others and that this was the true reason for the tense feeling that had stuck around for three days.

Something cracked behind him; like a twig that broke beneath a shoe. Jonas flinched, turned in shock, and flinched for a second time as he saw a black shadow at the edge of the forest. But even before he could say anything, the figure raised a finger to its mouth in a pointed gesture, and, in that same moment, Jonas also recognized who the shadow was. Obviously he wasn't the only one who found no sleep tonight.

As quietly as possible, he stood up and went over to Tressler. The pilot pointed for him to be quiet, and Jonas silently followed him a good dozen steps into the jungle until they were sure that they would wake none of the others.

"Tressler?" he whispered, surprised. "What are you doing here? You need a clear head in the morning!"

"I couldn't sleep," answered the pilot. "Just as little as you."

"I don't have to fly an airplane put together with gum and flowers tomorrow morning."

He wasn't sure in the complete darkness here in the jungle, but he at least thought that he could see a smile cross Tressler's face. "I'm used to it, don't worry," answered the pilot. "I sometimes only sleep one night a week." He became serious again. "Come, Jonas. I have to show you something."

The tone in which he spoke the last sentence wasn't to Jonas' liking. But he decided not to question it. If Tressler wanted to get him alone, then he would certainly have his reasons. And Jonas had the strange feeling that he wouldn't like this reason.

He was right.

Tressler walked in a wide arc around the camp and then back onto the beach; but not to where the airplane lay, as Jonas had expected. Instead, they neared a place that was a good mile away from the lagoon so that they couldn't see it directly from the campsite.

That was probably also the reason that the half dozen figures had chosen this place to assemble and not the beach farther to the west, where Sandstein had seen the tracks the night before...

He and Tressler stood there, motionless, for five minutes and looked at the black figures on the beach from the cover of the underbrush. They moved oddly, and Jonas heard excited voices in an incomprehensible foreign language. Sometimes the figures gesticulated excitedly; always pointing in the direction in which the airplane lay. And the camp.

Finally, Jonas pulled a step back into the jungle and sank down into a crouch. The darkness which covered him seemed to no longer offer protection, instead changing into something hostile, evil.

"So she didn't imagine them," he murmured as Tressler followed him and sank down silently next to him on one knee.

"No," answered the pilot. "Definitely not."

Jonas asked himself what that was supposed to mean, but didn't follow the thought any further. "Perhaps," he said haltingly, "we should try to get away from here. I don't like this."

"They're harmless," answered Tressler. He seemed to see Jonas' doubtful expression despite the darkness, because he continued hastily after a moment: "At least I think so. If they had wanted to attack us, then they would have done it long ago. They've had enough chances."

His words sounded more like a vague wish than a real conviction, and Jonas mentioned this. "Yes. Or they're watching us and waiting for the right moment to strike."

This time, a long while passed before Tressler answered. His voice was much quieter than before, and it sounded pointedly worried. "Listen, Jonas. I... I didn't tell the entire truth before when we were talking about the airplane."

"What?"

"If I may be completely honest- I barely think that I can get it up into the air," Tressler admitted. "And our prospects of getting farther

than ten miles are nearly impossible. I *can't* take anyone else with me. Even if we take every unnecessary screw off of the machine and throw out even the pilot's seat to save on weight, I would need an entire battalion of guardian angels if I want to get over the reef."

"Why try it at all then?" asked Jonas. "No one here will profit if you get killed."

"Because it's our only chance," answered Tressler. "Do you want to stay here for the next fifty years? This island has never been seen by a white man. It's probably that no one even knows it exists! It could be a hundred years before a ship ever passes by here!"

"Nonsense!" Jonas replied forcefully. "How do you know that? There are thousands of islands here."

Tressler laughed quietly. "Believe me. I would know if someone had discovered this island already. And you would too."

"What do you mean?"

Tressler's voice sounded surprised. "You didn't see it?"

"What the hell do you mean? The natives?"

The pilot got up again and made a gesture that Jonas more sensed than saw in the darkness. Obviously he was supposed to follow him. They went back to the edge of the forest, and Tressler pointed down to the beach. The natives still stood there and spoke loudly.

"To the right of them," whispered Tressler. "Directly next to the rocks, in the water. Do you see it?"

Jonas' gaze followed Tressler's outstretched hand. In the first moment, he saw nothing but shadows and rocks in black water on which moonlight played, but then...

"Oh my God!" he whispered.



Chapter 2

Washington DC

Eight Months Later

“No!” said Grisswald. “Over my dead body!” He balled his hand into a fist and crashed it down forcefully onto the desk to give his words extra impression. Perhaps it would have been better had he not done so, since his face distorted in pain, and one of the two government agents made a face as if he was seriously considering taking Grisswald’s words literally. The other continued to smile, as he had done since he had arrived. He had greeted Indy with this smile, and it hadn’t changed a bit since, although Indy had now sat there for nearly half an hour and watched him. He was now almost certain that the agent had been born with this ridiculous grin on his face and that it was his main and possibly only real trademark.

It seemed to be driving Grisswald at least slowly but surely towards madness. Indy nearly felt sorry for him. There could barely be anything worse than having to argue with someone who smiled constantly, no matter what anyone threw at him. Most of all if that someone was in a position where they could *afford* this arrogant smile. And this certainly applied to the two government agents. Indy didn’t even have to see their identification to know that. In the course

of the years, he had developed a honed and nearly infallible sense for such things.

“Dr. Jones, please say something!” Grisswald began to wring his hands almost desperately. “Please, at least *you* can be sensible!”

Indy enjoyed this moment like a sip of expensive wine. It was very seldom that Grisswald *asked* him for anything. And, at the moment, he was *begging*. So he paused in answering for as long as possible.

“I am being sensible, Mr. Grisswald,” he said. “But what else can I do when my country calls me. As a good patriot and an American, I can’t really refuse to help.”

Grisswald’s face lost its last bit of color, and Indy didn’t just send him his most heartfelt smile, but also allowed another ten seconds, in which Grisswald moved closer and closer to a stroke, before he turned to the two government agents and continued: “On the other hand, you must understand Mr. Grisswald, Sirs. Recently, I have... frequently been gone. And, among everything else, I am an employee at this university. My students are always excited when I tell them about my adventures, but that isn’t the reason they come to this university. They want to hear my lectures, and they have a right to.”

Grisswald was completely perplexed for a moment. Obviously he had expected anything; except having Indiana Jones on his side.

Which Indy hadn’t really done. Grisswald meant nothing to him. But his words were the truth. He had in fact been absent for a couple more lectures recently than he could answer for. And he simply had no desire travel to some other forgotten corner of the world to pull the government’s chestnuts out of the fire. Even a famous hero needed a break now and then, after all.

“You heard Dr. Jones, Sirs,” Grisswald hadn’t just overcome his surprise, but was already using this advantage. “We can’t help you. I’m sorry.”

Time for a little steam, Indy thought, smiled at Grisswald, and said: “I never said that, Mr. Grisswald.” Turning to the two government agents, he continued: “Of course I would never deny the

United States government my help. I only fear that I can't help you in this specific case."

"You don't even know what it involves yet," answered one of the two, the one with the smile.

"I know enough to know that I don't know enough," answered Indy. The man's smile suddenly looked somewhat forced, and his colleague and Grisswald also had noticeable difficulties following the sentence. But that had been the point.

"You see, Mr....?" he began again after a couple of seconds.

"Franklin," answered the eternally smiling agent. He pointed at his colleague. "That is Mr. Delano."

And, were there a third of you, I bet he would be named Roosevelt, Indy thought mockingly. Appearing unmoved, he continued: "You see, Mr. Franklin, I'm not a great specialist on the Polynesians. To be honest, I barely knew anything about this area before..."

"We know that, Dr. Jones," Franklin interrupted him. "But I still take it that you have heard something of Easter Island."

Indy traded a quick, surprised glance with Grisswald. The dean of the university looked just as surprised as he was. But now at least interested. Due to the unending little war that Indy and Grisswald had going on between them, Indy had nearly forgotten that Grisswald wasn't just revolting and the worst paragraph writer that he had ever met, but also a scientist. And definitely not the worst. Easter Island? Now, who hadn't heard of that place and the giant, sometimes fifteen meter high statues which stood on its beaches and looked out across the ocean? It was...

Indy realized at the last moment that he was about to swallow the bait that Franklin had thrown to him. He forced himself to calm down. He had to be careful. Franklin was no idiot. His permanent grin made him look more harmless than he was.

"Of course I have," answered Indy. "But I must disappoint you anyway. I have read a few sentences about it. Interesting, but not my area. I have colleagues who know much more than I do."

“No one knows *much* about Easter Island, Dr. Jones,” Franklin answered. “So far there has only been a single scientific expedition to it, and that brought us more questions than answers. We don’t need *knowledge*, Dr. Jones, we need *you*.”

“Why?” asked Grisswald.

Delano looked at him, as if he were only now taking his opposition seriously; and he didn’t seem to be very happy. But Indy also saw the quick, meaningful glance which Franklin threw his colleague, and something suddenly changed in Delano’s expression.

“Let me put it this way, Mr. Grisswald,” he began. “These odd statues on Easter Island are one of the biggest scientific challenges that we know of. The United States government has decided to take on this challenge. We are planning an expedition, and who would be better to lead this expedition than Dr. Jones?”

“An expedition?” Grisswald was listening now. “To Easter Island?”

“With complete backing from the United States government,” Franklin stated. “We have a ship, we have the necessary equipment, and a few good men. What we don’t have is a capable expedition leader.”

“And how did you choose me?” asked Indy. “I know a dozen colleagues who would give their right arm to do this- and would also be more qualified.”

“And I really doubt that, Dr. Jones,” answered Franklin, smiling. “Easter Island is practically unexplored territory. No one knows what we could discover. It could be dangerous, but it will definitely be strenuous. Scientific capacity, especially with your... um, specialties, Dr. Jones, is hard to find.”

“Still...” began Indy, but was again interrupted, this time by Grisswald.

“An expedition for the government?” he asked excitedly. “But why didn’t you say that already? Of course our university will do everything in its power to help. Of course...”

“Naturally you and your university will be the first to be able to publish on the results of the expedition,” said Franklin. “We guarantee you the greatest discretion, Mr. Grisswald. We aren’t trying to use our undertaking to hang up a big bell and call an army of adventurers and treasure seekers to come seek their fortunes.”

Grisswald beamed.

Indy stared at him, stunned. Franklin’s story was so thin that an eight-year-old child could have seen through it. Grisswald couldn’t possibly fall for it!

But he did.

“Dr. Jones will enthusiastically follow your orders, Mr. Franklin,” he said.

Indy groaned. “But Grisswald. You...”

“And I will too,” Grisswald added.

“Okay,” said Indy later, when he was alone with Franklin. “What is this really about? You definitely didn’t convince me with your story of solving the mystery behind some god statues on an island with no human inhabitants!”

They had left the university immediately after their conversation, and if more evidence was needed that Franklin’s story stank to high heaven, then it was the hurry with which the two government agents suddenly operated. Franklin had personally driven Indy to his house so that he could pack a couple of things for the trip, and Delano had done the same with Grisswald. Now, they stood in Indy’s bedroom in front of an open suitcase. Indy made no move to fill it, instead only looked at him questioningly.

“Why?” asked Franklin. “Aren’t you even slightly interested, Dr. Jones?”

“Of course!” answered Indy. “But *you* don’t give a bean, Franklin. And your colleague cares even less, I’d bet a year’s wages. I’m sure that, until two days ago, you didn’t even know where Easter Island is!”

“If I’m completely honest- I still don’t really know,” answered Franklin openly. “I also don’t need to know. Delano and I aren’t employed to know anything, but to find people who know these things.” He pointed at the open suitcase. “Please, Dr. Jones, hurry up a little. The plane is waiting.”

“It seems you’re in a damn hurry,” said Indy. “I’m just wondering why. Those statues have been there for hundreds of years. Are you afraid that they could run away if we get there a couple minutes too late?”

“Perhaps,” answered Franklin.

An icy shudder ran down Indy’s back. His words had been meant mockingly, but as he looked into Franklin’s face, the laugh literally stuck in his throat.

“Please, Dr. Jones,” Franklin continued after a while. “We have a long trip ahead of us, and not *all* of the planes will wait for us. I don’t know how you feel, but I don’t really want to have to spend two days in some god-forsaken hotel just because we wasted too much time here.”

“Planes?” Indy creased his brow, but still started to randomly throw clothes into his suitcase. “I was under the impression that we were taking a ship.”

“We will. The Henderson is waiting for us in Sydney.”

“Sydney?” Indy’s expression became exaggeratedly thoughtful. “Well, I was never very good at geography, but... isn’t that in Australia?”

Franklin laughed quietly. “It’s its capital city.”

“Oh,” said Indy. He remained silent for ten seconds, then continued: “As I mentioned, geography was never my best subject. But isn’t it a bit out of the way to go to *Australia* to get to Easter Island?”

“Far out of the way,” answered Franklin, who had to try to keep from laughing aloud. “That’s why we’re in a hurry. You see- it is a detour, but we have everything that we need for this expedition on a

ship in the Sydney harbor. And it's just easier to take *you* to the ship than to bring the ship to you. I take it that you would prefer to spend only three days on this trip instead of three weeks, right?"

Indy closed the suitcase, pinching both thumbs in the process, and grimaced in pain. "I would prefer to finally know the *truth*," he grumbled.

Franklin smiled.



Chapter 3

Sydney, Australia

72 Hours Later

Three days later, Indy was well on the way to hating that smile. As well as its owner. He was sure that Franklin could have had a stellar career on any Roman galley, because he was the worst slave driver that Indy had ever met.

At least he was also one of the most talented. The route he had worked out and mercilessly driven Indy and Grisswald through was a seventy-two hour torture, but it passed *quickly*. Three days before, Indy would have bet that it was impossible to get from Washington to Sydney in seventy-two hours; but it *was* possible. They had seen it for themselves. The fact that it felt as if they had walked the whole way without stopping to rest a single time was a somewhat annoying side effect, but it didn't change the fact that they had probably set a new world record.

Like all of the airports and train stations they had been in (how many had that been? Indy had stopped counting at some point, but it had been *lots*), everything here was perfectly organized. The airplane hadn't even come to a complete stop when Franklin got up, and gestured for Grisswald and Indy to follow him. Delano had already

gone to the front and spoken with the flight attendant, and, obviously as a result of this conversation, the door was opened just for them and a stairway was brought over so that they could get off of the plane long before the other passengers. A large German limousine with darkened windows waited for them right at the foot of the stairs. Indy climbed in, leaned back into the thick leather seats, and closed his eyes with an exhausted sigh. He had imagined this trip a little differently. He was accustomed to traveling hours, if not days in the saddle of a horse or even sleeping on hard rocks. That one could travel with the most modern transportation and still feel like they had been run over was new to him. Franklin climbed in last, pulled the door shut behind him, and the vehicle drove off. Indy studied him darkly. The government agent smiled as normal and looked repulsively wide awake. Grisswald, who sat next to him, looked just as Indy felt: More dead than alive.

“You will soon have this behind you, Dr. Jones,” said Franklin, after Indy had stared at him almost hostilely for a while. “In half an hour, you will be in your cabin aboard the Henderson and you can sleep.”

The words only sank slowly into Indy’s consciousness, which was half gone from sleep loss. “Henderson?” he murmured. “But I thought that we would go to a hotel first and...”

Franklin interrupted him with a regretful shake of his head. “Why?” he asked. “The Henderson is starting already. We will leave in...” He looked at his watch and considered for a moment, “...about seventy minutes.”

Indy swallowed down everything that he had been about to say. He had given up arguing against any of Franklin’s excuses already on the first day. The government agent remained friendly, but he simply grinned down any argument.

The vehicle left the airfield and crossed the city. Indy would have certainly enjoyed the trip had he not been so tired that he kept falling asleep. Still, he would flinch back awake after only a few seconds

with burning eyes, cold sweat on his brow, and a repulsive taste in his mouth.

Franklin woke him completely as they neared the harbor a good half hour later. The streets here were worse, so that even the large Mercedes' shocks could no longer completely suppress the shaking. Grisswald was constantly tipping forward in his seat so that Delano had to hold him back, but continued to snore, unperturbed.

"I fear that I must ask you for one more small thing, Dr. Jones," said Franklin with faked exhaustion.

"Oh," Indy yawned. "That's all. What do I have to do? Walk back to New York myself?"

"I fear that our secret-keeping hasn't been quite as perfect as I promised you and Mr. Grisswald it was," Franklin admitted. "Someone informed me that several reporters are waiting for us at the docks. We could just ignore them of course, but that would just cause unnecessary speculation. You know how such people are. I must admit that I'm not quite as familiar. Maybe you can say a couple of words."

Indy blinked, irritated. "And what about the army of adventurers and treasure seekers you feared?" he asked.

Franklin waved that away. "When this appears in the newspapers and those men have gotten enough together to buy equipment, we will have already reached our destination," he said. "We have no other choice now, I fear. One must be flexible, right?"

If Indy had been a little less tired, then he would have told Franklin by now that he could add "worst liar of all time" to his list of titles. But it probably wasn't worth it. At least yesterday, he had come up with a much better idea: At the moment, Franklin and his colleague Delano were in charge. But as soon as they reached Easter Island, *Indy* was the leader of this expedition. He would find a good job for these two...

“Of course,” he murmured, crossed his arms, lowered his chin down onto his chest, and closed his eyes. “Wake me when we get there.”

“We *are* there, Dr. Jones,” answered Franklin.

Indy forced himself to lift his eyelids and look out the window. The vehicle now rolled along the dock; Indy didn’t even remember being this close. A good mile from them, the outline of a ship was visible against the sea. Indy could make it out only as a black shadow since the sun was already low, and its red light drove tears to his already burning eyes. But something irritated him about this outline. He just didn’t know exactly what.

Several moments later, he saw something that he recognized very well- and that made him wide awake, at least for a moment. At the end of the dock they were driving across, a small army waited for them.

What had Franklin said? *Several* reporters? Indy guessed that the Henderson was surrounded by at least a hundred camera and notebook wielding figures. The small gap in Franklin’s security system had to be as wide as Niagara Falls!

“Just a few words, Dr. Jones, I promise,” said Franklin, smiling. It took half an hour for them to finally get on board.



Chapter 4

High Seas

The meeting with the reporters had completely worn Indy out. He could no longer remember how he had gotten aboard the Henderson; and certainly not how he managed to reach his cabin. He awoke with a headache, a terrible taste in his mouth, and a slightly ill feeling in his stomach, which he knew would certainly get much worse. The bed on which he lay wasn't just extremely uncomfortable, it also *moved*, and what he first thought was the hammering of his own heart, he identified several moments later as the sound of large engines running somewhere nearby. They were already on the high seas. But Franklin had told him that already.

Indy sat up carefully, swung his legs off of his cot, and tried to stand up. His stomach instantly began to rebel, and he continued on more carefully. The ground beneath his feet swayed heavily, and his stomach and head seemed to spin in the same rhythm. Somehow that was the oddest part, Indy thought. It wasn't the first time that he had been on board a ship- but he had never been *seasick* before.

Indy looked tiredly around the small, shabby cabin. Small and shabby was an understatement. It would have made a better closet, just wide enough for the bed and a tiny table- but not simultaneously. Both were screwed to the wall so that one had to be folded up to use

the other. Indy lengthened in his thoughts the list of things that Franklin would pay for after they landed on Easter Island and then left his cabin.

The hall down which he walked was no less cramped than his cabin. The droning of the engines could be heard more clearly here, and his stomach suddenly rebelled so much that he had to feel his way along the wall with both hands as he went to the staircase. He desperately needed fresh air.

Indy nearly got more of that than he wanted, because storm and seafoam hit him in the face like a wet hand as he stepped out onto the deck of the Henderson. For a moment, he seriously considered returning to his cabin and just going back to sleep, but then he stepped completely out into the storm and looked around, squinting.

It was dark. Storm and sea were approaching the point where the men up on the bridge would start to worry, and the Henderson plowed through the waves at full speed.

On the deck, not a single light shone.

Indy clung tightly to something with his left hand so as not to lose his balance on the slick, swaying deck, turned his face out of the wind, and watched with growing discomfort. Beneath his feet, the ship's motors droned on, the bow split the waves with an unabating, powerful din, but nowhere could any movement or light be seen. It was as if he were on a ghost ship. Even behind the large panes of glass of the bridge, darkness ruled. What on earth was going on here?

Through the droning of the engines and the storm, another sound reached his ear: A pressed groan, followed by a sudden retching sound. Indy turned and saw a hunched-over figure at the railing. Obviously he wasn't the only one who had come onto the deck despite rain, storm, and darkness.

As he approached the figure, he saw that it was none other than Grisswald, who stood turned away from the wind and, without much enjoyment, paid tribute to Poseidon with the food in his belly.

Indy cleared his throat, but that was unsuccessful, so he cleared his throat again and again until Grisswald finally reacted and turned his head with a jerk. On his face appeared a nearly horrified expression as he recognized Indy. “Dr. Jones!” he said. “What are you...”

He spit the rest of his question overboard along with his last meal, and Indy turned discreetly away until the uncomfortable retching noises had stopped again. He knew that that he had found Grisswald in an embarrassing situation.

“Please excuse me, Mr. Grisswald,” he said without turning to his dean. “I didn’t mean to cause an embarrassing situation.”

“Embarrassing? *Embarrassing!*” Grisswald started to swear like a trooper, and, after a few seconds, Indy turned back around and looked at him. Grisswald’s face was quite green, but he didn’t look embarrassed, instead obviously furious. “Damned disgrace!” he said poisonously as he continued to wipe his anything but clean handkerchief over his lips. “Someone will pay for this, Dr. Jones, I promise you that!”

“No one can do anything about the storm,” answered Indy. “And no one can be blamed for seasickness. Believe me, I have completely different...”

“Sea sick?” Grisswald interrupted him brokenly. “Me, sea sick? Don’t make me laugh! My father was a captain! I practically grew up on a ship! Even now, I have my own beautiful yacht and spend every moment I can on the high seas! I would never be seasick, Dr. Jones, never!”

Indy was so confused that he just stared at Grisswald in confusion. “But what...”

“Someone drugged us, Dr. Jones,” Grisswald continued brokenly. “Didn’t you notice? I had this taste in my mouth. I don’t know who it was or why, but I promise you that I will find out, and whoever it was will have to answer to me!”

“I’m sure that Captain Franklin will willingly do that, Professor Grisswald,” said a voice behind him.

Indy and Grisswald turned at the same moment, but, for Grisswald at least, the movement was a bit too fast, because he leaned back over the railing and offered the rest of the contents of his stomach to the gods of the sea.

Indy couldn't make out the other man's face in the darkness, but the voice sounded vaguely familiar, and even more so when he saw that the man was wearing a uniform. "Delano?" he asked haltingly.

"*Commander Delano,*" the other corrected, but took the sharpness off of his words by laughing, then continued quietly: "But that isn't really necessary here. Please come with me, Sirs. It is cold and damp out here, and you don't want to catch cold, right?"

"Your worry will be the death of me," said Grisswald angrily. "After all, you tried to poison us."

Delano overlooked the comment with a renewed laugh and repeated his requesting gesture. "Come, Sirs. It is really cold here. And I fear that it will soon become worse. A storm is coming up."

"Does this ship usually travel without lights on?" asked Indy. "So that the storm can't find us?" But he followed Delano anyway, and, after a last, nearly longing glance at the railing, Grisswald also followed.

Indy looked around attentively as they climbed up the stairs to the bridge behind Delano, and, despite the darkness, he now noticed many details. He wasn't even very surprised. If he hadn't been so tired when he had come aboard at Sydney, he would have noticed it already.

They stepped onto the bridge. The lights were all off. Only here and there, Indy saw the green shimmer of an instrument, in the glow of which the man at the wheel and the other members of the bridge crew looked like uncanny ghosts, moving nearly silently. Franklin was nowhere to be seen, but Delano pointed at a door in the back wall of the bridge and continued on quickly.

Franklin was waiting for them in a small, nearly cozy room. The windows were covered with heavy dark blue satin so that not a single

shimmer of light could get outside, and on a table near the door stood the largest and most complicated radio set that Indy had ever seen. It was turned off. The table at which Franklin sat was covered with papers and large photographs that had all been turned over so that Indy couldn't tell what they showed. But he would have only been able to throw a quick glance at them anyway, because for the next ten seconds he did nothing but stare at Franklin, mouth agape.

Better said: His uniform.

After Delano's appearance, it didn't surprise him just to see that Franklin was no longer in civilian clothes, and after everything else that had become clear on the way here, he wasn't even amazed by the fact that he was wearing an army uniform.

But it was even more than that. It was the uniform of a *General*.

So much for the idea of getting rid of Franklin and his companions as soon as they reached Easter Island, he thought. He was no longer certain that they were even going to Easter Island.

Franklin gave him some time to be amazed by him and his uniform, then he gestured at the two free seats in front of the table, and Indy and Grisswald obeyed automatically. Delano closed the door behind them, but remained standing. Franklin continued to remain silent. He also continued to smile, and it was Grisswald who finally broke the silence.

"Is... that uniform real?" he asked haltingly. Franklin nodded silently, and Grisswald continued after a glance at Indy, searching for help: "I've never heard of a General Franklin before."

"There isn't one," answered Franklin. "But I assure you that my name is the only thing in this room that isn't the truth. Our undertaking must go on with all possible secrecy. For this reason I was also unfortunately forced to stoop to some... uncomfortable levels. But that is over now."

"Secrecy?" asked Indy. "Is that why you called in a whole army of reporters at Sydney?"

“Of course,” Franklin answered, unperturbed. “I’ve always been of the opinion that the most convincing of lies come very close to the truth. Where would you hide a pail of water, Dr. Jones? In the desert, or at sea?”

“At least I wouldn’t try to pass off a warship as a research ship and hope that the entire world is blind!” said Indy. He searched for some sign of fear or disappointment in Franklin’s face. But he found none, so he continued: “The Henderson *is* a warship! Even I noticed that.”

“I had expected nothing less, Dr. Jones,” answered Franklin. “Please don’t think us mentally challenged just because we wear uniforms.”

Indy was now completely confused.

“This *was* once a warship, Dr. Jones,” said Delano. “Nearly ten years ago, it was taken out of service and has been turned into a research ship. All of this has been recorded, at least in the logbooks.”

“Yes,” Franklin backed him. “Well, during the last few weeks, we have made a few... small changes that may not be as carefully recorded. But that doesn’t matter right now. I’m sure that you’ll both be excited to find out why you’re here. Why you’re *really* here, I mean.”

“You can bet on that!” Grisswald said poisonously. Indy just looked at Grisswald silently, and Grisswald continued in a threatening tone: “I hope for your sakes that you have a good reason for this act!”

“We do,” Franklin assured him. He suddenly sounded very serious. For the first time since Indy had met him, his smile vanished. “And it wasn’t *just* an act. It is very possible that we will actually be able to contribute something to science, Professor. Along with a number of... other things, the storage rooms of the Henderson have all of the equipment for the research mission that I promised you. You will get your expedition, Professor Grisswald.”

“He will,” said Indy. “What about me?”

Franklin nodded approvingly. “I see that you really do have a keen mind, Dr. Jones. Perhaps you will be able to help your colleague with his research. I hope so.”

“And if not?” Indy was suddenly angry. “Damn it, just stop beating around the bush already! What’s going on here? What are we really doing here?”

Franklin remained silent for quite a while before he began again in a quiet voice, tone changed: “As you know, we are at war with Japan and the German Reich, Sirs.”

Indy froze, and Grisswald also gasped audibly, but Franklin ignored both of their reactions, raised his hands defensively, and added nearly hastily: “Please believe me, Sirs: I know that you are scientists, not politicians or soldiers, and I certainly don’t wish to pull you into something that lies outside of your fields. But this is an issue that may lead to unforeseeable consequences. And if it is as I fear, then we *need* you.”

“Why?” asked Indy. His voice shook.

Franklin stood up. He started to nervously pace back and forth across the small cabin. “I need to back up a bit,” he began. “As you may know, the German navy has been launching a brutal campaign of destruction against all ships that sail under Allied flags. They sink everything that crosses their path: Warships, tankers, freighters...”

“And you don’t?” asked Grisswald.

Franklin ignored this argument. “Most of all, their U-boats make things hard for us. Our fighter units are currently doing very well at tracking them down and sinking them, but they still cause massive damage. What you probably don’t know is the following: The German plan is to spread terror worldwide, that is, to hunt down our ships *everywhere* and sink them, even right at our own doorstep. That doesn’t mean that they need more U-boats than they had before, but a network of filling stations and U-boat harbors all over the world. For two years, they have been trying to build this network.”

“And Polynesia is perfect for that with its countless islands and atolls,” Indy guessed.

Franklin nodded. “Yes. Of course we haven’t been idle and have carried out some investigations. The Germans are dangerous opponents, Dr. Jones, and, God knows, anything but dumb. Nevertheless, about a year ago, one of our agents was able to infiltrate their organization. This agent has the cover name *Jonas*.”

Indy blinked, and an amused glimmer appeared in Franklin’s eyes, but he continued immediately: “Jonas is in possession of very valuable documents, which would make it possible for us to destroy most of the U-boat bases in Polynesia, if not stop them from even being built.”

“Would?” asked Indy. “So does that mean that you couldn’t do it?”

“Unfortunately not,” Franklin admitted.

“Did the Germans find him out?”

“I wish I knew,” said Franklin. He sighed deeply. “I don’t think so, but...” He searched for words for a moment. “Our agents have to be careful, as you can certainly imagine. He can’t just call us and ask for a plane to come pick him up.”

He smiled in a way as if he expected Indy and Grisswald to smile as well. When they didn’t react after a couple of seconds, he continued haltingly: “We have had to piece the story together with trouble, but I think that it played out like this; Jonas was trying to get to Australia somehow. We followed his trail to a small atoll named Pau-Pau. He spent nearly a week there in a hotel, waiting for an airplane. He finally got on board one with nine other passengers.”

“But the airplane never arrived,” Indy guessed.

Franklin nodded silently.

“The Germans must have shot it down,” said Grisswald.

“That was our first thought as well,” answered Franklin darkly. “But if it were so simple, then I would be glad. And you and I wouldn’t be here now. About three months ago, the airplane showed

back up. Better said: It fell into the sea half a mile from Pau-Pau Atoll. On board we found one dead and one dying man. The pilot and a passenger. And some of Jonas' records.

He reached into the disaster on the table, dug out a small notebook bound in black leather, and handed it to Indy. Grisswald leaned curiously to look over his shoulder as he opened it.

Aside from the binding, which showed clear signs of fire damage, there were only a few pages; the rest had been torn out or burned. And the remaining pages seemed at first to be a disappointment. The ink had run, which clearly meant that, on top of everything else, the book had spent a long time in the water. And what remained readable couldn't be understood because it appeared to be the senseless scratching of a young child. Or at least handwriting that shared a clear resemblance to that.

"Don't strain your eyes," said Franklin, sighing. "We showed these pages to the best cryptologists in the country. They're just the senseless scratching of a mad man. Turn to the last page."

Indy did so- and he and Grisswald simultaneously gasped in surprise. Mad or not, the owner of this book had been a passable artist. The last two pages showed a beach on which half a dozen human figures stood. In front of them, only partially sticking out of the receding tide, rose two colossal statues.

"Do you recognize them?" asked Franklin.

Indy remained silent, but Grisswald said unsurely: "I've... seen pictures of the figures on Easter Island, and..."

He said no more as Franklin flipped over one of the pictures on the table and pushed it in his direction. Indy noticed without much surprise that it showed one of the massive head statues as they had been discovered on Easter Island. Thoughtfully, he looked between the photo and the drawing for a while.

"The similarity is confusing," he said finally.

"Similarity?" Franklin laughed. "They are completely identical, Jones. Look at the oversized heads and the long, stretched ears. I've

shown these images to dozens of specialists, and they all came to the same conclusion. Whoever made this drawing must have had this as their model.” His outstretched finger seemed to move to stab the photo.

“Why aren’t your dozens of specialists not here in our place?” asked Grisswald.

Franklin ignored his remark, and Indy said slowly: “This means that Jonas is on Easter Island.”

“No,” answered Franklin. “He was never there, we know that at least. And the range of the airplane wasn’t nearly far enough. There must be a second island that has such statues. And it must be somewhere within a radius of three hundred nautical miles of Pau-Pau. And we’re here to find it.”

“You think that Jonas and the others are still alive and just stayed there,” Indy guessed. He continued somewhat more sharply: “And you practically kidnapped us so we could help you recover your valuable agent- and the plans along with him!”

“I wish it were so,” said Franklin quietly. He sighed, shook his head a couple of times, and looked at Indy very seriously. “If what we fear is correct, Dr. Jones, then the Germans no longer need mysterious undersea bases in Polynesia. I fear that they won’t even need U-boats anymore either.”

Indy stared at him. He suddenly felt an inexplicable fear.

“What... what do you mean?” asked Grisswald. His voice also shook.

“I haven’t yet told you what condition the plane was in when it arrived at Pau-Pau,” said Franklin. He handed Indy two more photos. They showed the wreckage of a Junkers JU 80, propped up with the help of a complicated wooden frame in a massive hangar. “You can see that this machine was very badly damaged,” he continued. “The wreck lay twenty meters down at the bottom of the sea. We salvaged it and put it back together as well as we could. Our technicians

needed two weeks to finish it, and, unfortunately, we couldn't recover *all* of the pieces."

That's obvious, thought Indy. The JU 80 looked like a three dimensional puzzle that someone with oversized, clumsy fingers had put together.

"The machine must have already crashed once before," said Franklin, "or had quite a rough emergency landing behind it. Obviously they had tried to fix it with rather primitive means. These private pilots are sometimes the most creative at fixing things and can manage to make a machine fly again with a bundle of wire and a couple of nails." He laughed quietly, but his eyes remained serious. "But that isn't what scares us, Dr. Jones."

"And what... does scare you?" asked Indy haltingly. He had the feeling that he already knew the answer.

Franklin leaned forward. "That," he said, pointing at three different locations on the wreck of the airplane. "And that and that."

Indy had also noticed these spots. Questioningly, he looked at Franklin.

"We have had many metallurgists examine the wreck," said Franklin. "They all said the same thing: The metal must have been exposed to unimaginable temperatures. See the discoloration around the edges?"

Indy nodded. Again he felt an icy shudder.

"...they tried to weld it?" said Grisswald haltingly.

"No welding devices reach temperatures of over a thousand degrees Kelvin," answered Franklin calmly. "And you can see it better on this picture, see..." he handed Grisswald another picture, "...the holes even reach to the other side of the machine."

"As if someone shot at it," Indy murmured, shuddering. "But with what?"

Franklin's answer consisted of a meaningful, dark silence. He picked up another photo, but didn't show it to them yet. "We mentioned the two passengers, remember?" he continued. "The pilot

was very badly injured when he was pulled from the water. I... also have pictures of him, but I will spare you the sight if you don't want to see them. Please just believe me when I say that he was burned to the point of being nearly unrecognizable. How he even managed to get the airplane to the atoll is a mystery to us all."

"And the other man?" asked Indy.

"The copilot? A certain Perkins, one of the passengers. He obviously lost consciousness during the crash and drowned. But he also wasn't uninjured." He continued after a second-long, measured pause. "The man was blind. The pathologist who looked at him stated that his retinas were burned."

"Do you know what that means?" asked Indy. It was a rather stupid question, and Franklin didn't even take the trouble to answer. Silently, he handed Indy and Grisswald the picture he had previously held in his hands.

Indy's fingers started to shake as he studied it. He could truly *feel* as Grisswald paled next to him.

"The dark lines are blood," said Franklin quietly. "Human blood. Obviously there was no pen on hand."

It was a roughly-drawn picture that had been drawn onto a piece of the JU's instrument panel in thick, uneven lines. It showed- only roughly and obtusely, but still clearly recognizable- three things: One of the large god statues, the airplane- and a jagged bolt of lightning coming from the stone figure's eyes and hitting the airplane.

"I think I understand you now," Indy whispered.

"I hope so, Dr. Jones," answered Franklin seriously. "And I hope to God that we are all mistaken and that these are just the feverish imaginings of a dying man."

"I... I just don't understand what... what all of this means," Grisswald stammered. Indy looked at him, and something in his eyes made it clear to Indy that he understood very well, but he just *wouldn't* admit it now.

“There have been rumors for several years that the Nazis are working on a new secret weapon, Professor Grisswald,” said Franklin. He pointed at the photo showing the airplane nearly burned beyond recognition. “It looks like they may have finished it.”

An hour later, light came, and, with the night, the storm also pulled back into its dark den. The sea calmed noticeably, and the Henderson added a couple of knots to its speed. They were back on the bridge. Indy noticed the nervous glances the bridge officers continued to throw at the sea.

After everything he had learned from Franklin, he understood this nervousness only too well. If the Germans really did have a secret laboratory on some Polynesian island where they were working on a weapon that could possibly end the war, then they would have to turn over every single piece of driftwood for a radius of a thousand nautical miles. During the night, the darkness provided them a bit of protection against German U-boats and airplanes. Now, the ship was being practically presented on a silver platter. The Henderson was anything but *small*.

“Afraid?” asked a voice behind him. Indy turned around and recognized Delano. The commander looked pale, bleary-eyed, and noticeably nervous.

“You aren’t?” Indy replied. “If I were the Germans, then I would sink everything that I even *thought* could be there.”

“Yes, perhaps.” Delano sighed. His eyes moved over the endless gray, smooth surface of the sea. “But it really isn’t as bad as all that, Dr. Jones. Not even the Nazis would dare to attack a ship without reason, especially one that is on a peaceful research mission.”

“And has storage rooms full of weapons and soldiers, I take it.”

Delano smiled briefly. “Those reporters that got on your nerves so much in Sydney, Dr. Jones, are, in a way, our saviors. The entire world now knows that the Henderson is on its way to Easter Island. And also why.”

“But you haven’t told us yet what role Grisswald and I will play in your little charade,” said Indy.

“Professor Grisswald...” Delano looked around as if he first wanted to make sure that Grisswald couldn’t hear him before he continued. “He was an unexpected, but welcome addition. The Henderson is in fact on the way to Easter Island now, Dr. Jones. Professor Grisswald will be able to dig and research there to his heart’s content. We hope that half the world will be watching him.”

“While you and Franklin search for something else,” Indy guessed.

Delano nodded. “Yes. At the moment, the statues on Easter Island are our only hint- nearly, at least. Perhaps, with the help of that or the Polynesians themselves, we can manage to find the exact location of the other island.”

Indy stared at the other man, mouth agape. “How?” he groaned. “Do you even know what you’re talking about? Such research could take *years*, if we ever...”

Delano lifted his hands calmly. “I said *nearly*, Dr. Jones,” he explained. “There is a second hint. It’s a long shot, but, at the moment, it’s the only thing we have. Franklin told you about Pau-Pau. Well, there’s a... man there. A somewhat odd man, I’ve heard. His name is Ganty. For years, he’s been telling mad stories about an island peopled by giants. No one believes him, but I think it’s time that we talk to him.” He made a vague gesture towards the sea. “The Henderson moves is quite fast, Dr. Jones. Fast enough that it can make a slight detour and still arrive punctually at its destination. You and I will get on a pontoon plane that will take us to Pau-Pau in about two hours.”

“To talk to Ganty,” said Indy.

Delano nodded.

“And if he really is just a storyteller and doesn’t know anything?”

“Then,” Delano answered very seriously, “we will really be in a pickle, Dr. Jones. And the rest of the world along with us.”



Chapter 5

Pau-Pau Atoll, Polynesia

Maybe the city really did had a name. But if so, then no one had thought it necessary to put up a corresponding sign- and why would they? It wasn't just the only town on the island, it had only around a dozen houses, standing around the natural harbor. There wasn't even a street, but along the three wooden docks floated more boats than there were citizens in this dump.

“Are you sure that we'll find this Ganty here?” asked Indy. He stamped his feet hard a couple of times to get the water out of his shoes, but didn't have much success. Delano had sprung onto land from the pontoon plane with the powerful leap of a swimmer, but Indy's attempt to follow in the same way hadn't quite worked out. His pant legs were soaked nearly to the knees.

“His boat is here, at least,” said Delano, after his gaze had swept over the harbor for a moment. He pointed at a dirty white, fifty foot long yacht that had surely seen better days, but it was still the largest ship in the harbor. “I think he may be sitting in the hotel bar, getting plastered. Come on.”

The commander had changed. He now no longer wore his Navy uniform, instead simple sailor's clothing, heavy linen pants, a black jacket, and a dark blue cap, but this clothing fit him just as little as

the tailored suit in which Indy had first seen him in Washington. He wondered who Delano was trying to trick with these disguises.

Indy had also changed and now wore his leather jacket, hat, and the rolled up whip at his belt. Delano had only smiled knowingly as Indy had taken them from his suitcase, but withheld any comments.

They moved towards the largest building of the nameless city, which- judging by the handmade sign over the door- was simultaneously hotel, bar, and community center. Indy looked around attentively. The town was quiet, but not abandoned. He saw several white men in rumpled clothing, but also two or three Polynesians. They had probably come here with the white settlers, because Pau-Pau simply wasn't big enough for there to have been a native population. As small as the city was, it still took up a good fifth of the usable land; the rest consisted of sharp-edged lava and seemingly endless sand dunes. This city was certainly one of those settlements that, in Indy's opinion, just shouldn't exist, because they were practically impossible to sustain without outside help.

The hotel-bar-community center seemed to also serve as a goat stall, at least judging by the smell that hit Indy and Delano as they entered. After the bright sunlight outside, Indy was nearly blind at first.

Blinking, he looked around the half-dark, filthy hall. Behind the bar near the door leaned a figure who seemed to be a mixture of barkeeper, hotel manager, and pilot, who studied him and Delano with unconcealed distrust. Indy smiled at the man and stepped closer.

"A room?" asked the man without stopping for such superficial formalities as a greeting.

"Maybe later," answered Indy. "Right now, we're searching for someone. A certain Mr. Ganty. Is he here?"

"Sitting at the window," answered the barkeep with a corresponding gesture. His eyes grew small. "What do you want with him?"

“To buy him a drink,” answered Indy. “And you as well, if you want. Can you bring three to our table?” He turned around before the man could ask another question, and gave Delano a sign that he should follow him.

Ganty was a gray-haired man with a hulking figure and a hard to determine, but certainly considerable age. His face sported a full, white beard, and the tiny red veins around his nose and eyes betrayed him as a boozier. But his eyes, which studied Indy and Delano from beneath bushy white brows, were awake and very attentive.

“Mr. Ganty?” asked Delano.

Ganty looked up. “No one has called me Mr. for quite some time,” he said. “But Ganty is right.”

Delano pulled a chair over and pointed at himself and Indy as they sat down. “My name is Delano,” he began. “This is Dr. Indiana Jones. We would like to speak with you for a moment, Ganty.”

“A medicine man?” asked Ganty, and looked at Indy. “From what tribe?”

Indy suppressed a smile. “Indiana,” he intoned, “not Indian. And I am a doctor of archaeology, not medicine.”

“Oh? Too bad.” The other man came over and brought the three ordered drinks. Ganty had the first one down even before the tablet had touched the table, and reached for a second glass. “Thought you were a doctor. I have an ingrown toenail I’d like someone to take a look at.”

He burped loudly, emptied the second glass in one gulp, and grabbed the third. Indy signaled the man to bring another round and simultaneously threw Delano an almost pleading look. Ganty played the barbarian, but he certainly wasn’t one. Indy wondered why he was doing this.

“What do you want from me?” asked Ganty, after he had knocked back the third schnapps without batting an eye. “Do you want to rent my boat? Costs fifteen a day. Twenty if I show you a couple good places to fish”

“Perhaps,” answered Delano. “Mr. Ganty, Dr. Jones and I are...”

Indy cut the procedure short by reaching into his pocket and pulling out one of the photographs he had taken from Franklin’s desk. “Have you seen anything like this before?” he asked.

The image showed one of the gigantic statues on Easter Island. Ganty stared at him for a moment, but his reaction was completely different than Indy had expected. One didn’t have to be psychic to tell that this wasn’t the first time that he had seen what was depicted there. But suddenly, his face darkened. He looked at Indy and Delano *furiously*.

“So that’s it!” he said, strained. “But shouldn’t I have expected this? Get out, the both of you!”

Delano was completely confused. “I don’t really understand, Ganty...” he began.

“For you, it’s *Mr. Ganty!*” Ganty interrupted him brokenly. “Don’t play the fool! Do you think that I don’t know why you two vultures are here?”

“I fear that there’s been a misunderstanding, Mr. Ganty,” said Indy. He traded a confused glance with Delano and shrugged.

“A misunderstanding, ha!” Ganty now spoke very loudly. He was almost screaming. Agitated, he leaned forward and breathed his alcohol-laced breath onto Indy and Delano as he continued. “I recognize vultures from a hundred miles away!” he claimed. “A few nice words, a couple glasses of schnapps, and perhaps a few dollars, and then you’ll have your story, right? And the readers of your tabloid can be amused by the old crackpot who...”

“We aren’t journalists, Mr. Ganty,” Indy interrupted him.

Ganty blinked. “No?”

“Definitely not,” Delano assured him. He pointed at Indy. “Dr. Jones is one of the world’s leading archaeologists. And I also don’t care much for reporters. We definitely aren’t here to make fun of you, Mr. Ganty. We’ve come a little too far just to do that.”

Ganty stared between the two of them, filled with distrust. He still wasn't completely convinced, but at least he was no longer boiling with anger.

"You've seen something like this before, haven't you?" Indy pointed at the picture that lay between them on the table. "But not on Easter Island."

"And if so?" Ganty growled.

"You already said yes, Mr. Ganty, you realize that, right?" asked Indy.

Ganty looked at him, and, for the first time, he smiled. But only for a second. "What do you want?" he asked once more.

"We're part of a scientific expedition," Indy began again. "We are trying to solve the mystery of these statues. You see, Ganty, there is a theory that there are other islands on which such statues stand. Before, we didn't even know if the culture that created these statues was really originally from Easter Island. It would be a major breakthrough for scientists if we could find evidence of similar statues on other islands in Polynesian."

"Oh, is that so?" Ganty whimpered. "And what do I have to do with that?"

"Our financial means aren't limitless," said Delano, "but..."

"Money?" Ganty made an obscene sound. "Stop it, Mister. I have everything I need."

"You could prove to the entire world that you're right," said Indy. Ganty stared at him and remained silent, and Indy continued: "That you aren't the *old crackpot* that people have denounced you as. If you help us discover a sensation like *this*, Ganty, then no one will laugh at you anymore, I'm certain."

Ganty considered this. "How did you come to believe an old boozier like me?" he asked distrustfully. "You can't mean to tell me that you came all the way from America just to follow this slim lead!"

“No, certainly not.” Indy smiled, reached into his pocket once more, and pulled out the singed notebook. Not the slightest reaction could be read on Ganty’s face as he opened it and showed him the drawing on the last two pages. Not even surprise.

“That came from a victim of a wreck that someone fished out of these waters,” said Indy. “Unfortunately, he was no longer able to give us more information about it. But we know one thing for certain: It *didn’t* come from Easter Island.”

Ganty remained silent. Thoughtfully, he flipped through the pages of the notebook. In a way that confused Indy. Had he not known better, he would have sworn that Ganty was *reading* those pages. But, after all, the best cryptologists in the USA said that it was just the scribbling of a mad man.

Finally, Ganty closed the book, gave it back to Indy, and looked at him and Delano almost penetratingly for quite a while. But Indy slowly recognized that this wasn’t quite true. He wasn’t looking at *them*, he was looking at their *ears*. Madness. And simultaneously, Indy had the feeling that he should know what that meant.

“I’ll think about it,” said Ganty, before Indy could follow the thought any further. “I’ll tell you my decision in the morning.”

“We’re in a bit of a hurry, Mr. Ganty,” Delano pressed.

“Morning,” Ganty commanded. And it remained that way.

They had, for better or worse, gotten a room in the hotel; small, filthy, and for a truly ridiculous price- but still better than sleeping in the cabin of the pontoon plane that swayed outside on the waves. After they had spent half an hour with stories and speculations, they went to bed by sundown. Of course there was no electricity on Pau-Pau, and, for a tiny petroleum lamp with cracked glass, the cutthroat had wanted no less than five dollars; an imposition that Indy had refused on principle.

Against his own expectations, Indy fell asleep almost immediately, but he soon awoke again and sensed that not very much time had

passed. But he also knew that, at least for the moment, he wouldn't be able to fall asleep again. Carefully, so as not to wake Delano, he stood up and went to the washbasin to take a drink of water.

The water jug was empty, and he couldn't wake Delano because he was no longer in his bed. He wasn't even in the room.

Maybe he also couldn't sleep and had gone back down to the bar to drink something. So Indy left the room as well and went downstairs.

He didn't find Delano in the bar, but the man behind the desk explained to him that he had something to drink half an hour ago, then left the hotel to get a little fresh air outside.

Indy also went outside. He was irritated, but also a little uncomfortable. Delano didn't seem like the kind of man who would take a stroll in the middle of the night to *get some fresh air*.

He also couldn't find him outside. Indy searched the harbor as well as the city from one end to the other (which was really no great feat) without even finding a trace of him. Finally, he turned to what the natives here would likely describe as "inland", and climbed up the highest (and only) mountain on the atoll, a not even ten meter high hill, from the peak of which he could look across the whole island.

At the other end of the island stood a single figure, looking out across the ocean.

Delano? But what was he doing there?

Indy looked silently at Delano for quite a while, and the whole time he did so, Delano stood there motionlessly and looked out across the sea. Finally, Indy carefully walked down the opposite side of the hill and went over to the commander. Since he wasn't really trying to be quiet, Delano soon heard his steps and turned to face him. He made a hasty movement, almost as if he was trying to hide something beneath his jacket. Indy made note of this for later, but didn't pursue it at the moment.

"Delano?" asked Indy. "What are you doing here?"

Delano shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "I could ask you the same thing."

"*I was looking for you,*" asked Indy, slightly angry. "And you?"

Delano's shrug was repeated. "It's a beautiful night," he said. "I wanted to get a bit of fresh air. I couldn't sleep anyway."

Indy stared attentively for a moment in the direction Delano had been looking before. Had he been deceived, or did he really see a shadow on the sea?

"What do you think, Jones- is Ganty telling the truth, or is he really just an old crackpot like everyone else thinks?" asked Delano.

Indy tore his gaze from the sea and looked at Delano. "I don't know," he admitted. "But I was watching his face when he saw the pictures. He wasn't very surprised. He had at least seen something like the photos and drawing once before."

"Those odd god images, you mean?" Delano turned around and started to go back to the city. Indy followed him.

"They aren't images of gods," he answered, smiling. "At least I don't think so. Have you ever been to Easter Island, Delano?"

"Me? God forbid, no."

"But you've seen the pictures?"

"Of course. They are impressive."

"And the originals must be even more impressive," said Indy. "I've also never been there, but of course I've read a few things about them. They're twelve meters tall, and several weigh over thirty tons. If you consider the fact that the Polynesians had no iron tools until the white men arrived, then it's even more impressive."

"No iron?" Delano inquired. "But then how did they carve those things out of rock?"

"Not only you and I would like to know that," answered Indy. "And that isn't even the most amazing part. They chiseled the figures out of the stone cliffs of volcanoes, you know? Miles inland. But several are located on the coast. No one knows how they got there, but the legends insist that they walked."

“Walked?” Delano’s eyes widened in shock. “Didn’t you say that they’re twelve meters high and weigh a few dozen tons?”

“It is still possible,” said Indy. “They probably stood them up and then transported them standing.” He stopped, placed his feet close together, and started to waddle on the spot. “Like that, you see? I think that they tied ropes around their necks and then carefully pulled in all directions at once and swayed them until they slowly began to hop along. There are a few broken statues that obviously fell over and seem to support these theories.” He smiled and continued. “But, as I said, it’s just a theory. No one has tried to experiment with it before.”

Delano creased his brow approvingly. “For someone who knows nothing other than the fact that he knows very little, you sure know a lot, Dr. Jones,” he said.

“But what I do know, I know well,” Indy added, smiling. “It is a very interesting subject, Delano. As you’ll see, Easter Island hides many secrets. And so far, we have many more questions than answers.”

“And you think that Ganty has the answers?”

“Maybe a couple,” said Indy, shrugging his shoulders. “Did you see how he was studying our ears?”

Delano automatically raised his hand and felt his earlobe. As he became conscious of his own movement, he let his arm sink again, nearly embarrassed.

“That was no coincidence,” said Indy.

Delano looked at him sharply.

“You see, Delano- Easter Island is barely inhabited today, but that wasn’t always the case. Until about two hundred years ago, there was a thriving civilization there. It collapsed because the tribes warred among themselves a bit too often. It’s assumed that their own lifestyle probably destroyed them. They uprooted a few too many forests to build fortress walls and weapons. It finally led to an ecological collapse, and relationships between all of the plants and

animals were disrupted. The island once had over ten thousand inhabitants. Today, only a handful of farmers can survive off of what grows there.”

“Interesting,” said Delano. “But what does that have to do with our ears?”

“Just wait,” said Indy. “The culture of Easter Island was separated into two classes- one ruled, the other was ruled. In the last big war, the slaves denounced the tyranny of their lords and destroyed them. The legends say that only a handful of them got away with their lives and were able to escape.”

“Uh-huh,” said Delano. He sounded a little bit impatient.

“The slaves were normal Polynesians,” Indy continued. “Yet their masters were supposedly a people of giants. They had a number of names. One of them was *Long Ears*.”

Delano stopped again. This time, he looked much more shocked than confused. “And what does that mean to you?” he asked.

“Nothing, at the moment,” answered Indy. “I don’t like jumping to conclusions too quickly. I watch and observe, that’s all.” He continued walking. “But if Ganty is really nothing but a drunk old crackpot, then you can call me Adolf.”

They had already reached the city, and Indy turned towards the hotel. But Delano suddenly stopped, held Indy back by the shoulder, and simultaneously placed a finger over his lips. Indy understood. He quickly pulled back into the shadows of one of the buildings and looked in the direction in which Delano’s outstretched hand pointed.

As from any other point in the city, they could look out across the entire harbor. Ganty’s boat lay at the opposite end of the harbor, but light burned aboard the tiny yacht so that the outline of the two figures on deck could be clearly seen. One of them was Ganty. Indy would have recognized the stooped figure with the broad shoulders and hulking head under any circumstances. The other was slimmer, but very tall. Next to Ganty, they looked like a giant.

“Who could that be?” whispered Delano.

Indy just shrugged his shoulders. Of course he had no idea who Ganty’s conversation partner was, but one thing was clear to him: That Ganty had consciously met the stranger there so as not to be seen. He had acquired a sense for such things over the years. Ganty’s gestures were clearly those of a man who felt uncomfortable and was afraid of being noticed. Faces and voices could lie; body language seldom did.

“Why don’t we take a closer look?” he said. “It’s a beautiful night, and warm enough for a bath.”

Delano looked at him questioningly, but Indy just grinned again, turned around, and crept, hunched over, to the beach.

The water wasn’t nearly as warm as Indy had thought, but the way also wasn’t very far. Almost silently, Indy swam over to Ganty’s yacht, circled around it, and approached the ship from the open sea. He could no longer see Ganty and his conversation partner, but he could definitely hear them.

It wasn’t much use. Ganty and the other person spoke in a language that he didn’t understand- and had also never heard before. It didn’t sound at all familiar, although there was barely any dialect that Indy hadn’t heard at least once before, no matter what corner of the world it came from.

He listened for several seconds, then he swam as carefully as he could around the boat to get into a position from which he could see Ganty as well as his mysterious visitor.

He couldn’t see Ganty completely, but that made the sight of the man even more shocking.

His face wasn’t the broad, flattened, friendly mug of the typical Polynesian, instead small and hard with almost Asiatic features, and the unknown man also didn’t have the typical, short build of the islanders, instead was a giant at least two meters tall; probably even more. His enormous size made him seem overly thin, but he really wasn’t, he was almost terrifyingly muscular around his shoulder area,

biceps, and thighs. He was naked except for a loincloth and soaking wet; he had obviously gotten there the same way as Indy had.

And his ear lobes were so long that they nearly hung down to his shoulders.

The sight was so bizarre that Indy realized the importance of his other observation- namely the growing puddle in which the foreigner stood- much too late. Something splashed behind him, and Indy suddenly felt as he was grabbed beneath the arms like a child and thrown out of the water.

In a high arc, he flew over the boat, flipped over twice, and nearly fell right back into the water on the other side, but he grabbed onto something at the last moment. Uncertain and with a ringing skull, he sat up and saw something dark gliding through the water like a gigantic fish; at least like a fish with huge hands, the shoulders of a prize fighter, and earlobes that waved like large fins in the water. Confused, he watched the shadow until it completely vanished, then he turned around...

...and found himself looking straight down the muzzle of the pistol Ganty was pointing at him.

“You were spying on me, Dr. Jones?” asked Ganty.

Indy stood up very carefully before he answered, and Ganty seemed to have nothing against that. Yet he did follow every movement that Indy made with the muzzle of his weapon. And he didn’t look like someone who had his scruples about using the weapon. There was no trace of his uncanny visitor.

“This is a misunderstanding, Mr. Ganty,” said Indy hastily. “I’m not spying on you. I...”

“You just happened to be swimming by here, right?” Ganty interrupted him mockingly. “I understand.”

Indy’s thoughts raced. He searched desperately for some type of reply that sounded at least halfway sensible, or at least not completely idiotic. He found none, and so he finally spread out his hands with an embarrassed smile. “Okay, you caught me,” he

admitted. "I have been spying on you. But you've also been keeping some things from us, right?" He made a head movement to that place on the ship where the stranger had stood. "Who are your mysterious friends, Mr. Ganty? They're Long Ears, aren't they?"

Ganty's expression darkened. "You saw them?"

"I'm not blind, after all," answered Indy. "So everything they say about you is true, Mr. Ganty. Except for the claim that you're insane. You've probably laughed louder at the rest of the world than even they laughed at you."

Ganty's face darkened even more. "You really saw them," he said. "That isn't good. Really. Definitely not good."

"I fear that your little secret is no more," answered Indy.

Ganty sighed deeply. "Believe me, Dr. Jones, I hate to do this," he said, and shot Indy in the stomach twice at close range.



Chapter 6

High Seas

Sunrise

One of the few memories that Indy had of his mother was the feeling of a warm, tender presence and the sensation of being held gently in her arms and being rocked, and it was probably only natural that he felt this same feeling as he returned from the edge of the boundary that every person must eventually cross. He saw nothing, but he heard an even, calm rustling and whispering, and he felt himself being rocked gently back and forth.

But then he tried to breathe, and it became quite drastically clear to him that even this paradise had its little drawbacks, because such a gruesome pain shot through his chest that he flew up with a pained scream.

And then he fell right back down, because heaven wasn't just painful, but also quite low; and it had an iron ceiling that Indy had hit his head very hard on.

He groaned, lifted his hands carefully to his head, and opened his eyes even more carefully. Every breath hurt terribly, and if this was heaven, then it was definitely not at all like the one envisioned in the Bible or the Koran or any other religion, because it was small and

filthy and stank of schnapps and rotting fish, and instead of heavenly choirs, he heard the asthmatic groaning of an ancient diesel motor. No doubt about it- the Bible had been very wrong.

Of course, there was a second possibility: Namely that he wasn't dead. This thought was still almost as improbable. Indy clearly remembered everything that had happened. And he had never heard of anyone surviving two shots in the belly from such close range.

As carefully as he could, he tried to sit up for a second time, but the pain in his chest was just too much. He groaned, opened his jacket and shirt with trouble, and looked down. He was afraid of what he might see.

Not without good reason, as it turned out. His belly and entire right side shimmered with all colors of the rainbow. It was the worst bruise he had ever seen.

"If I were you, then I wouldn't move unnecessarily," said a voice somewhere outside of his view. "You're just hurting yourself for no reason."

Indy turned his head and recognized Ganty, who crouched on the other side of the tiny cabin and studied him, shaking his head. "Terrible thing," he said with a gesture at Indy's chest. "But you're a tough man. In a couple of days, you'll be able to move normally again. Almost, at least."

He laughed, and this laugh should have made Indy furious. But he was much too confused to muster anything other than a questioning expression. He looked down again. It didn't just look like it, it *felt* as if a camel had stepped on him- but his skin didn't even have a scratch on it!

"But how... how is this possible?"

Ganty reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a bullet, which he squished between his thumb and forefinger before Indy's disbelieving eyes. "Tin, quicksilver, and bismuth," he explained, "and just enough lead that it doesn't explode in the barrel and blow

my hand off. I pour the things myself. It took a while for me to figure out the correct mixture.”

“I... don’t understand any of this,” Indy murmured. He tried to sit up for a third time, and this time he managed it, even if still swaying and with clenched teeth.

Ganty nodded approvingly. “You really are a tough fellow, Dr. Jones,” he said. With an almost casual movement, he pulled his pistol out, the one with which he had shot Indy before, and continued: “But please don’t try to play the hero now.”

“Don’t worry,” Indy groaned. “I’m not quite sure that I’ll ever be able to move again. Why the hell did you do it?”

“Would you have preferred it had I used real bullets?” asked Ganty, smiling.

Indy glared at him. “You know exactly what I mean!”

Ganty sighed. “I had no other choice, Dr. Jones,” he said. “After what you saw, I couldn’t just leave you there. And it must have seemed convincing to your friend.”

“Wouldn’t it have been enough just to hit me over the head once?” Indy grumbled.

“I fear not,” answered Ganty, troubled. “You see, if your friends think that you’re dead, then they might search for your murderer for a couple of weeks, and not even that thoroughly. After that, no one will give two hoots about you. On the other hand... if the famous Dr. Indiana Jones is missing, then this place could be teeming with ships and planes in just a few days.”

“The famous Dr. Indiana Jones?” repeated Indy.

Ganty laughed. “I know exactly who you are, Dr. Jones. I’m not the idiot that everyone thinks I am.”

“I didn’t buy that for a moment,” answered Indy. “So am I to infer from your words that my execution has only been postponed?”

“I haven’t decided yet,” answered Ganty. “But I don’t think that they’ll kill you.”

“They?”

Ganty smiled and remained silent.

Indy tried to swing his legs off of the cot, but immediately gave up the attempt as Ganty made a threatening movement with his pistol.

“Who are you, Ganty?” he asked. “Who are you really?”

“Just an old man,” answered Ganty, “who has happened to come across one of the last mysteries of this world and doesn’t want it to be destroyed.” He laughed quietly. “Twenty years ago, I appointed myself as its protector, but I think that word may be a bit too pompous.”

“Then I was right,” said Indy. “There are other places where the Easter Island culture existed. And you know where it is.”

“Your guess is right, Dr. Jones,” answered Ganty. “Only you used the wrong tense.”

“What?”

“You used the past tense,” said Ganty.

It took a moment for Indy to *truly* realize what the other man meant. But then his eyes and mouth gaped open in disbelief. “You... you’re trying to tell me that they still exist?” he gasped.

Ganty nodded. “As unchanged and untouched as on the first day. And they will stay that way.”

“And you know where this island is?” Indy asked excitedly.

“We’re on the way there,” said Ganty. “If the weather holds, we will reach it tomorrow morning.”

“But that’s... fantastic!” said Indy. He was so excited that he now sat up anyway and could barely feel the pain in his bruised ribs. But he could in the back of his head as he hit it against the top bunk for the second time.

“Please don’t get excited too soon, Dr. Jones,” said Ganty, as Indy laid his left hand on his ribs and used his right hand to massage his throbbing head. “I think I can guarantee you your life. But not that they’ll ever release you.”

It was several more hours before Indy had regained enough of his strength to leave the cabin and go out onto the deck of the ship. They

were going in a western direction. In front of them and to both sides the sky was empty, and the sea lay there, smooth as a mirror, but a mile behind the yacht at most, the heavy, large clouds rose up like dark, fairy tale mountains, and the sea was hidden beneath a thick bank of fog. Indy hoped that the ship was fast enough to outrun the storm. He could think of much better things to do than try to survive a hurricane in this wreck.

Ganty stood behind the wheel, but his hands only rested on it, they didn't really hold on tight. He must have heard Indy's steps as he didn't remotely try to be quiet, but he didn't turn around to him. Indy stepped over to him, looked silently past him to the west for a while, and then asked abruptly: "Why do you trust me, Ganty?"

"Shouldn't I?" Ganty didn't look at him.

"That isn't an answer," said Indy. "You've protected your secret for twenty years."

"Not well enough, unfortunately," Ganty admitted. "Before, when I was younger, I sometimes told people more than was good."

"Those were the rumors?"

"Yes. Unfortunately. I almost ruined everything. But then I realized in time what fate would befall them if the world were to learn of their existence." He laughed. It sounded very bitter. So I tried to fix the damage I caused. Who would believe a mad old boozer?"

"And after all those years, you decided to trust me?" asked Indy.

Ganty now loosened his gaze from the horizon and looked at him. "Do you know anyone better, Dr. Jones?"

Indy was embarrassed. "Well, I..."

"I know who you are, Dr. Jones," Ganty reminded him.

"Admittedly, we are almost at the end of the world here, but one still hears a few things. And there are things that I pay especially close attention to. I still have a few connections from before."

Indy looked at him questioningly, and Ganty laughed very quietly. “I was once a professor of archaeology, Dr. Jones. Just like you. But that was long ago.”

“You?!” asked Indy in disbelief. He immediately felt sorry for the tone he had said that in, and he apologized.

Ganty waved it off. “You don’t need to apologize, Dr. Jones. I have exactly the reputation that I want to have. But I still remember how I was at your age. And that’s why I think I can trust you. You aren’t like most of my so-called colleagues who can think of nothing but their own personal success and fame. I was the same way once. But then I realized that there are things that must be hidden to protect them. And I think you know that as well.”

Indy said nothing. Ganty’s words had embarrassed him, but he also felt that they were meant honestly.

Just to change the subject, he pointed to the east. The gray wall had come no nearer, but their distance from the front of bad weather also hadn’t noticeably increased. “Do you think that the storm will catch us?” he asked. “Or that your ship can survive it?”

Ganty’s eyes glimmered mockingly. “The answer to both questions is no,” he said. “This ship is almost as old as I am. And I also fear that it isn’t in the best condition.” He spent a few seconds noticeably enjoying Indy’s obvious terror, then he continued: “But it won’t catch us.”

“Are you sure?” asked Indy doubtfully. He didn’t know nearly as much about sea travel as Ganty did, but he knew how unpredictable the weather in this part of the world could be.

“Absolutely,” answered Ganty. “It’s just a little security measure. Just in case your friend Delano decides to follow us.”

“What?” asked Indy, confused.

“Didn’t you know a ship followed you to Pau-Pau?” asked Ganty. “You should choose your friends more carefully.”

“That isn’t what I meant,” said Indy. He pointed at the gray wall of fog and clouds that really did seem to follow the yacht at a distance of a good nautical mile. “What do you mean, a security measure?”

“Can you think of a ship that could follow us in *this* weather?” asked Ganty. “Or a plane?”

Again, Indy looked for several seconds at the gigantic barrier of fog and clouds. “No,” he said then.

“You see? I can’t either,” answered Ganty, smiling. And that was all that Indy could get out of him regarding the meaning of his mysterious remark.

But it was almost more than he had wanted to know.



Chapter 7

The Island of the Long Ears

The Next Morning

They reached the place Indy had so far heard no more than a few mysterious remarks about almost exactly to the minute that Ganty had stated before, namely an hour before sunrise. It was no longer completely dark, but also not truly light, so Indy could see little more than a vague outline of the island they were approaching. It seemed to be very large compared to the mostly tiny archipelagos that made up the Polynesian islands, but also very flat, barely more than a hard line drawn across horizon without any rises or mountains to speak of. Ganty maneuvered the boat the last bit of the way with caution, and Indy soon recognized the reason for that: A ring of sharp-edged reefs and banks of coral surrounded the island like a natural fortress wall. He finally left the wheelhouse so as not to disturb Ganty's concentration. He had little desire to swim the last bit of the way to shore.

The front of bad weather had in fact followed them for the entire day and also the night like a true watchdog. In the darkness it did really look like a wall behind which the rest of the world lay hidden, and, with the morning, a light fog also rose up. At the moment, it was just a type of mist that hung over the water in sheets, torn in

countless places, but it would soon grow thicker. Indy was suddenly very glad that Ganty had held so precisely to his schedule. In an hour, it would probably be impossible to maneuver through the reef.

As if to remind him that, even now, it was still quite dangerous, something scraped along the hull of the boat with an uncomfortable screeching sound, and Indy felt as the planks beneath his feet began to shake. Shocked, he turned to Ganty.

The old man smiled apologetically. "Don't worry, Dr. Jones. We're almost through." He concentrated back on the water in front of the bow of the yacht and said, more quietly and more to himself than Indy: "Farther to the north is a wider passage. Maybe I should start using that one."

The fog was thickening, but now they had the most dangerous bit behind them. The boat glided, pace not much faster than a stroll, up onto the beach and finally stopped completely. Ganty turned the motor off, waved almost excitedly for Indy to follow him, and sprang into the knee deep water.

A familiar excitement gripped Indy as they waded the few steps to the beach side by side. Once again, he was about to discover a forgotten part of the world. It didn't matter that he wasn't the first to come here. In that point, Ganty had been right. Indy had realized long ago that one didn't have to share everything they discovered with the whole world. Had he done so, then his name would have been written in the textbooks alongside those of Cook and Livingstone long ago. But it wasn't fame that drove the relentless search Indiana Jones had been on for his entire life. What he wanted was the search itself, the prickling feeling of discovery, the knowledge that he was holding something in his hands that no one had ever touched before, stepping on a piece of ground where no one had stood for a thousand years. And, deep within, he was certain that this mindset was the reason that he had discovered these secrets. He had somehow sealed a pact with fate that demanded silence on his part. The past wouldn't give up its secrets to anyone who would broadcast them to the world.

A meter away from the water, they stopped. At first, Indy assumed that it was just to rest for a moment. But Ganty continued to stand there, motionless, even after over a minute had passed.

“What do we do now?” asked Indy finally.

“We wait,” answered Ganty. “It’s better if we wait here. It won’t be long. They know we’re coming.” He had lowered his voice to a whisper, but it sounded more reverent than fearful, and Indy said no more. They were being watched, he could sense that. The jungle began twenty meters away from the water, and it was so thick that, even during the day, it looked like nothing but a green-black wall. But he could *feel* invisible eyes staring out of the darkness, alert, careful, and filled with distrust.

“They’re confused because I didn’t come alone,” said Ganty quietly. “But they trust me, don’t worry.”

Indy remained silent. He hoped ardently that Ganty was right. But he was suddenly no longer completely certain.

A dull shimmer close to the forest’s edge drew Indy’s attention. He looked at Ganty questioningly, got no answer, and moved towards it.

A few steps before the jungle lay a piece of corrugated iron.

A pail of water that someone had poured over him without warning couldn’t have pulled Indy back to reality any more suddenly. It was just a small shred, barely larger than a child’s hand, but still more than a normal piece of metal. The piece came from the fuselage of the airplane that had crashed into the sea near Pau-Pau, and the sight of it reminded him almost brutally *why* he was really here.

But it meant even more than that, and this more had nothing to do with secret German weapons, agents, or hidden U-boat harbors. It pointed to the end of an era, the end of an epoch, and probably also the end of Ganty’s dream. It might still be a while, maybe years, maybe even a decade, but a time *would* come when places like this would no longer exist, when everything would be discovered, every place explored, and every square meter of this planet mapped or at

least *seen*. The white spots on the globe would be filled in, and, in the not too distant future, they would have vanished, melted like ice in the sun, and Indy wasn't sure whether this future would truly be better than the present, because, with them, the world's last secrets might also vanish.

He sensed after a while that he was no longer alone. Ganty stood next to him, and the expression on his face betrayed that his thoughts weren't much different than Indy's. He suddenly took a step forward and angrily stomped the iron down deeper into the sand with his heel. It didn't vanish completely. A small, sharp edge could still be seen, glimmering like the blade of a knife that was only there to mock them.

Indy remained silent, and, after another second, he also turned around. He realized what the old man was thinking, but there was nothing he could have said. None of them could stop time; or even turn it back.

Out of a sudden feeling of reverence, Indy turned around completely and went back down the beach again. He had the feeling that it would be better to leave Ganty alone for a few minutes now.

It had become noticeably cooler since they had come on land. The mist had meanwhile become real fog that lay on the water, gray and heavy like a cloud that had fallen from the sky and soaked everything around it. And there was... something in that fog.

Indy turned around with his hand shading his eyes and tried to see. He couldn't make out anything. It was more of a sensation than actual sight, perhaps a sound right beneath the range of what was audible, a sliding and waving just out of his field of view. He saw and heard nothing, but he sensed that there was something out there, that...

Indy closed his eyes, balled his hands into fists so hard that it hurt, and turned around with a jerk. This place was mysterious and uncanny enough without him trying to see ghosts.

When Ganty returned to him, he had calmed down. He looked almost embarrassed. Indy smiled at him, understanding, and Ganty smiled back after a short moment, and, with that, the issue was taken care of, and they would never again mention it.

“Where are your friends?” asked Indy.

Ganty didn’t answer, but suddenly the feeling that they were being watched grew almost to the intensity of a physical touch. Indy turned to the forest’s edge.

In front of the black wall of the jungle, Indy more sensed the figures than actually saw them. They must have stepped from the bushes completely silently, and he wondered how long they had been standing there, watching them.

Ganty went over to the two men and started to talk to them in the same incomprehensible language that Indy had heard two nights before. Indy still didn’t understand it, but he did notice the expression on Ganty’s face; and also that the two natives’ gestures were becoming more and more unwilling.

“Is something wrong?” he asked.

Ganty shook his head hastily. “It’s... all okay,” he said in a tone that couldn’t even convince himself. “They are a little nervous, that’s all. Come on, Dr. Jones. Everything will be taken care of.”

Indy wasn’t so sure. Ganty wasn’t a very talented liar. Maybe it was just no longer possible for him to lie convincingly about little things, since his life had really been nothing but a huge lie. As Indy followed him and his two companions deeper into the jungle, he was anything but calm.

These two were also very tall and broad shouldered, true giants, just like the figure Indy had seen on Pau-Pau. With difficulty, he remembered what the legends about the original inhabitants of Easter Island said: A people of giants who had come from across the sea in time immemorial.

Although Indy was walking so close in front of the two Polynesians that he could feel their breath on his neck, he heard only

his and Ganty's steps; the two Long Ears moved as silently as shadows.

"Where are they taking us?" asked Indy

Ganty turned in mid-step and threw him an almost pleading glance. "Not so loud, Dr. Jones!" He spoke in a hasty, shocked whisper that made it clear to Indy more than anything else had that something wasn't right here. Ganty seemed to notice his own tone, because he tried to smile. "We're almost there, Dr. Jones. They don't like the silence to be disturbed."

"Nonsense," said Indy. "Something isn't right here, Ganty. What is it?"

Ganty looked at him, shocked, but also a little thoughtful, and maybe he would have actually answered Indy's question had he gotten the chance to do so.

Near them, something rustled, and the two Long Ears silently turned into *racing* shadows that moved so fast that Indy could barely follow their movements. But they still weren't fast enough. Something flew out of the bushes and hit one of the giants in the head, and, in that same moment, a dark body fell from the height of the branches above the second giant and dragged him to the ground. Simultaneously, something hit Indy's back with such force that he stumbled forward and collided with Ganty, who he dragged down with him. They fell. Indy buried Ganty beneath him, rolled aside instinctively, and finally woke from his shock.

A shadow flew at him, and someone tried to leap at him with outstretched arms. Indy pulled his knees up to his chest, lightning fast. The collision seemed to push him a bit deeper into the soft forest floor, and for a moment, he had the feeling that his legs had been broken in at least a dozen different places and must look like an accordion. But the furious growling of his attacker quickly became a pained gasp as his ribs hit Indy's knee and at least one of them broke.

Indy flung him away, sent another punch after him to completely throw the man off, and leapt up. He tried to orient himself, but was

unable to at first. Next to him, Ganty fought against another opponent, and, where the two Long Ears had stood, he saw only a black knot of bodies and limbs.

For a moment, he was indecisive. He didn't know who the attackers were, let alone why they had attacked them or who they had been trying to attack. He and Ganty, or the two Long Ears.

It really was just a second, but even that was too long. Indy heard a rustling behind him and tried to turn around, but he was too slow. A terrible punch hit the back of his head, sent him flying forward, and he fell to his knees. He swayed. Everything around him went black, and he barely felt as he fell forward and landed on his face.

Indy didn't lose consciousness, but for several seconds he was paralyzed, blind, and deaf. He no longer even felt the pain as he was thrown to the ground. His face seemed to glide through a large, black emptiness, and beyond this emptiness hid something else, something final. With all of his strength, he fought against the pull of this abyss. He would never wake again if he crossed this invisible boundary into darkness.

He couldn't say how long it took for his senses to clear again (anyway, the first thing he felt was a raging pain in his skull), but the fight was over. He heard voices conversing quietly in English without the words reaching deep enough into his consciousness for him to understand them, raised his hand, groaning, to the back of his head, and felt warm, sticky blood.

Someone kicked him in the side. Indy squirmed, opened his eyes in pain, and looked into a stubble-covered face that was contorted into a grimace containing a mixture of fury and pain.

The man prepared another kick, but a second figure suddenly stepped over to him and held him back. "Leave him!"

"That guy broke one of my ribs!" the bearded man howled.

"And Bell got him back for that," said the other. "I think you're even. Anyway, we really don't have time for such games." He threw

the bearded man a warning glance, then turned around and sank into a crouch next to Indy.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

Indy took his hand down, studied the blood that clung to his fingertips for a second, sullen, and then turned to face the other man. He was unshaven and dirty, just like the man who had kicked him, but he lacked the brutal expression that covered the other man’s face. He looked determined and very distrustful, and on his right cheek was a fresh scratch, but he didn’t look unlikable. “I think so,” answered Indy with trouble. His tongue felt very heavy and refused to obey his commands correctly. He stammered as if he were drunk. “Who are you?”

“My name is Barlowe,” answered the man. He pointed at the bearded man who continued to stare at Indy with unconcealed hatred. “This is van Lees, and the man who knocked you down is Bell. We are the last.” A third figure stepped into Indy’s line of sight: An old, white haired man who seemed to have trouble managing the weight of the gigantic club that he held in his hands. Still, he was obviously excellent at using it, as the ringing pain in Indy’s skull proved.

“The last of what?” asked Indy.

“The last who haven’t been caught yet,” answered Barlowe.

“So you were on the plane,” Indy guessed. “The machine that vanished here eight months ago?”

“Eight months?” Barlowe flinched visibly. “Good God, I didn’t know it had been that long!”

“It’ll be much longer if we stand around here and chat,” said van Lees. “One of the brutes got away! Why are you talking to that man anyway? He’s probably in cahoots with them anyway, just like the old man!”

Indy now noticed that Ganty had sat up and was staring at the row of three rumped figures. His hand moved inconspicuously down to his jacket pocket.

“If you’re looking for this, then you can spare yourself the trouble.” Van Lees held up Ganty’s pistol, grinning. “It’s a bit more useful for me at the moment. Your Long Ear friends will be coming now.”

“Don’t celebrate too soon,” said Barlowe. “Jonas had a pistol too. It didn’t help him very much.”

“Jonas?” Indy was listening now. “Is he here? Is he alive?”

“The savages have him,” answered Barlowe. “I have no idea if he’s still alive. They kidnapped him, just like Mrs. Sandstein, van Lees’ brother, and the Dutchman- and my wife,” he added after a clear pause. A bitter expression appeared on his face. But only for a short moment, then he had himself back under control.

“Why did you ask about Jonas? Do you know him?”

“Not personally,” Indy admitted. “But he’s the reason that I’m here. I’m looking for him.”

Ganty stared at him. He said nothing, but something had suddenly appeared in his gaze that made it impossible for Indy to hold up to it for longer than a few seconds.

“Just you?” Barlowe laughed wickedly. “You should have brought an army with you, Mister. And a tank buster. And I’m not even sure that would be of much use.” He stood up and made an impatient gesture. “Come on! We’re taking your boat.”

“Why?” asked Indy, not understanding.

“To get out of here, why else? These savages are weaklings, but in ten minutes, this place will be teeming with them, you can count on that.”

Indy stood up. “But I can’t go!” he said. “I have to find Jonas!”

“Are you mad?” asked Barlowe. “You have no chance! Damn it, why do you think we’re here? My own wife was taken prisoner by those savages! Do you think that I would leave her in danger if there was even the slightest chance that I could free her? If we’re still here in ten minutes, then we’ll be dead, man!”

“Why are you even talking to him?” asked van Lees. “Can’t you see that he’s just trying to waste time? He’s one of them!”

Indy spared himself the trouble of responding, and Barlowe also just looked at van Lees for a moment, expressionless, then he shrugged his shoulders. “Maybe,” he said. “Maybe not. But you’re right. We should get away while we still can.”

Indy and Ganty were pushed roughly forward. Barlowe and the two others were armed with homemade bamboo spears, the blades of which were made of sharpened stones. Indy considered his chances of getting away from the three of them with a valiant leap into the bushes, but then decided against it. If these three men had survived here for eight months, then they could probably use their improvised weapons very well, and an obsidian blade between his shoulder blades could be just as deadly as one of steel. And anyway, he couldn’t just leave Ganty there.

They reached the boat after a few minutes and went on board. As van Lees forced Ganty with his own gun to turn on the motor, Barlowe, Indy, and Bell remained on deck. The white haired old man was getting ready to take the wheel. Barlowe seemed to have the task of keeping an eye on both Indy and the edge of the forest.

He wasn’t doing very well with either. It would have probably been very easy to overpower him then and take Bell’s weapon as well. But he didn’t do it. He was much too confused to do anything at all- and first, he needed to figure out what was really going on here. Ganty hadn’t mentioned any survivors; and certainly not that the Long Ears had taken them as prisoners.

The diesel motor awoke to life, sputtering, and in practically the same moment, the boat started to move, haltingly at first, almost against its will, as if it sensed that its true owner wasn’t steering it and was trying to resist. But then it gave way more and more to the pull of the tide. The bow turned and no longer pointed at the beach, instead into the fog.

And towards the coral reefs hidden within it.

Indy flinched, so shocked that Barlowe looked at him distrustfully and closed his hand more tightly around his bamboo spear.

“The reef!” said Indy. “We’re going to run into the reef!”

Barlowe made a calming gesture. He simultaneously relaxed a bit again, even if not completely. “Don’t worry. There’s a passage a bit farther to the north.” He looked at Indy penetratingly. “The old man didn’t mention the reefs. I think he was hoping we would run into them. Why did you warn us?”

“The water is a bit too cold for a bath,” answered Indy. He completely understood Barlowe’s distrust: But that didn’t change the fact that it was starting to get on his nerves.

Barlowe laughed. “You’re either serious, or you’re the worst liar I’ve ever met,” he said.

“Or afraid of the water,” Indy added.

This time, Barlowe laughed even louder; yet only for a short moment, because then he was met with a warning glance from Bell, and he fell silent, nearly self-conscious. “So Tressler and Perkins made it,” he said suddenly, and, in that same moment, the last trace of a smile also vanished from his face. “I wouldn’t have believed it. Why did you come alone? Didn’t Tressler tell you what’s going on here?”

“He told me nothing,” said Indy quietly. “He’s dead. So is his companion.”

“Crashed?” asked Barlowe quietly.

“He somehow managed to get the plane back to Pau-Pau,” answered Indy. “His companion was already dead. I’m sorry. Were they friends of yours?”

“If it was possible to make friends during a half year long escape from those devils, then yes,” answered Barlowe. Then he shook his head. “No, we weren’t friends. I’m amazed that they managed to get that far. We all thought it was over when they caught them.”

“When *what* caught them?” asked Indy.

Barlowe prepared to answer, but in the same moment, Ganty and van Lees appeared on the deck again, and Barlowe turned to the two of them. He started to converse quietly and quickly with van Lees.

Indy looked back out into the fog. The sky above them began to lighten again, but the fog was still thick; Indy guessed that the field of view was barely ten meters. But Bell went on very slowly, and the way that he steered the boat showed that he knew his way. After all, they had eight months to study every detail of the coast.

“I trusted you, Dr. Jones,” said Ganty quietly. Indy turned to him, but Ganty wasn’t looking at him, instead continued to stare off into the fog. But Indy was sure that he saw something completely different in the gray clouds than any of the others. “But you lied to me. You’re no better than the others. I thought you were, but... you aren’t. You’re all the same.”

“Dr. Ganty, I...”

“Spare me your lies, Jones,” said Ganty bitterly. “I don’t want to hear it.”

Indy didn’t go on. This wasn’t the right time to explain anything to Ganty; and maybe the old man was right from his point of view. They had talked for nearly an entire day and night, and Indy had quickly realized that he had missed the proper time to explain to him why he and Delano had *really* come to Pau-Pau.

Something scraped along the hull of the ship. Bell cursed, spun the wheel wildly, and the small yacht turned back on course with a noticeable, sudden shake. Indy hastily reached for the railing and held tight with both hands.

“Don’t worry,” said Bell. “We’re through. I may have overestimated myself a bit, but nothing really happened.”

“Through?” Barlowe suddenly looked even tenser than before. “We’re out? We’ve reached... open sea?”

Bell nodded. “We made it,” he stated. “If I haven’t accidentally turned this crate in the wrong direction, that is.”

“You’ll never get out of here,” said Ganty quietly. “You’re going to kill yourselves, you fools.”

“Maybe,” answered Barlowe, bitter. “But if so, then we’ll go to hell together, Mister.” His hand closed so tightly around the shaft of the bamboo spear that his joints cracked. “I would really like to slit your throat though. Maybe I’ll just do it anyway.”

Ganty just looked at him, but Indy still took a step and placed himself between him and Barlowe to break up the eye contact between them. For a moment, it seemed as if Barlowe was going to focus his fury on him now.

“Hey!” said van Lees suddenly. “Listen!” He lifted his hand warningly and listened for a second, eyes closed. “There’s something there!”

As if he had only needed to hear those words, Indy suddenly heard it as well: A quiet, but approaching splash that he couldn’t place at first, but still thought he recognized. It wasn’t a good sound.

“The savages!” Barlowe suddenly screamed. “There they are! Bell, faster!”

The sputtering of the diesel motor grew slightly louder, but the boat continued to glide just as slowly through the waves. “We can’t!” Bell screamed. “This old boat can’t give anymore!” Panic lay in his voice. “Damn it, Barlowe, *do something!*”

The splashing came closer, spreading and multiplying, and the fog was suddenly no longer filled with imagined movements, but *real* ones. Half a dozen long, dark shadows moved towards the boat from just as many directions, and something flew inches from Indy’s face with a wicked whirring and smashed through the window of the wheelhouse.

Indy gave Ganty a shove that forced him down onto the deck, dodged a second arrow with the same movement, and tried simultaneously to take the whip from his belt. He heard a scream behind him. Glass clinked. Something crashed loudly against the hull

of the yacht, and two gigantic figures suddenly straightened up at the rear of the ship.

Barlowe raised his spear, but van Lees was faster. The pistol he had taken from Ganty fired with a whipping crack, and one of the shadows stumbled back with a nearly grotesque movement and vanished into the fog.

Indy cracked his whip, and the second Polynesian also fell backwards overboard. Barlowe looked at him, surprised, opened his mouth to say something, but, at the same moment, another arrow flew out of the fog and bored through his shoulder. With a loud scream, he fell to the ground.

And that was just the beginning.

Indy had been through many fights- but never a situation nearly this hopeless. The odd sound he had heard repeated a half dozen times as five or six of the small reed boats the Polynesians had come on simultaneously hit the yacht, and the deck was suddenly filled with gigantic, dark figures.

Van Lees shot another Polynesian before a club sent him to the ground, and Indy also defended himself desperately. He pushed one of the attackers overboard, knocked three Long Ears off their feet simultaneously with a wide lash of his whip, and nearly fell himself as a fourth Polynesian grabbed the whip and tore it from his hands with a hard jerk.

Indy tumbled against the wall of the wheelhouse, saw a movement out of the corner of his eye, and instinctively jumped aside. A stone axe smashed into the wood near his head. Indy raised his arms, knocked the weapon out of the Polynesian's hand, and crumpled in pain in the same moment as a vicious punch knocked the air from his lungs. Bright stars exploded in front of his eyes. He gasped desperately for air, but got none, because the native's hands had closed around his neck like a steel clamp and pressed down with merciless strength. Indy reared up, pulled with all his might at the

man's wrists, and rammed his knee between his legs. The Polynesian gasped, but his grip didn't loosen.

Indy's lungs screamed for air. He tried to kick for a second time, but he no longer had the strength. His attacker's face started to blur before his eyes.

A shot crashed. The deadly chokehold around his throat loosened, and the face in front of him was suddenly no longer a face, but red and distorted, and then the Polynesian fell stiffly and silently back.

A second shot sounded. Indy heard the bullet bury itself, splintering, into the wood near him, and as he sank to his knees and gasped for air, a volley of whipping shots crashed one after another.

A bright light blinded Indy. He raised his hand in front of his face, blinked in the growing brightness of the spotlight that cut through the fog like a knife and right into his corneas, and noticed a gigantic, dark shadow rising out of the fog. Orange-red muzzle flashes flared, and two, three more Polynesians fell to the ground or overboard.

The fight was over as quickly as it had begun, and it wasn't a real fight, it was a massacre. Whoever the attackers were, they shot with unbelievable precision and knew no mercy. Barely any Polynesians who had boarded the yacht escaped their fire. And the few that managed to save themselves with a valiant leap over the railing died in the water.

Indy registered with a mixture of horror and disbelief that the dull hammering of a machine gun had mixed in with the whipping shots. Two, three of the Polynesians desperately swimming for their lives sank in a swirl of roiling foam and blood, then the volley reached one of the reed boats and shredded it, along with the two natives who had reached it.

Only a single one of the small ships managed to get away. It moved away from the yacht at a right angle and started to vanish into the fog, and, as absurd as it may be, Indy hoped more than anything that they would make it.

The boat vanished into the fog. In the shadows on the other side of the yacht, a light flared up, a dull crash rang across the water, and, half second later, the gray swaths glowed in the light of a massive explosion. Indy didn't even hear a scream.

The silence that followed the crash of the explosion and the nerve-shredding rattle of the machine gun volley was nearly deafening.

Indy stood up, swaying. The shadows had now become a ship, moving slowly up alongside them, but he didn't even look at that. His gaze moved over the deck, and all he felt was horror. Not even a relief at being alive. His hands and jacket were damp and sticky with the blood of the Polynesian who had tried to strangle him, and he counted eight, ten... a dozen dead, not counting those who had died in the water.

Someone leapt, crashing, from the deck of the ship down onto the yacht and walked towards him. Indy turned around slowly. He wasn't even that surprised when he recognized Delano. The commander carried a gun in his hand.

"Was that necessary?" he asked bitterly. "This... massacre?"

"You have an odd way of thanking people, Dr. Jones," answered Delano.

"Thanking? For what?"

"Like the fact that we saved your life," said Delano. "And your friends too."

"A few shots into the air would have probably been enough," said Indy, enraged.

"Maybe," answered Delano calmly. "But in that case, you would probably be dead now."

Indy prepared a furious answer, but in that moment, he heard a groan, and one of the figures that covered the deck moved. Delano raised his weapon, but Indy pushed the gun aside and knelt next to the injured man.

It was Barlowe. He looked terrible, even if most of the blood on his face wasn't his own. But the wound on his shoulder was bad. He

would bleed out if a doctor didn't take care of him. "*Bell!*" Indy yelled. "Come here!"

Bell didn't answer. Indy looked up and noticed that he had collapsed over the wheel. A bullet had hit him directly between the shoulder blades.

Delano leaned forward curiously, looked down at Barlowe for a second, and then formed a funnel in front of his mouth with his hands. "Medic!" he called in German. "Over here! We have wounded."

Indy should have immediately realized it, but it took this cry for him to understand the truth. He looked up at Delano in disbelief.

Delano smiled. But it was a smile that Indy liked just as little as his black uniform with the two silver death heads and the SS runes on his shoulders.

As it turned out, Indy and Ganty were the only ones who had come through without injuries worth mentioning. Bell was dead, hit by a stray bullet that had shattered his backbone. Van Lees had a gaping flesh wound on his forehead and at least a bad concussion, if not worse, and Barlowe's gored shoulder bled so heavily that the medics couldn't say for sure that he would survive.

The fog started to dissipate as they went aboard the German ship. What Indy had first thought was a large warship was more of a frigate, barely thirty meters long, but armed with a large caliber cannon in the front and a double flak gun at the back, the muzzles of which were pointed threateningly into the fog. Indy counted thirty soldiers on the deck alone, all in the black uniforms of the SS, and most carried submachine guns, but several also had precision weapons or larger guns.

"What are you planning?" he asked as he went to the wheelhouse of the frigate with Delano. "To start a war?"

"If we have to, then yes," answered Delano calmly. "But I don't think that will be necessary. These savages might be uncivilized, but

they aren't idiots. I think that a little demonstration of power will be quite enough to bring them to their senses."

"Or another little massacre," said Indy bitterly.

Delano's confusion wasn't just an act. "I don't understand your outrage, Dr. Jones," he said. "We had no other choice if we wanted to save you and your friends. Would you have preferred if we had watched those savages slaughter you? They've already killed, Dr. Jones. More than one person!"

"Not like that!" answered Indy. "That wasn't necessary, Delano, or Müller or Schmitz or Meier or whatever your real name is!"

Delano smiled and ignored the unspoken question hidden within Indy's words. They had reached the bridge. Delano opened a door and, with a mocking gesture, invited Indy and Ganty to step inside. After going up a short, iron staircase, they reached the wheelhouse of the frigate. The soldiers within saluted, more casually than with Prussian zeal, and Delano returned their greeting with a slight nod. Then he pointed at a small, iron bench that was screwed into the wall. "Take a seat, mein Herren," he said. "You must be exhausted."

Ganty obeyed, but Indy didn't move. Delano just shrugged his shoulders and exchanged a couple of words in German with the man at the wheel. Indy didn't understand the answer he got, but Delano didn't seem to like it very much, because his next words sounded much sharper.

"How did you manage to win over Franklin's trust?" asked Indy as Delano turned back to him after a while. "Or is he just one of you too?"

"Please, Dr. Jones!" Delano smiled. "You can't really expect that I'll just hand over German intelligence secrets, can you? But I can reassure you. General Franklin is a loyal American. He doesn't have the slightest idea who I am."

"Do you even know that yourself?" asked Indy.

"An interesting question," Delano replied. "Unfortunately, we don't have time to trade philosophical reflections at the moment. As

soon as the fog lifts, we'll try to find a passage through the reefs and go ashore. I take it that you would like to come along."

"Do I have a choice then?"

Delano sighed. "I thought you would be more sensible, Dr. Jones," he said. "As things currently lie, you are my prisoner, but I would still prefer it if you could see yourself as sort of my guest. With certain restrictions, you understand."

"Thanks," Indy murmured. "I've often had the honor of enjoying German *hospitality*."

"You survived, didn't you?"

"Yes. In spite of everything your countrymen tried."

Delano- or whatever his name was- laughed heartily, but didn't continue the conversation any further, instead signaled to one of the soldiers that he was to watch Indy and Ganty, and stepped back over to the man at the wheel.

Indy sat down now. Ganty demonstratively slid as far away from him as the space on the small bench allowed, and when Indy tried to talk to him, he stared past him with a stony expression.

He could understand Ganty. And he rebuked himself for having been duped so easily. He had quickly realized on the trip here that there could be nearly anything on this island, except for one certain thing: A secret German lab where the Nazis were building a wonder weapon. How could he have been so naïve as to really think that no one had followed them? Ganty had even *told* him that Delano was a double agent.

"I'm sorry, Dr. Ganty," he said quietly. "I... didn't mean for this to happen."

To his surprise, Ganty suddenly looked up at him and answered: "You don't have to be sorry, Dr. Jones. It was just as much my fault as it was yours. None of these fools will survive. As soon as the fog lifts, we will all die."

Indy looked at him, equally questioning and shocked, but Ganty looked away and sank back into his brooding, and Indy knew that he would learn nothing more from him.

Ganty's words filled him with a feeling of unease. This wasn't the desperate protest of an old man. He suddenly remembered that Bell had also mentioned that they had to leave this island before the fog dissipated. Maybe he hadn't just been referring the Polynesians who had followed in their reed boats...

Restless, he stood up and went over to Delano. The SS officer looked at him briefly, but seemed to have nothing against it, and so Indy looked carefully around the bridge for the first time.

He hadn't often been aboard a warship, certainly not a *German* warship, but somehow this boat still seemed unusual to him. It was very old, he could tell that at first glance, and the panel before which Delano stood seemed to be a mishmash of some ancient, but also some especially modern devices and gauges, some in English, others in German. It was a wonder to Indy that Delano had been given an ancient and obviously hastily prepared ship for such an important mission.

Delano noticed his searching, astonished glances, but he didn't comment on them, instead just smiled mysteriously and continued to give the man at the wheel and other officers orders.

Outside suddenly glowed a bright light, and as Indy looked up, he saw Ganty's yacht, unmanned, burning on the ocean. Delano's men must have torched it.

The fog lifted very slowly. The sky lightened more and more, and the uncanny gray clouds became an even more uncanny white. But still, they could only see for barely twenty meters. Indy was very surprised when the ship suddenly began to move.

"Don't worry," said Delano. Indy's slight flinch hadn't escaped him. "I sent a boat ahead to light our path."

"I'm not worried," answered Indy. "Not about the reefs, at least."

Delano's eyes glimmered with amusement. "You aren't afraid of those savages, are you, Dr. Jones?"

"I'm afraid of something completely different, Delano," said Indy quietly. "You saw the pictures, didn't you? Before I did and for longer, I assume." Suddenly, he was angry. "Damn it, Delano, are you Germans really so narrow-minded that you think you're invincible, or are you just idiots?" He pointed into the fog, agitated. "No one knows what's waiting for us on that island, and you..."

"We are prepared for all scenarios, Dr. Jones," Delano interrupted him.

"Yes. Tressler and his copilot certainly thought that too."

"This is a warship, Dr. Jones, not a small passenger airplane made of corrugated iron." Delano's voice sounded a little sharper, but Indy wasn't sure whether the dominant tone within was really conviction.

"I noticed that you were looking around, Dr. Jones," he continued. "You are right- this ship is something very special."

"It really just seems very old to me," said Indy.

"It is," Delano added. "It comes from WWI, and I don't think it was a spring chicken even then. Awkward, barely maneuverable, and not very fast- but it does have one massive advantage. This thing is armored like a rhinoceros." He demonstratively hit his knuckles against the iron wall beneath the window. Not the slightest sound could be heard. "Eight centimeter thick steel, Dr. Jones. Something like this wouldn't be built today. It would probably be senseless anyway. But at the moment, I'm very glad that we have this old ship. Believe me, we're as safe here as in a mother's lap."

Indy said nothing, but he turned to Ganty and was met by a glance from the old man that caused an icy shiver to run down his back. Silently, he turned again and looked out of the window.

The frigate moved no faster than at a walking pace. The motor had just enough thrust to equal the pull of the current and move the ship from the spot practically centimeter by centimeter. After a while, he saw a shadow far in front of the ship and he heard voices that

sounded oddly muffled and distorted through the fog hanging over the water. The guide that Delano had mentioned.

Indy couldn't fight off a shudder. Everything looked so uncanny, almost as if in a nightmare.

In this point, Indiana Jones was wrong. The nightmare hadn't even started.

But it began.

Now.

It took them almost twenty minutes to pass through the gaps in the coral barrier, and there were a few moments in which Indy wasn't the only one who doubted that they would make it. More than once, the hull of the ship collided, screeching, against the coral reef. A less stably-built boat would have probably never managed it, but the old armored ship finally broke its way through the barrier with brutal force.

As they reached the lagoon, the fog started to lift. It was almost uncanny, Indy thought, how quickly the gray-white swaths now dissipated after they had so stubbornly refused to be weakened by the warming rays of the sun before. As if with the reefs, they had also simultaneously overrun the island's last defenses, and as if the fog had decided to give up its resistance.

He traded a confused look with Ganty. Ganty smiled, but it wasn't a good smile.

The ship grew slower and came completely to a stop and the fog continued to recede. As if in a movie that was being rewound, the gray white swaths had pulled back across the water in front of them, crawled up the beach, and entered the jungle. Indy was suddenly reminded of the mysterious front of bad weather that had followed them the whole way from Pau-Pau.

"I don't like this," he murmured. "We should get out of here, Delano. Something isn't right here! Don't you feel it?"

“I just feel that we’re very close to discovering something huge, Dr. Jones,” answered Delano. “Doesn’t that thought excite you? Maybe we’ll see something that no other human has ever seen before! You disappoint me, Dr. Jones.”

“Tressler and Perkins *did* see it,” Indy reminded him.

Delano pressed his lips together and considered for a couple of seconds. Then he nodded jerkily. “You’re probably right, Dr. Jones. We should take certain security precautions.” He took the receiver from its clasp and gave a command in German to the machine room, then he turned to the door with a jerk. “Come!”

Indy and Ganty followed him out onto the deck. Despite the early hour, the sun was already quite strong. It had become noticeably warmer since they had gone up to the bridge, but the fog had soaked everything, and an uncannily clammy vapor still hung in the air.

Delano started to give quick orders in a quiet voice. Men appeared on deck or vanished, and the large gun in the front, as well as the twin muzzles of the flak gun, turned silently to face the edge of the forest.

“Fools,” muttered Ganty. “Damn fools! Nothing will help them. Nothing!”

He had spoken very quietly. Still, Delano had understood the words, because he turned to him and looked at him very seriously for several seconds. Then he gave another command.

A number of small inflatable dinghies were launched into the water, and a whole platoon of soldiers appeared on the deck of the ship. They were armed to the teeth and wore oddly clunky-looking protective suits in which they could barely move, along with large helmets outfitted with reflective visors that completely covered their faces.

“Who put together this equipment?” asked Indy mockingly. “Hugo Gernsback?”

To his surprise, Delano seemed to get the joke, because he laughed loudly and heartily. The sound rang uncannily across the water, and

Indy noticed that several of the men flinched in shock behind their masks. The men's nervousness couldn't be overlooked. Obviously Delano had at least informed his soldiers about what to expect instead of allowing them to run blindly to their destruction. But not even that made Indy like him very much.

The men climbed into the rubber dinghies. Alongside each other, in a wide chain, they approached the beach as sharpshooters and men with machine guns took up positions on the deck of the frigate to provide covering fire. It was an impressive demonstration of military precision, which would have certainly been even more impressive if it hadn't been directed at an empty beach and a just as empty patch of forest.

The rubber dinghies slid onto the beach, and the men leapt out. Almost silently they formed a precise protective line, as straight as if drawn by a ruler, and continued on without another command.

At once, the edge of the forest seemed to come alive. Dozens of slim, brightly painted figures stepped out of the underbrush, none shorter than two meters tall and all armed with spears, axes, or bows. They had appeared completely silently. Indy didn't even hear the rustling of leaves or the cracking of a branch. But maybe that's what made it seem so eerie.

Delano's soldiers had stopped, and their postures told Indy that they had been prepared for this situation: They formed three lines, the first of which lay stretched out in the sand, while the second knelt and the third remained standing. Indy knew this tactic. It was as old as the first use of projectile weapons, and it would have a great effect, at least against an opponent like these Polynesians. A single command from Delano, and this beach would witness a massive bloodbath.

"Delano, no!" he whispered. "Please!"

Delano's gaze remained directed towards the brightly painted figures at the edge of the forest as if in a trance. "It isn't up to me, Dr.

Jones,” he said quietly. “I hope that these savages understand what I’m trying to tell them. If not...”

Indy only now realized that Delano had very consciously placed his men in this ancient (and, in this time of automatic weapons, completely unnecessary) formation so that the Long Ears would realize how hopeless resistance was. He sent a prayer to the heavens that it would be understood.

It wasn’t heard. For several seconds, the two unequal armies just stood there, and Indy was also already beginning to hope that perhaps everything could still turn out well. But then one of the Long Ears took a sudden step forward and raised his spear.

A submachine gun rattled. A chain of tiny explosions raced through the sand towards the Polynesian and swayed to the side only centimeters away from his feet. But either the natives didn’t understand the point of this final warning, or they ignored it. He continued to run, threw his spear, and hit one of Delano’s men. The soldier toppled back with a scream and lay in the sand, motionless.

Indy closed his eyes in expectation of the coming massacre- but he had once more underestimated Delano. A single shot cracked. The Polynesian who had thrown the spear grabbed his throat and collapsed silently, and, a second later the beach again rang with a volley of machine gun shots.

But none of the bullets hit.

The shots caused the sand in front of the Polynesians’ feet to spray up, shredded bushes and leaves, and tore branches from trees. Around the Polynesians, sand and jungle seemed to be shredded by invisible claws, but none of the shots even touched the brightly painted figures.

“That is their last chance, Dr. Jones,” said Delano. “If they don’t understand this, then not even I can help them.”

“You damn idiot!” said Ganty. His voice shook. “They *can’t* understand, can’t you get that into your head? They don’t understand guns!”

Delano looked at him, disbelieving and alarmed, but his answer was lost beneath a loud scream from dozens of throats that suddenly rang from the beach.

The Polynesians attacked. Spears, arrows, and axes whirled through the air, and Delano's soldiers opened fire even before the first weapon hit its target.

It was like the fight from before, only worse. The Polynesians didn't even have a ghost of a chance. Four or five of Delano's men were hit and fell to the ground, dead or wounded, but the first volley knocked over two dozen of the natives off of their feet.

The second ended the fight.

Indy stood at the railing motionlessly and stared over at the beach. He was more shaken than he had ever been in his life. The stretch of sand in front of the jungle was filled with dead and dying natives, perhaps three dozen, but it wasn't this sight alone that made something within him cry out in horror. It was the *speed* with which it had happened. Delano's men had fired with the precision of sharpshooters. They had used only two volleys. The slaughter hadn't even taken five seconds.

"I'm sorry, Dr. Jones," said Delano quietly next to him. "I didn't want this, please believe me."

"Oh really," answered Indy bitterly. "Was that the *little demonstration of power* you mentioned?"

"Damn it, what should I have done?" Delano suddenly screamed. "Watched as my men were slaughtered?"

Indy felt helpless. He felt terror and fury, a deep, boiling fury at this terrible, senseless massacre, but mostly he was confused and felt helpless as seldom before in his life. Perhaps because deep inside, he knew that Delano was right. He had no other choice. His men or the natives, as brutal and simultaneously simple as that was.

"You shouldn't have even come here," he murmured.

"You're probably right," said Delano, bitter. "But we are here now. And if it hadn't been us, then it would have been *your* people,

wouldn't it have?" He stared at Indy for a couple of seconds and waited in vain for an answer. In his eyes lay an expression that Indy didn't understand at first. And as it slowly became clear to him, he was deeply confused. Perhaps he had misjudged Delano. Perhaps not everyone who wore the black uniform with the death heads was a senseless murderer.

"You will pay for that," said Ganty quietly. His voice shook with hatred. "You and your entire band of murderers! A higher price than you can imagine!"

Delano turned around angrily. His hands jerked as if he could only control himself with his last bit of strength so as to keep from grabbing the old man. "Murderer?" he asked. "You're calling me a murderer, Mr. Ganty? And what are you?"

Suddenly he grabbed Ganty, shook him wildly, and pointed to the beach with his other hand. "This is as much your fault as it is mine! You could have stopped it! Why didn't you go to your friends and tell them that we come in peace?"

"With machine guns and cannons?"

"We would be dead now if we didn't have them," answered Delano. He let go of Ganty.

"You will be anyway," said Ganty wickedly. "Look at the forest."

Delano and Indy turned around at the same moment- and simultaneously screamed in surprise.

The jungle seemed to have come alive. Everywhere something rustled and undulated, leaves and twigs moved, and something huge, dark began to break through the underbrush, something that...

"*Jones!*" roared Ganty. "*Take cover!*"

The first soldiers started to fire. Submachine gun shots hit the forest, and a second later, the dull hammering of a machine gun was added.

Indy didn't see what happened next, because Ganty had grabbed him and dragged him along with such strength that he had trouble staying on his feet as Ganty pulled him back behind the bridge.

“*Don’t look at it!*” Ganty yelled in a voice that was overcome by panic. “*For God’s sake, don’t look at it!*”

Of course Indy turned around anyway and looked across the deck. He would regret having done that for the rest of his life.

The world was red.

An unbearably bright red blaze bathed the beach, the sea, the sky, and the ship in glowing light and blacked out all other colors, and Indy simultaneously heard a sound like none other before in his life, a loud, swelling singing and screeching like the cry of an angry god, so loud and penetrating that every single bone in his body began to vibrate.

Ganty stumbled back farther, collided with the railing, and pulled Indy with him. Backwards, they fell overboard. But what Indy saw during that half second fall, he would never truly forget.

The red glow became even more intense until it seemed to penetrate through the iron plates of the ship’s hull, as if the entire world had caught fire. Indy saw a shimmering figure stumble across the deck of the ship, screaming and desperately beating at burning clothing and glowing hair.

Then he hit the water, and the terrifying image vanished before his eyes.

Not the red light.

The water here had also turned red, and from the surface came the glowing, unbearably bright light. And the water was *hot*.

Indy’s lungs started to scream for air. He tried to loosen himself from Ganty’s grip and swim back up to the surface, but Ganty wouldn’t let him go, instead pulling him deeper and deeper into the water. But the red light followed them there too. Even down here, four or five meters beneath the surface of the water, it was suddenly so hot that Indy would have cried out in pain if he could have.

His need for air grew unbearable. Heat and light reached an intensity that Indy wouldn’t have believed possible a couple of moments before, and he knew that he would burn if he surfaced now,

but he would also die here below, and the instinctive urge to surface was simply greater than his senses. With all of his strength he pulled free, paddled with desperate swimming movements to the surface, and filled his lungs with oxygen.

It was as if he was breathing in flames. The air was so hot that he screamed in pain. Steam rose from the water's surface and, not very far from him, something gigantic, burning floated on the waves, but heat and pain drove tears to his eyes so that he couldn't tell exactly what it was.

He sensed the direction in which the beach lay more than he saw it. With clenched teeth, he swam on as he tried to raise his head and shoulders as far out of the water as he could. He would be boiled like a lobster if he didn't get out soon!

It wasn't very far to the beach, perhaps twenty, at the most thirty meters. Still, this stretch cost Indy every bit of strength he had left. Exhausted to death and more unconscious than not, he crawled up the beach and collapsed there. Minutes passed before he had the strength to raise his head and look around.

The beach was a gruesome sight. Dozens of dark, burned bodies covered the sand. Several of them burned, from others, black, fetid smoke curled into the unmoving air. And there was also nothing moving aboard the frigate. The ship had capsized and was leaned onto its right side. The armored plates were black and ashen, and right beneath the bridge, the iron glowed a dark, threatening red. Steam surrounded the ship like a gray shroud.

Indy's gaze slid back onto the beach. Even the corpses of the Long Ears who had fallen prey to Delano's men were burned to the point of being unrecognizable, and here and there the sand shimmered as if it had been subjected to an unimaginable heat that had melted it to glass. The edge of the forest was untouched. But not unchanged.

Another group of Long Ears had stepped out of the bushes, but it wasn't them that pulled in Indy's gaze almost hypnotically.

It was an almost five meter tall figure made of black basalt that had appeared between the trees.

It was a person, but the proportions weren't right. The head was a good three times as big as the body, arms and legs almost laughably small and only hinted at. The ears were too long and melted in with its shoulders, and on its head was a good half meter tall hat made of red granite. But the most shocking thing about the gigantic stone figure was its eyes.

Unlike its bigger brothers from Easter Island, they weren't just empty sockets. They were red. And they *glowed*.

And then, very slowly and accompanied by a dull, creaking crash, the stone giant turned around and stared at Indy. The uncanny red glow in its eyes intensified.

The sight was too much. Weakness, exhaustion, and fear demanded their tribute.

Indy lost consciousness.

Something cool, damp stroked his face as he slowly regained consciousness. The touch felt very good, because his face burned as if someone had pulled his skin off. He felt dazed, and he sensed that much time had passed. His clothing was dry, and he lay on a cot that seemed to be both hard and soft. Something poked into his neck: Straw.

"I think he's awake," said a voice. It was more of a chirping, a voice that seemed to fit with a blond idiot from a Humphrey Bogart film.

The face did too, Indy saw as he opened his eyes.

"He's waking up," said Blondie, blinked, and added: "I think."

Steps, then the face vanished from his field of view, and a moment later Ganty's face appeared above him. At least Indy guessed that it had once been Ganty's face- before someone had tried to cook it and singed off his eyebrows and a good deal of his hair.

"Ganty!" said Indy, shocked. "Why... why do you look like that?"

“The same reason as you do, Dr. Jones,” answered Ganty. “We were lucky again.”

“Luck?” Indy sat up and carefully raised his hand to his face. Even the slightest touch hurt.

Ganty nodded. “Most of your Nazi friends had it worse.”

“They aren’t my friends,” Indy growled. He swung his legs off of the cot and looked around. They were in a small, windowless chamber, the walls of which were built with stone blocks, each one of which must have weighed a ton. Aside from Ganty and the blond woman, there was a bearded man in torn clothing in the room who studied Indy silently but very attentively and had a noticeable similarity to van Lees. Indy assumed that this was the brother Barlowe had mentioned.

“I know, Dr. Jones,” said Ganty. “If I had thought any different, then you would be dead now.” He grinned as Indy turned around and looked at him, furious. “At least now your first name will make more sense to people, Dr. Jones,” he said. “You really look like a redskin.”

“What happened?” asked Indy. “The red light... what was that?”

Ganty grinned again, but this time it wasn’t a real smile, instead more of a flash of the teeth. “The Nordic master race came across a power that is their undoing, that’s what happened,” he said.

“Yes. In every respect, isn’t that right?” Indy replied.

Ganty’s smile vanished. He understood how Indy’s words had been meant, but he didn’t comment, and Indy also didn’t continue this senseless dispute. Instead, he made a wide gesture and asked: “Where are we?”

“With the Bird People,” answered van Lees in Ganty’s place. With an accusatory glance in Ganty’s direction, he added: “His friends. They took us all prisoner except for my brother, Bell, and Nancy’s husband. They killed the Dutchman.”

Indy turned back to the young woman. He suddenly felt uneasy, even though he had barely known Barlowe. “I’m sorry, Nancy,” he said. “But I fear that your husband...”

“He lived,” Ganty interrupted him. “And the Australian too. They are nearby, with the others.”

Indy looked at him doubtfully. The image of the blackened, glowing shipwreck stood clearly before his eyes. The idea that someone could have survived that inferno on the boat was hard to accept.

“He’s telling the truth, Dr. Jones,” Nancy squeaked, having noticed Indy’s doubtful gaze. “I’ve already talked to him. They’re a little banged up, but okay.”

“The only question is how long they will stay that way,” van Lees continued darkly. “It will soon be full moon again.”

Ganty remained silent, but on his face appeared a new, darker expression, and Indy also suddenly had a bad feeling.

“Full moon?” he asked.

Van Lees grinned, but it was a smile that lacked any trace of humor. “Ganty’s friends are a jolly little people,” he said. “They always celebrate the full moon with a festival, the pinnacle of which is a large feast. They took the Dutchman last time. He was the main course. They’ll probably eat us all one by one.”

“Is that true?” asked Indy, turning to Ganty.

Ganty paused for a moment. “They... they aren’t really cannibals,” he said finally. “They kill only for ceremonial purposes.”

“Like to celebrate a great victory,” van Lees added.

Ganty prepared to reply, but Indy cut him off with an energetic gesture. “This argument won’t help anyone,” he said. “Instead, let’s try to find out why we’re here, and, most of all, how we can get out.”

Van Lees stared at him as if he seriously doubted his sanity, and Nancy also just sighed. Ganty grimaced.

“Did I say something wrong?” asked Indy.

Instead of giving him a direct answer, van Lees turned around and waved for him to follow. “Come, Dr. Jones.”

They left the chamber and stepped into a small hallway, the ceiling and right wall of which were made of massive stone blocks. The

other wall and the floor were made of lava rock, and as Indy touched it, he noticed that it was warm. Not hot, but much warmer than it should have been.

Although no torches burned out here, the hall was filled with red light. The air was sticky, and within lay a smell like burning rock. Van Lees pointed to the right. About twenty steps away was a small, rectangular door that was filled with flickering red light. Indy searched in vain for a guard or any other trace of the Long Ears; or the Bird People, as van Lees had called them.

As they reached the entrance, he also realized why.

The door led out, but not to freedom.

In front of them lay three wide, well-trod stone steps, and after that it was an at least twenty meter vertical drop. As Indy leaned forward, a gust of boiling hot air hit him in the face. Beneath him bubbled the bright red lava of a volcanic crater. The building in which they found themselves had halfway melted into the lava of the volcano, the other half clung to the ledges like a bird's nest made of stone. It was an impressive sight. Indy would have probably been even more impressed if there had been a way for them to get out.

But there was none. The stars ended in nothing, and the wall that continued down at a good forty-five degree angle to the boiling heart of the volcano was mirror smooth. Escape was impossible.

But this volcano was also impossible. Indy still clearly remembered the silhouette of this island. There was no mountain, not even a hill.

"You're standing there like a man who is asking himself the same thing I did the first time I came here," said a voice behind him.

Indy turned around. Next to van Lees, a second figure had appeared who studied Indy calculatingly, but didn't seem to be unfriendly.

"The volcanic crater is beneath the ocean's surface," the stranger continued stretching his hand out to Indy. "My name is Jonas. And you must be my near-rescuer. Dr. Jones, I take it."

Indy gripped Jonas' outstretched right hand and shook it. "Indiana," he said. "I think that, under the circumstances, it would be better if we stick with Indiana. Indy to my friends."

Jonas smiled. "Indy, good. I take it that van Lees has shown you everything?"

"Only this crater and the hallway, but..."

"There isn't much more to see here," sighed Jonas. "And also not much more to tell. They caught us one by one, and since then we've been stuck here. That's really all there is."

"I don't believe that," answered Indy. He threw a stolen glance in van Lees' direction, but Jonas waved it off.

"This secretiveness isn't necessary, Indy," he said. "Delano told us everything. We all know why you're really here. I must disappoint you. I no longer have the plans. They were on board of the airplane. If you haven't found them, then I assume that they were destroyed."

"Delano survived?" asked Indy, surprised.

"More or less," answered Jonas. "Come on- I'll take you to him."

They went back inside of the building, but passed by the door to the chamber in which Indy had woken up. Indy saw that the hallway continued a good way into the crater wall beyond that, following its curve, and that there seemed to be a large number of similar, smaller chambers.

He and Ganty were not the only ones who had survived the inferno on the beach. Indy looked into every chamber that they passed and counted around two dozen SS man, most in singed uniforms and with more or less serious burns.

In the last chamber, they found Delano, Barlowe, and the second Australian. Barlowe had his injured arm in a sling and greeted Indy with a nod while van Lees stared at him hatefully from beneath the thick bandage on his forehead, as if everything that had happened to him was Indy's fault.

Delano sat hunched over on a tiny, straw-covered cot like the one Indy had awoken on. His uniform was burned and hung in tatters, and

his hands and arms were bandaged to the elbows. The left half of his face had been badly burned.

But the worst part was his eyes. Suddenly Indy thought he could hear Ganty's voice again as he yelled, panicked, not to look. Now he understood why.

"Delano?" asked Indy haltingly.

The SS officer raised his head. His eyes moved in the direction from which Indy's voice had come, but they remained empty. Indy was looking into the eyes of a blind man. "Jones. Is... is that you?"

Indy nodded. Only a second later did he realize that Delano couldn't see the movement, and he said aloud: "Yes."

"You're alive," murmured Delano. "And unharmed."

"Nearly, at least," answered Indy. "A couple of scratches, that's it."

"Good," murmured Delano. "That is... good. You have to get us out of here, Jones. You have to stop... stop someone from getting it."

"What?"

"The weapon. This... this terrifying light. No one... No one can get it, you hear? Not you, and not us. Destroy it, Dr. Jones! Someone has to destroy it!"

He started to stammer. His shoulders sagged forward again, and his words became senseless noises. Indy didn't have to touch him to know that he had a high fever. That he even had managed the strength to sit up and talk in his condition bordered on a miracle.

"Do you think he meant that seriously?" asked Jonas. "He's hallucinating."

"I wish everyone in the world would have such hallucinations," murmured Indy. But the words were meant only for himself. Louder, he continued: "At any rate, we have to get out of here- before his people start to wonder where he is and come looking for him."

"Or ours?"

Indy looked at Jonas for a long time and very thoughtfully. It was absurd- but for a moment he was no longer sure *who* here was his enemy and who wasn't.

Someone entered the chamber, and Indy pulled himself out of his thoughts.

It was Ganty. He just looked at Delano with a cursory glance, then turned back to Indy. "They want to see you."

"Your friends?"

Ganty remained silent for a moment, and Jonas said mockingly: "You're poking an open wound, Indy. I fear that they're no longer his friends."

"Is that true?"

"Something... has changed," Ganty admitted unwillingly. "I don't know what it is. I only speak a few words of their language." He suddenly made an impatient hand movement. "Come on. They want to see you. And you..." he pointed at Delano, "...as well."

They had to support Delano as they left the chamber, and Indy wasn't sure whether the SS officer even comprehended what was happening to him. He had a high fever, and Indy didn't feel good about taking him out there. It was possible this trip could kill him.

Four Long Ears awaited them in front of the exit. Three were clothed as the uncanny warriors had been- namely wearing nothing but a tiny loincloth and a colorful leather band around their hips- but the fourth wore a large feather cloak and matching headpiece that would have made any Sioux leader green with envy. Indy suddenly understood why Jonas and the others had called the natives *Bird People*. The Polynesian truly looked like a large, deadly, colorful bird.

Ganty exchanged a couple of words with the natives, and the Polynesian with the feather cloak made a commanding gesture. Indy didn't understand the words, but the expression on Ganty's face grew even more bitter. Jonas' remark seemed to come very close to the truth.

Above the staircase that ended in nothingness now hung a large basket made of bamboo and woven straw. The construction didn't give Indy the impression that it could bear the weight of seven people, but their guards pushed them in and followed without pause. Indy felt as the basket groaned beneath their weight. For a second he was completely convinced that the rope would simply tear and they would fall. But the basket held. Creaking and swaying here and there in an ominous way, it moved away from the steps and began to simultaneously rise up. Indy looked up and realized that they hung on a type of crane that moved them across the glowing heart of the volcano in a wide arc towards a second, much larger tunnel entrance.

Entrance and crane both were not the only of their kind. Close beneath the edge of the crater, dozens of very large, bizarre buildings of wood and raffia towered into the air, and there were so many natural tunnel entrances and hand-carved passages and walls set into the cliffs that the inside of the crater walls must have been like Swiss cheese. It was a city within a volcano.

The heat that rose up from the boiling magma beneath them was nearly unbearable. Indy could barely breathe, and Delano collapsed completely between him and Ganty and began to groan. On the faces of the four Polynesians, there wasn't even a single drop of sweat.

The basket reached the entrance that they had been aiming for down to the centimeter, and they climbed out. Other natives came towards them, many clothed in the large feather cloaks, and several with big red hats that looked like overly long cylinders and seemed nearly laughable.

But Indy wasn't in the mood to laugh. The threat that accompanied the brightly painted figures could be too clearly felt. Their faces were as empty as masks, but they all looked dangerous due to their size alone. None of them were shorter than two meters tall, and the half meter high hats made them appear even more gigantic than they already were.

Indy's courage sank. God knew that this wasn't the first time he had found himself in a nearly hopeless situation. So far, he had always managed to find some way out, but maybe that wouldn't be the case every time. There was a first time for everything. Unfortunately, this situation would probably be the first as well as the last...

More to get rid of his dark thoughts than for any other reason, he tried to concentrate on his surroundings.

But there wasn't very much to see. The Bird People formed a thick cordon around them, and the light grew worse the deeper they went into the mountain. Only here and there still burned a torch, letting out a dark red light in which Indy sensed rather than saw the next meter, his next step. Still, their companions seemed to have no trouble finding the right way. As little as they had noticed the murderous heat outside, they could orient themselves in minimal light.

Indy considered how long a people would have to live in a place like this to adapt perfectly to it. And he asked himself what a place like this would *do* to people. It wasn't just the heat and the darkness. It was this world. The black, sharp-edged lava, the unceasing, gentle shaking and bobbing of the ground beneath their feet, the sticky smell which lay in the air. Every square centimeter of this black, cavernous world through which they walked was hard and hostile and hot and let off *violence* as if it were an all-encompassing stench. What would a people become after living in a world like *this* for generations and generations, hundreds, if not thousands of years? He suddenly didn't want to know the answer to this question.

The passage ended in front of a gigantic, two-paneled door, which, like everything down here, was made of black lava and decorated with artful ornamentation and relief work. The light was too bad to make out the details, but he had the impression that it matched what he had experienced on the way there. Everything was dark, rough, and filled with chiseled violence.

Perhaps, he thought, his worst nightmares were now coming true. Because there was something that Indiana Jones had feared for his entire life, even if he had never told anyone, yes, not even admitted it in his own thoughts. But the fear had been there. The fear that maybe one day he would discover something, rediscover and *reawaken* a secret from the past that would have been better left forgotten for all eternity. Perhaps that day was it now.

The door swung open. Although it must have weighed tons, it moved completely silently as one of the Long Ears laid his hand on it, and it revealed a view into a massive subterranean hall, which, unlike the passageways, was lit by hundreds of torches, making it nearly as bright as day.

Indy blinked in the unexpected brightness. At first he was nearly blind, but after a few seconds the shadows in front of his eyes turned to dark bodies and outlines, and what he saw made him gasp, shocked.

The cave was so large that one could have comfortably an entire block of five story houses in it. Dozens of the gigantic, black stone figures that showed mostly just the head and shoulders covered the ground and formed an inward-facing double ring around an oddly large statue that had only a body, arms, and legs. It crouched in a kneeling position so that its thighs and arms formed a throne for the colorfully clothed figure who sat there.

“Oh my God!” whispered Ganty. His face had lost all color.

“Yours?” Indy laughed quietly and very bitterly. “I fear that you are mistaken, Ganty.”

One of the Bird People gave him a shove that caused him to stumble forward two steps. Delano slid from his grasp and fell hard to the ground.

Indy moved to help him, but the figure on the throne let out a sharp command, and the two Long Ears grabbed him and dragged him roughly towards the throne. The others grabbed Ganty and the groaning SS man and flung them brutally onto the ground next to

Indy. Again a sharp order rang out. The foot that had pressed Indy's neck against the ground was removed, and Indy pulled himself with some difficulty onto his hands and knees, but didn't dare to stand up completely.

"Please forgive me, Dr. Jones," said the figure on the throne in nearly perfect English. "Their ways of carrying out my orders sometimes leave a little to be desired. They are still a wild people. But I think that I'm slowly gaining better control over them.

Indy looked up, confused. At first he found it hard to recognize that there was more than a single, colorful tangle of feathers, many-colored bits of coral, and glimmering crystals. Only after a few moments did he discover a face in all of this chaos.

But it looked completely different than he had expected. It wasn't the hard, gruesome face of a Long Ear that smiled at him from the collar of brightly colored feathers. It wasn't even the face of a *man*. Indy looked, completely stunned, into the face of an at least sixty-year-old, white-haired lady, whose pleasant demeanor couldn't even be completely destroyed by her barbaric outfit.

"Who... are you?" he asked haltingly. He heard as Ganty gasped sharply next to him, but didn't turn to him.

"My subjects call me Mi-Pao-Lo, but you may call me Baroness von Sandstein, Dr. Jones," she answered. She leaned forward and laughed, causing the cloak of feathers to start to rustle and wave as if the entire throne had come to life. "Every now and then, I even allow my good friends to call me Fräulein Adele," she continued. "But we aren't that far yet, are we?"

Indy's confusion grew from second to second. He looked at Ganty now, but Ganty was looking at the woman on the throne, so stunned that he didn't even register Indy's gaze.

Sandstein smiled apologetically. "I see that you are a little confused, Dr. Jones," she said. "That is also only too understandable after everything that you have been through in the last few days. But

I hope that you will overcome your shock a little faster, my dear Obersturmbannführer. That is your rank, isn't it?"

The words were directed towards Delano, and to Indy's surprise, the SS officer did in fact lift his head as if he were looking up at the throne. Sandstein smiled at him.

"Who... is that?" murmured Delano.

"He can't see you," said Indy quickly. "He's blind."

Sandstein sighed. "Oh, I understand. He looked into the light, didn't he? How inattentive of him. Didn't you warn him, Mr. Ganty?" Her hand ran down the blanket of feathers that covered her from head to toe and reappeared with a nearly fist-sized crystal colored blood red. It wasn't just any crystal. Indy had never seen anything like this stone before in his life and also never heard of it, but he still knew almost instantly what was in front of him. He just refused to believe it at first.

The stone was somewhat larger than Adele Sandstein's fist and was filled with an uncanny, dark red light that pulsed with power. Something evil, powerful, which could barely be described with words was in that light.

"You?" asked Indy, stunned. "That... that was you? You caused all those..." He had to gather all of his strength to continue. "...all those men to die?"

Sandstein's eyes flashed. "It was the fury of Make-Make that destroyed them, not I!" she said, agitated. The crystal in her hand began to pulse faster; its glow intensified. "You brought this destruction upon yourself, Dr. Jones! Not I. I was only a tool, just as we are all tools in the game of the gods."

Indy didn't say any of the things that lay on his tongue. The crystal in Sandstein's hand pulsed even more heavily, and its light was now burning as if she held a tiny red sun in her fingers. From the corner of his eye he noticed that the Long Ears near them were beginning to shift nervously.

“Please, Baroness,” he said hastily. “I don’t mean to sound insensitive. I don’t know who this Make-Make is, but...”

“The god of my people,” Sandstein interrupted him. “Our god, Dr. Jones. The god who has protected this place and its people for all these years while people like you and these...” she stared at Delano nearly hatefully, “...*creatures* have done their best to destroy the world!”

“But Delano is one of your own people,” Indy turned, confused.

“Be quiet, Dr. Jones!” Sandstein suddenly screamed. The crystal in her hand flared up to a bright glow, and not just Indy, but the Long Ears as well flinched back in shock. In the middle of the light something seemed to move, something bright and evil that waited to destroy, to break, and to burn...

“What do you know of my people?” Sandstein continued, eyes flashing. “I forbid you from naming me in the same breath as this pack of Nazis! I have nothing to do with these traitors, you hear, nothing!” She started to play even more nervously with the glowing fireball that she held in her hands. Her breathing was fast, and on her face were suddenly hectic red flecks. “I have nothing to do with those traitors, *nothing!*” she said once more.

Indy didn’t answer, and to his relief, Ganty and Delano both remained silent. Obviously they had also realized that anything they said would only make things worse.

And that Adele Sandstein was completely and hopelessly mad.

After a while the flickering of the fiery crystal calmed again, and at the same time the light stopped fluttering like a racing little heart, Adele Sandstein also calmed back down. Her breathing slowed, and the red patches vanished slowly from her face and throat. Finally she closed both hands around the crystal orb, and placed it beneath her feather cloak again after a few seconds. Suddenly she looked very, very tired.

“Go, Dr. Jones,” she said, exhausted. “Go. And take this traitor and the old fool with you.” Her head sunk forward, and she was asleep almost before she had spoken the last word.

“Of course she’s insane,” said Jonas later, after they had returned and Indy and Ganty had told the others about their meeting with Adele Sandstein. “Who wouldn’t be after eight months of being held prisoner by these cannibals?”

“Eight months? But then she must have...”

“...been taken prisoner on practically the first day, yes,” Jonas finished the sentence and nodded. “She was the first to fall into their hands.”

“Fell into their hands, good,” murmured Indy. “I had the feeling before that it was the Long Ears who fell into *her* hands, not the other way around.” He started to pace, worried, back and forth across the small chamber, but after a couple of seconds he gave it up and sat back down. During his absence, the Polynesians had brought food: Flat wooden plates with a porridge that tasted just as it looked: Like damp wallpaper. Indy shrank back at first, but then he told himself that he might have to deal with this type of food for a rather long time and began to eat with his fingers for lack of silverware.

“How did she even manage to convince them that she’s their leader?” he asked.

“We know that just as little as you do,” answered Jonas. He looked at Indy silently for a second, then he went over to the unconscious Delano and started to search through his uniform. Indy interrupted his meal and watched Jonas until he made his discovery: With a face like a child who was picking up a gift from beneath the Christmas tree, he pulled a singed pack of cigarettes from Delano’s uniform jacket and snapped open his lighter.

“Ah, that feels good.” He smiled appreciatively, suddenly wheezed, and took a new, even deeper draw as soon as he had caught his breath. “The first after eight months of abstinence,” he explained

to Indy. "It's probably madness again to start again after three quarters of a year, but I don't think that we'll really need to worry about our health. Perhaps," he continued, grinning, "it will ruin their stomachs as well as my lungs."

Indy didn't think that was very funny. "We were talking about Baroness Sandstein," he reminded him.

"Baroness?" Jonas hacked again as the gray cigarette smoke rose from his mouth and nose as if in an explosion. "She is just as little a baroness as you are an Indian chief, Indy," he said after he had caught his breath again and took another greedy drag on his cigarette. He tapped his thumb against his forehead. "I'm telling you: She's gone mad. She probably thinks that she really is what the Bird People see her as."

"And what is that?" asked Indy.

"A goddess," answered Ganty in Jonas' place.

All of them suddenly turned their attention to him, confused. Ganty hadn't spoken a word since they had returned, instead crouched silently in one corner of the chamber, brooding. Even now he didn't look at anyone directly, instead stared at an imaginary point somewhere on the wall behind Indy.

"What?" asked Indy finally.

Ganty looked up now. "Did you see her ears?"

Indy answered no. Ganty looked questioningly from one to another, but got the same answer: A confused shake of the head. "But I did," he said finally. "She wore large earrings with diamonds."

"Fakes," Jonas corrected him. "Cheap imitations, believe me."

"It doesn't matter if they're horse shit," answered Ganty darkly. "They are large and must be heavy, and she must have worn them for a long time. Don't you understand?"

"No," said Jonas. Indy thought that he at least understood what Ganty was getting at, but at the moment he thought that it would be better to let Ganty talk and so gave Jonas a sign that he should be quiet.

“They weren’t born with these ears,” said Ganty. “The children wear heavy earrings that lengthen their earlobes even before they reach adulthood.”

Jonas’ eyes widened. He grew a bit pale “You... you mean, to the savages, she is a Long Ear?” he asked haltingly.

“More than that,” answered Ganty. “Haven’t you noticed that there are no women here? Only three in ten children born are female. When they came here, there were thousands of them. But in every generation, fewer girls were born. So they protect their women like a treasure. They keep them hidden in a secret place and go to them once a year to impregnate them.”

“All of them together?” Nancy Barlowe giggled and put her hand in front of her mouth. “How indecent.”

She stopped abruptly as a dozen angry glances hit her all at once, and Ganty continued:

“Did you hear the name that she has given herself? Mi-Pao-Lo?”

Indy nodded. He didn’t know what that meant, but to Ganty it was obviously more than just a foreign-sounding word.

“There is a legend among the Bird People,” Ganty continued. “No one knows it exactly, because back then, when they had to flee at short notice and leave their homeland, they destroyed all written records that they couldn’t take with them, but here these things are just as alive as they were on the first day. It was a woman who ended the rule of the Long Ears in their homeland when she showed their enemies the only way through the fire pits that protected her kingdom from all attackers. And it is said that a renegade woman will be the one to bring an end to their exile in this place when the time of trials is over.”

“And you really think that Adele Sandstein is this woman?”

“Of course not.” Ganty now had himself under control again and spoke with a normal, even voice and no longer as if in a trance. “But I fear that the Long Ears think so. She is a woman who left her own people, a renegade. The time of this place *is* coming to an end. Each

year, fewer girls are born, and soon there will be barely any left. And something else: I have known of this island for thirty years. In that time, the lava in the volcanic crater has risen over two meters. They had to give up the lowest caves already because the heat became unbearable.”

“But that could still take decades!” said Barlowe.

But Ganty shook his head.

“You’re forgetting where we are,” he explained. “This volcanic crater lies beneath the surface of the ocean.” He pointed up at the ceiling. “What looks like a gigantic mountain in here is only a barely ten meter high wall. The Bird People have worked for the last thousand years exploring every square centimeter of this mountain. This island is covered with tunnels and passageways like a gigantic termite mound. A single heavy earthquake and the sea streams into this crater. Do you know what that means?”

No one answered, but they didn’t need to. Nothing would remain of the island but a cloud of steam that would probably be seen all the way to New York.

Indy waited for Ganty to continue talking. When he didn’t do so and Indy realized that he wasn’t going to, he stood up and went over to Delano. As he sat down next to the SS man again, he realized that Delano was conscious again. He had heard every word.

During the next three days, nothing really of note occurred- aside from the fact, perhaps, that Delano, defying all expectations, didn’t die, instead drifted constantly between unconsciousness, coma, and a sort of half-awake condition. He ate nothing and drank very little, but something within him clung to life with desperate strength although the few moments in which he was awake must have been a single, gruesome blur.

Now and then they heard news of their fellow prisoners. Of the seventy elite soldiers who had accompanied Delano, only twenty-one had survived- of which only eleven were in a position to help.

Which didn't change very much. Not even a hundred men would have been of much use. The trap in which they sat was just as simple as it was unavoidable: The only way out was in the large baskets that the guards brought down two times a day to bring them their food. To capture them probably wouldn't have been a problem- but definitely madness. At the end of the thirty meter long rope on which the basket hung crouched a Bird Person with a large knife who was just waiting to cut it and send the basket and its contents down into the bubbling lava.

At evening on the fourth day, Adele Sandstein called Indy back to her. She wasn't waiting in the throne room, instead in a smaller room deep in the rock, the walls of which were covered with images and confusing symbols. She looked much better than she had on the first day. The sick sheen to her skin had vanished, and she no longer crouched, powerless and hunched over, instead came to meet him with short, energetic steps and smiled. If not for the screamingly colorful feather cloak and the lessening, but still noticeable shimmer of madness in her eyes, one would have thought that she was nothing more than a nice old lady. Indy decided to remain on guard and carefully consider every word he said.

"Dr. Jones!" Adele Sandstein met him excitedly, grasped his hand, and then pulled back a couple of steps so that she could study him from head to toe. What she saw seemed to please her, because she smiled even more widely.

"How nice to see you again so healthy and uninjured," she said in a tone as if she hadn't really expected it. "How do you feel?"

"Good," answered Indy, confused. What was going on? With a quick smile, he added: "The accommodations leave a little to be desired. Room service is miserable, and the warm water in my room isn't working."

Sandstein laughed long and heartily, then she turned around, went with little tripping steps to a stone table, and waved for Indy to follow her. On the table lay many different types of food and drink in

wooden containers. Sandstein invited him with a gesture to take some, but Indy declined graciously.

“But Dr. Jones!” she said, and threatened him mockingly with her finger. “You aren’t afraid that I poisoned it, are you?” She laughed, but suddenly grew very serious again- so suddenly that Indy flinched.

“I would never do something so foolish, Dr. Jones,” she said, “because I need your help. Your help as a scientist.” She sat down and gestured for Indy to do the same. After a short pause, he obeyed.

“You’re an archaeologist, aren’t you?”

Indy nodded. He was confused, and not just by the question. The mad fire in Sandstein’s eyes had nearly gone out. He seemed to be sitting next to a completely different person than the one he had met three days before. The colorful robe and barbaric throne on which she had sat made her seem even larger and more impressive than she really was- but there was almost nothing left of the gruesome, mad goddess who he had met in the other part of this subterranean world. The change should have calmed him, but it didn’t. Just the opposite: It terrified him.

“Are you a good archaeologist?”

Indy paused. “Some think so,” he answered. “Some think that I’m just an adventurer, and others...”

“Please, Dr. Jones,” Sandstein interrupted him. “We have no time for this.” In her eyes again appeared a flicker, but it wasn’t that of Mi-Pao-Lo forcing her way back out as Indy had feared at first. It was something else. Fear?

“I think that I’m very good, yes,” he answered.

Sandstein sighed audibly. “That is good,” she said. “Because I need the help of a good scientist.”

“Why?” Indy inquired.

Sandstein made a wide-encompassing movement with her hands that indicated the entire room, perhaps the whole island. “Do you know what this is?”

“I fear that I don’t completely understand the question,” Indy said.

“Then I will answer it myself,” said Sandstein. “It is the last sanctuary of a people that were driven from their homeland over a thousand years ago.”

“A very gruesome people, Baroness,” Indy heard himself say to his own surprise. At best, he would have liked to have slapped himself. But the words were already out and could no longer be taken back.

But Sandstein wasn’t angry, instead just smiled. “Perhaps they will say the same thing about us in a thousand years, Dr. Jones,” she said. “Gruesome or not, they were a great people who had tremendous power. And now they are dying.”

Indy nodded. “The island is sinking.”

Sandstein looked at him in surprise. “You noticed that?”

“I am a scientist,” Indy murmured. That was nonsense. Without Ganty’s explanation, he would have never even realized what was happening here. But Sandstein believed him. He could read it on her face. She believed him only because it was what she had *wanted* to hear.

“That is very good,” she said, “because that spares me a lot of time-consuming explanations. This island will sink. Not in a hundred years, not even in ten, but perhaps next year. Or in a few weeks.”

Indy looked at Sandstein very attentively, but it was impossible to read her expression. Still, he was beginning to realize what she wanted. The thought nearly paralyzed him with terror.

“And they expect that I will save them,” said Sandstein after a long pause filled with an uncomfortable silence. She said no more.

“But you don’t have the slightest idea how,” Indy guessed.

Sandstein remained silent. Her hands closed so tightly over the handles of the throne that her veins stuck out of her skin like a network of thin blue lines.

“They think that I am a goddess,” she said quietly. “A type of messiah who will lead them back to their homeland. I have tried to

explain to them that I am not, but I don't speak their language. And I also don't think that it would be of much use if I could."

For a moment Indy felt nothing but sympathy for her. No matter what she had done, at this moment Indy saw nothing in Adele Sandstein but a desperate old woman who had been at the wrong place at the wrong time and had simply been caught up in the events around her.

"What do they expect from you?" he asked gently. "That you will part the sea like Moses did and lead them back to their homeland with dry feet?"

Sandstein laughed, but it sounded sad. "Oh, no, unfortunately it isn't that easy, Dr. Jones. The way back to Te-Pito-O-Te-Henua is well known to them. They are great seafarers, and they haven't lost any of their knowledge throughout these centuries."

We noticed that, Indy thought darkly, but he was careful not to say this.

Sandstein continued. "There is a certain ritual that must take place before they can return to their homeland. Only Mi-Pao-Lo can do this, and unfortunately, at the moment, Mi-Pao-Lo has no clue what this ritual is supposed to be."

Indy smiled briefly when he heard the ironic undertone in Sandstein's voice. But this smile changed nothing about the seriousness in which he held the situation. "And if you don't do it..."

"...they will kill me," said Sandstein. "You understand me correctly, Dr. Jones: I am an old woman who no longer has any fear of death. But they will also kill you and all of your companions, or they will hold you here until this island sinks, which will also achieve the same thing."

And maybe that would be best, Indy continued in his thoughts. He thought of the red fire that had hit Delano's men, and a single shudder ran down his back. But he didn't speak this thought aloud.

"If no one knows what this ceremony is like," he said, "then just think up some nonsense."

Nonsense was the right word. Of course his idea wasn't practical, and he knew that even before Sandstein stood up with a sad sigh and shook her head.

"Unfortunately they know very well what the ceremony is like, Dr. Jones," she said. "Come."

Indy got up and followed her to the back wall of the chamber. Only when he got very close to it could he tell that it was covered with jagged lines and shapes.

"They have held it here for over a thousand years, Dr. Jones, every year on the same day." She looked at Indy seriously. "In exactly three days from today, they will light the fire at the edge of the crater and swing through the sky. And once the flight is over and the strongest among them have been chosen, they will go to the flames and father a new generation."

"Okay," said Indy. He didn't understand a word.

"So it has happened for over a thousand years, and it will also continue to happen. But this time they want me to call Make-Make and plead for his blessing for their journey home." She sighed. "And I don't have the slightest idea of how I'm supposed to do that."

"Then ask them."

"They don't know," answered Sandstein. "Only the Mi-Pao-Lo knows the secret of talking to Make-Make." She pointed at the wall. "It is written there, Dr. Jones. They showed it to me. Because they are not idiots. They know that I am a foreigner and know nothing of their traditions and customs. The secret is there, written in a language that only the priests from the first generation knew when they reached this island- and Mi-Pao-Lo. They think that their god will give me the power to read it."

She sighed deeply, turned completely to the relief, and then let her gaze slide over the oddly geometric shapes and lines. "But Make-Make has remained silent, Dr. Jones. I cannot read it. Can you?"

Indy had nearly laughed. Without her explanation, he wouldn't have even been aware that this was *writing* in front of them. He also

studied the reliefs, but not for very long and with a feeling of growing discomfort. The lines and stripes had something just as uncanny and wicked about them as this entire island did. If one looked for too long at any one place, then it seemed as if they began to move and take on a gruesome sort of life as if they were preparing to leap off of the wall and strangle the viewer. With a jerk, he turned around.

Sandstein looked at him questioningly, but Indy didn't answer. As foolish as her plea might seem, he still somehow understood her. It wasn't just pure desperation in her words, but also every bit of misplaced trust that people had started to feel towards men of science in the century in which humankind had learned how to fly, build ships as big as cities, and drive off their old enemy, darkness, with a single flick of the finger. Only too many began to see scientists as modern sorcerers.

They weren't. Indy could have explained to her that scientific work comes mainly from sweat and toil, and, above all else, it takes *time*, that it could take years, if not decades to decode this ancient writing, and even then he couldn't be sure that he could manage it. Three days? Ridiculous.

But something else warned him. Whatever he said now might decide more than just his fate and that of the others. He hadn't forgotten the red light. And also not the demon that lurked, hidden, within Adele Sandstein.

"Three days?" he murmured as he acted as if he was studying the tangled lines on the wall. In reality he was trying to see as *little* of them as possible. "That is... not very much time."

"That is all you have to save your life and that of your friends," said Sandstein seriously. "And I warn you, Dr. Jones. It would be foolish for you to try to deceive them. They expect an answer. If I call Make-Make and nothing happens, we will all die."

Indy remained silent. He had never before felt as helpless and desperate as in this moment.

“And if you explain to them that this Manko-Minko wants his people to set all prisoners free and give them a boat?”

Had it been anyone else, Indy would have sworn that they were only asking that question to pull his leg, even if this was quite an unfitting moment for that.

He wasn't quite sure with Nancy Barlowe. Indy looked at her for a second and then decided that it would be smartest to just act as if he hadn't heard the question. He turned back to Jonas and the others.

No one said anything. He had stopped talking a good two minutes before, and since then a deep silence had spread through the chamber. The expressions on the others' faces were almost identical: Swaying between dismay and desperation. The desperation was clearly winning out.

Finally Indy himself broke the silence as he turned to Ganty. “I take it that that you also can't read the writing?”

“Me?” Ganty's shock was a little *too* real, Indy thought. “What gave you that idea?”

Indy shrugged his shoulders. “Back at Pau-Pau, I got that impression when I showed you Jonas' notebook.”

Ganty smiled. His fingers started to play nervously with the hem of his jacket without him seeming to be conscious of it. “I *recognized* the symbols,” he said. “That doesn't mean that I can read them. No one can. The last of those who could decipher this script has been dead for a good thousand years.”

Indy continued to look at him sharply. Ganty seemed to him to be taking a little too much trouble to assure everyone that he couldn't read the Long Ears' script. But maybe he was just seeing ghosts. Indy made a hand movement that declared the topic over, but still decided he would bring it up later- and with fewer onlookers- with Ganty.

“I will try to hold them off for as long as I can,” he said. “But we still have a maximum of three days to think of something.”

“We could try to dig a tunnel,” Anthony van Lees threw out. His brother creased his brow and said loudly: “Nonsense!” but Anthony continued with a gesture at Ganty: “He said himself that this mountain is like Swiss cheese. If we can dig our way out...”

“With our bare hands,” his brother retorted.

“...perhaps we can reach the coast...”

“...and swim two hundred nautical miles to the nearest island,” Steve finished the sentence. Anthony glared at him and prepared to respond, but Ganty made a quick, calming gesture.

“The crater walls aren’t very thick, that is true,” he said, and Anthony’s face brightened until Ganty continued with a sigh: “But not very thick unfortunately doesn’t mean thin. Even with the correct tools, we would have no chance of digging through twenty-five meters of lava rock. Not even in three months.”

“Aside from the fact that we are beneath the surface of the ocean,” continued Jonas. He made a commanding gesture. “Stop with this nonsense. We only have one chance.” He pointed at Indy. “Indy will try to stop Sandstein for as long as possible, and in the meantime we will work out a plan to overpower the guards and gain control of the crane system.”

“Are you mad?” asked Anthony van Lees.

“That is the first sensible thing that I’ve heard today,” said his brother.

“They’ll just drop us into the lava,” said Barlowe darkly.

“And?” Jonas looked around calculatingly. “I would like that better than ending up in their stew.” He remained silent for several seconds as he studied the unconscious Delano, who groaned feverishly on his bunk. “Or be grilled alive.”

He had spoken very quietly, but they had all understood the words, and again worried silence spread throughout the chamber for several seconds. Jonas himself was the one who ended it. He had noticed how unfitting his comment had been.

“I think that we should go to the others and band together with them,” he said. “They are German soldiers, but a few of them didn’t fall on their heads. And it looks as if we’re all in the same boat at the moment.”

No one had any objections, although Jonas’ comment was just as senseless as all of the others they had heard before. It was probably the same for all of them: They just wanted out of here and to escape the fact that they were completely helpless. Discussing an impossible escape didn’t make it any more possible. But at least it might help to drive off thoughts of the end for a while.

Indy remained behind, and he sent Ganty a look to indicate to him that he should stay as well.

Ganty didn’t, but he returned after barely a minute and remained standing in the doorway with his arms crossed. His posture was that of a defiant child, but Indy felt the fear that lay behind it.

“So?” he asked.

“So what?” asked Ganty.

Indy sighed. “Please, Ganty,” he said tiredly. “I’m exhausted. I am just as desperate as you and all of the others. I have neither the nerves nor the strength for any games!”

Ganty remained silent. But he grew more nervous by the second.

“You can read this writing,” Indy said straight out.

“No,” answered Ganty. For several seconds he obviously struggled within himself. Then he said very quietly: “But I know what the inscription you’re talking about means. They told me about it a long time ago. They were my friends once.” The last sentence sounded bitter. Indy ignored that.

“You know the ceremony?”

“No,” replied Ganty. “Sandstein told the truth. No one knows it. But she didn’t tell you one little detail, Jones. The legend of Mi-Pao-Lo goes even farther.” He breathed in audibly. “It says that on the day following their return home, Make-Make’s fury will destroy all

of the unbelievers in the rest of the world if the god is called wrongly or not at all.”

Indy stared at him. He could feel every single hair on his head stand up as if he had been shocked. “But that... that’s ridiculous,” he said haltingly. “You don’t truly believe that...”

“After everything that I saw and experienced on that beach, there is no longer very much that I don’t believe, Dr. Jones,” Ganty interrupted him. “Do I really have to remind you that most stories and legends have a common origin? Maybe you don’t like the sound of Make-Make’s fury. What do you think of Sodom and Gomorrah? Or Armageddon?” For several seconds he stared at Indy out of eyes in which nothing but pure panic was written. Then he turned on the spot and stormed out the door.

Armageddon! The Last Judgment! Sodom and Gomorrah! What nonsense! Since there had been humans, they had all prophesized possible misfortunes, and if it involved the end of the world or any other dark vision of collapse, then they were all the more enthusiastic about it.

Indy constantly repeated this thought over and over again as if he only had to hammer it in enough to make it true. Or at least to make himself believe it.

Neither one nor the other happened.

Indy was quite far from actually believing in the upcoming end of the world. But if not he, then who would be the one to know that not all legends were just fairy tales and that there were some powers that would always remain outside of human understanding- and that only too many of these powers were more gruesome and heartless than the biblical angels of vengeance. The world wouldn’t end if Make-Make’s fury came over them, as Ganty had put it. But it was possible that they would experience another terrifying catastrophe that turned all of the dark powers of this time into a more destructive force, and it really didn’t matter if only one innocent life or a million would be

destroyed. There were many things that time had covered with the cloak of obscurity for good reason. And one of these powers had awoken, and it would certainly do more than just swallow up this island and its inhabitants if it really got free.

Indy sat there for a long time, buried in these dark thoughts, before he realized that he wasn't alone in this chamber. Something in the rhythm of Delano's troubled breathing had changed.

He stood up, went over at him, and sat down very carefully at the edge of the bunk so as not to touch him and cause unnecessary pain. Delano's eyes were wide open, but his gaze was as empty as ever. Still, Indy knew that Delano was awake.

"You heard everything?" he asked.

"Yes," whispered Delano. His voice was so weak that Indy flinched. Delano's face glowed. The wound on his cheek had become infected and now released a terrible stench. "It seems as if... you won't survive much longer than me, Dr. Jones."

Indy didn't know how he should answer, so he remained silent. After a while, Delano asked: "Are we alone?"

"Of course," said Indy. "Why?"

"Go check," Delano said. "It is... important. Please."

Indy stood up carefully, went to the door, and threw a glance to the left and right before he returned to Delano. "There's no one there."

"Good," whispered Delano. He lifted his hand and felt blindly for Indy's arm. Indy gripped his bandaged fingers, and although he knew how much pain this must have caused Delano, he didn't pull his hand back, instead just held Indy more tightly. Like a drowning man who was desperately clinging his last handhold. Indy shuddered as he felt how hot Delano's skin was beneath his bandages.

"Listen to me, Dr. Jones," whispered Delano. "There is still a chance, but you... you cannot talk to any of the others about this, promise me."

"Of course," said Indy, but Delano didn't accept that.

"No," he said. "Really promise me. It's important."

“I promise it,” said Indy. He meant this seriously.

“You have to destroy this weapon,” Delano murmured. “It... cannot fall into the hands of the military. On either side. Promise me that you will... stop this.”

“I’m not even sure that it is a weapon,” answered Indy haltingly.

“No matter what it is, destroy it, Jones.” Delano sat up, grabbed Indy by the jacket collar with both hands, and stared at him out of wide open, empty eyes. “Promise it!”

It would have been easy to just say yes, and probably also merciful. But Indy knew that Delano would probably sense if he was lying. And he didn’t want that. Delano had a right to the truth.

“I will try,” he said.

Delano tensed. His eyes closed. He sank back, but he remained awake. “Promise that this thing... will not fall into the hands of either your people or mine, and I will tell you how you and the others can get out of here,” he whispered. “There is... still a chance. Maybe.”

Indy paused for a long time before he answered. The words sounded odd coming from Delano’s mouth. And still, he believed him. Delano was a German soldier, an SS officer to boot, part of a group that wasn’t known for holding its members to criteria like humanity and brotherly love. Perhaps he had only now felt for himself what it meant to suffer and die, even before he realized what the word war really meant.

And himself? Indy was torn back and forth. He could lie to Delano and then make sure that the fury of Make-Make fell into the hands of his own people. With a weapon like this it would probably only be a question of weeks until they had defeated the Nazis. The nightmare that had been spending years destroying half the world and trying to set the other half on fire would be over.

But then he looked down at Delano’s burned body, and suddenly he knew why Delano had asked him to search for the unknown weapon and destroy it. There were things that people should just have nothing to do with, never and for no reason. Like this red light.

“I promise it,” he said honestly.

“What day is it?” asked Delano.

Indy searched through his brain for a moment, then he told him.

“Then maybe you have a chance, Jones,” Delano whispered. “With a bit of luck, Franklin will be here with the Henderson in one or two days.”

“Franklin?”

“Have you forgotten that I am officially on his team?” asked Delano. “We tried to foresee every possibility, including that of finding the island and...” he smiled, “...ending up as German prisoners.”

“Franklin doesn’t even know that this island exists. Let alone where it is.”

“You disappoint me, Jones,” said Delano. “Do you have even a little trust in the capabilities of your own people? The Henderson will reach the island, Jones, sooner or later. Pray that they don’t come too late. You have to warn them. The plan was that Franklin would wait for forty-eight hours.” His voice grew constantly quieter, but he also spoke faster as if he sensed that he had only a little time left, less than he needed to say what was necessary. Indy leaned forward and placed his ear close to Delano’s lips so that he could understand him.

“After that time runs out, they will send a landing troop, Jones. Armed men. Many men. They... they will die just like my soldiers. You have to warn them. A... signal. Give them... the signal. Three times short, four times long, one time short. Then... they will know that they... are expected and to be... careful. Three, four... one. The... signal, Jones!”

And with that, he died.

It was definitely not dramatic. No writhing, no agony- he just stopped breathing, that was all, and Indy carefully reached out his hand and closed his eyes.

For over an hour, Indy sat next to the dead soldier without moving, without saying a word, without reacting if any of the others came in to talk to him.

Then he knew what he could do.

On the following morning, Sandstein called him back. As he had promised Delano (Delano? He didn't even know his real name, and this thought filled him with an absurd sense of guilt), he had told no one anything about their last conversation, instead spent that evening excitedly discussing ways to escape with the others and then throwing each one out. Simultaneously and only internally, he was occupied with figuring out another even more hopeless plan; an idea that was so mad that it could only end in catastrophe.

But maybe that's exactly why it would work.

Sandstein wasn't waiting for him in her "library," instead in the barbaric throne room where he had met her for the first time. A number of the warriors surrounded her, large, broad-shouldered figures who were nearly two times as tall as the short lady; several even though they knelt before her. Indy couldn't make out exactly what they were doing, but it seemed to involve a type of ceremony because he heard a monotone, swelling sing-song, the rhythm of which held something oddly disquieting and dark. The flickering red light of a torch gave the scene a certain measure of unreality like in a nightmare. Sandstein was again wearing a large cloak of feathers that covered her body from head to toe, but they were not multicolored, instead a blood red color. Indy's steps grew unwillingly slower as he approached the group. If the guards had allowed him to, he would have stopped.

When Sandstein noticed his presence, she stopped her sing-song, and the Polynesians also fell silent one by one. Something of the uncanny atmosphere of the scene seemed to vanish as the dark tone silenced. Some, not all.

“Fräulein Adele!” said Indy with forced cheerfulness. “Nice to see...”

A glimmer in Adele Sandstein’s eye stopped him from continuing on. Sandstein stared at him penetratingly, and only now did Indy realize that the source of the flickering red light was no torch.

It was the red crystal. It lay in a flat, stone bowl that Sandstein held in both hands, and again Indy noticed how much the flickering resembled the beating of a heart.

Adele Sandstein’s heart.

On her aged, folded throat, a vein pulsed. And it pumped with the same rhythm as the red light grew brighter and darker. Was she the one who forced this stone’s rhythm- or was it the dark, mystical power of the crystal that was slowly taking control of the person who had once been Adele Sandstein?

Indy nearly feared the answer to this question, but then he looked once more into her eyes, and he knew in that moment that he was no longer standing opposite Adele Sandstein, but Mi-Pao-Lo, the dark, undying goddess of the Bird People. In this point, the prophecy had lied. She had been here for all of these centuries. All she had been waiting for was a body that could serve her.

Following a sudden intuition, he lowered his head and said in a reverent tone: “You called me, Mi-Pao-Lo.”

Maybe he had come on a little thick, because when he looked up again, Sandstein didn’t look content at all, but more distrustful. For several seconds she stared at him silently, then she sent away the Long Ears kneeling in front of her and came towards him. She continued to stare at him although Indy towered high above her and she had to look up in order to see into his eyes, which probably made her feel small and helpless. He had the feeling of being freed from a heavy weight as she finally looked away from him.

“You had time to think about our conversation,” she said. “Can you do it?”

Indy considered his words very carefully. Sandstein might be insane, but she wasn't foolish. "I will try," he said. "We don't have very much time, but I think that I have a good chance."

"I would hope so, Jones," said Sandstein (Sandstein? No: Mi-Pao-Lo) seriously. "For your sake and that of all of the other fools out there."

Indy wondered what she had meant by that- Jonas and the other prisoners, or the rest of the world in general- but Sandstein was already continuing: "You can start your work, Jones. But before that, I think that you should see something."

She turned around with a jerk and went to the other side of the room, and Indy was pushed on behind her by the Long Ears, even though he would have followed her willingly. He had long ago stopped trying to fight off attacks by the Bird People. Ganty had explained to him that they were a proud, unapproachable people, but the legends of Easter Island and what Indy himself had experienced claimed otherwise. They despised everyone who didn't obey them. The other prisoners probably weren't even humans in their eyes, just animals that spoke and walked upright.

Sandstein didn't sit down on the large throne as he had expected, instead steered towards one of the black head statues that formed a double ring around the center of the cave. The figure was somewhat smaller than the others, but was still a colossus over three meters tall that must weigh at least ten tons. And there were two other points in which this statue was different from the others: Instead of black stone, its eyes were made of red crystal that was cut with thousands of tiny, shimmering facets. And it moved.

At first, Indy had the just as absurd as terrifying impression that the stone colossus was in fact moving with its own strength. But of course that wasn't true. In truth, it stood on a wooden platform that was moved through a simple, but very technical system of levers and pulleys manned by half a dozen Polynesians and certainly not

requiring much strain. It was the figure that he had seen down on the beach before.

“Come on, Dr. Jones!” Sandstein pointed commandingly to her left side, and Indy hurried to follow the request before one of his guards tried to add emphasis to the command with a shove, one that might end with him sliding across the lava on his face.

“What’s going on?” he asked nervously.

Sandstein smiled coldly, but didn’t answer his question, instead gave the Long Ears another wave. The warriors quickly and silently formed a large half circle that was open towards the entrance to the room. A moment later the door swung open, and two more Long Ears entered the hall.

All of the others who Indy had seen so far wore either feather cloaks or loincloths, but these were completely naked, only covered with painted-on blood red lines and stripes.

And they were terrified.

Their faces were not motionless masks like the other Bird People, instead distorted by a horror that made Indy shudder. Whatever these two men feared, it was worse than death.

“These two men have disappointed me,” said Sandstein. “They have disappointed Make-Make and lost their right to return to the homeland. They are unworthy to live with us!”

She had taken the red crystal from the bowl and now held it with both hands. Red light oozed like blood between her fingers.

Indy realized what would happen, but everything suddenly went much too quickly for him to even have time for a shocked cry. The eyes of the statue lit up, and at the same moment the crystal in Sandstein’s hands began to glow like a tiny, fiery-red sun. A wave of bright, blood colored light shot at the two Long Ears and covered them, a light with unimaginable intensity and an unbelievably *evil* color.

Indy closed his eyes, but it was of no use; the light was so intense that it went through his eyelids without trouble and showed him

every horrifying detail of the scene. The Polynesians started to scream and waver, and the light grew brighter and brighter until their flesh and muscles became transparent and their skeletons were visible beneath. They collapsed, but first their flesh started to just fall off as if the red light was filled with glowing sulfur. What hit the ground were only rather blackened, glowing bones that burst into dust and countless tiny splinters.

Indy tried to turn away, but his guard wouldn't let him, instead forced him to look at Sandstein.

The sight of her face horrified him almost as much as the death of the two Polynesians. It was a grimace into which he looked, the distorted visage of a demon in the eyes of which glowed madness or perhaps something much worse.

"I hope that you were paying close attention, Dr. Jones," she said. "That is the fate which Make-Make has prepared for all who disappoint him. Think about that when you begin your work!"

She lowered her hands. The red pulsing of the crystal slowed and after a few moments sank down to a shimmer that was barely noticeable after the gruesome light.

And at the same moment Sandstein made a nearly uncanny change.

Indy could see all of the strength drain from her body. Her face slackened, and the demonic fire in her eyes went out just like the glowing of the crystal. She swayed, but made a weak, declining movement as one of the Polynesians moved to support her.

"Go now, Dr. Jones," she said quietly. Her voice sounded very tired. "Start your work. We don't have much time."

During the next three days, Indy saw Adele Sandstein as herself about half a dozen times, but also nearly as often as Mi-Pao-Lo. The difference was growing greater. The agitated, distrustful old woman that the ghastly Mi-Pao-Lo transformed her into had an unstoppable fury that caused her to scream at him for no reason, and even the

Polynesians themselves began to fear her, and, in the same measure, Adele Sandstein grew weaker and quieter as if the evil spirit was sucking out her real self whenever it possessed her.

It was the crystal that had caused this fearful change. Indy never met Mi-Pao-Lo without the fiery red crystal and never found Adele Sandstein with it. But he didn't dare to speak of that in the dwindling hours where she was herself. He had quickly found out that Sandstein didn't remember what she had done or said as Mi-Pao-Lo, and if she did, then it was strange and muddled. But he had no guarantee that it was the same the other way around.

And anyway, he didn't have time to talk for long with either of the beings that struggled for control of Adele Sandstein's body.

He had asked that someone get him certain things from the wreck of the frigate; and Sandstein fulfilled these wishes. Already on the evening of the first day, he had turned the room with the inscription into an unholy chaos. Papers, books, tables, and notepaper covered every square centimeter of the room, along with a slide rule, the disassembled sextant from the ship, and hundreds of sheets covered with endless numbers and written columns that he had scribbled down, with several other technological devices from the ship that he had rebuilt and combined into new (and completely senseless) apparatuses. It was a truly impressive sight.

These did in fact serve no other purpose than to give that impression. Nothing that Indy had done in these three days had been for anything other than to give Sandstein, and mainly Mi-Pao-Lo, the impression that he was working hard to decipher the inscription on this wall.

Indy was working very carefully despite everything, and, if nothing else, at the end of these three days he at least deserved an award for his acting prowess. More than once he made it seem as if desperation was close and that he wanted to give up, and every time he did that, it caused an outburst of fury from Mi-Pao-Lo. He played the unwilling participant. Acted indecisive. Howling in excitement

when he had seemingly made a breakthrough, and, in the next moment, lying on the ground, destroyed, as if he had noticed his mistake. The first time that he admitted he at least *thought* he had decoded a few of the symbols was midday of the second day.

When he finally acted as if he could occasionally provide new information, he was even more careful. He paused authentically, made conscious mistakes, and took back ideas that he had previously maintained vehemently. Mi-Pao-Lo's warriors built, at Indy's instruction, a twelve meter high wooden building at the edge of the crater that looked incredibly nice, yet didn't fulfill the slightest purpose. That took them ten hours, and when they were finished, Indy explained that they had made a mistake and the structure needed to be another half meter taller; but they also needed twelve.

Mi-Pao-Lo just stared at him wordlessly as he admitted his "mistake". Now, judging by her gaze, she was busy thinking of a couple of original means of death for him, but she didn't say a single critical word, instead commanded the Long Ears to do everything he demanded. Indy almost regretted not telling them to build twelve hundred of the little wooden buildings; or a model of the Eiffel Tower at 1:1 scale.

But despite everything, he started to hide actually important instructions among all of the nonsense he told the Polynesians. He did it carefully, almost unnoticeably, a comment here, a word there, and at the end he had created such a tangle of lies, half-truths, and completely nonsensical actions that he himself could no longer see through it. He could only pray that the Polynesians would really think that this nonsense was the will of their god and carry it out faithfully.

On the evening of the third day, Sandstein came to him once more. She wore a large robe of feathers, colorful fabric, and leather bands, even a barbaric necklace of many-colored coral and crystals, the weight of which must have been approaching a hundred pounds, turning her walk into a troubled shuffle. Beneath all of these barbaric trappings, Adele Sandstein could barely be seen. At least in this

moment she was herself, which Indy realized with a single glance into her face. She looked endlessly tired and old. In the eight days in which Indy had known her, she seemed to have aged at least that many years, and in her eyes was an expression of endlessly deep confusion.

“Have you done it, Dr. Jones?” she asked timidly.

Indy let his eyes drift for several seconds over the complicated lines and sketches on the wall that told him just as little now as they had before. For a brief time he really had tried to decode it, but he hadn’t even found a place to start. He just found no system in this confusion. Indy was meanwhile no longer even certain it was really writing.

Still, he nodded with a grave expression. “I think so,” he said. “It was very hard, but I think I’ve done it.”

“I hope so, Dr. Jones,” whispered Sandstein. Her voice sounded just as tired as her face looked, but Indy still couldn’t overlook the fear in her voice. “I don’t know what will happen if the ceremony is done incorrectly, but it will be something terrible.”

Indy looked at her seriously. “Do you even know what will happen if it works?” he asked quietly.

The fear in Sandstein’s eyes turned to panic for a moment. But she fought it back and forced herself to smile. “Come on, Dr. Jones. In a couple of hours we will know the answers to all of your questions.”

“Now?” Indy was surprised in spite of everything. He had expected that someone would take him back to the others to bring them all up together- at least if they were taking part in the feast. Sandstein hadn’t mentioned it before.

“There’s no reason to wait,” said Sandstein. “Everything is ready, all preparations are complete, and the fires are burning.” She seemed to want to say more, but then she looked at Indy silently for a few seconds and finally pointed at the door. But as he turned around and started to go back to the two Long Ears who were waiting for him there, she called him back again.

“Dr. Jones?”

Indy stopped and looked at her.

“Promise me something,” Sandstein said. Her voice was very quiet, but there was something in it that made an icy shudder run down his back. He continued to say nothing, but his silence was obviously answer enough for Sandstein, because after a couple of seconds she continued in the same, almost whispered tone: “If... this *thing* gains complete control over me, Dr. Jones, then you have to kill me.”

She went past him with quick steps and out of the room so fast that he didn't even have a chance to answer, and Indy looked after her, confused and deeply worried, until she had vanished from sight with her guards.

It wasn't the last time he saw that body.

But it was the last time that it belonged to Adele Sandstein.

The sun had already gone down when the two Bird People who had stayed behind to watch him led him back out. Still, it hadn't grown dark inside of the volcanic crater. In the sky stood a perfectly round full moon, the light of which wasn't covered by a single cloud. From within the crater came the dark red light of lava, and from the edges, a brighter red glow reflected this shine: The flickering of hundreds of glowing fires that the Long Ears had lit at the edge of the crater. The Polynesians themselves had taken their places next to them so that the figures appeared as deep black outlines before the fire. Indy flinched slightly as he saw how many there were. Before, he had assumed that this was a tribe of fifty to a hundred warriors, even less after the massacre on the beach- but there were hundreds, if not thousands of gigantic warriors who had taken their places around the crater, every single one a giant, and every one in a screamingly colorful, large feather cloak and fully armed. As they stood there, they really did look like a swarm of large birds that had gathered at

the edge of the crater, and suddenly Indy thought about what Sandstein had said: *They will fly*.

He tried to fight it back, but for a moment he had the absurd feeling that all of these gigantic, uncanny warriors were about to rise into the air and cross the crater with powerful wings.

Of course the mere thought was nonsense. But since they had stepped onto this forgotten island at the end of the world, he had seen and experienced many things that he would have previously described as “impossible”.

Only when the basket with Indy and his two guards had swung far out across the crater did he realize that their destination wasn't the opposite entrance this time. They now climbed up at a much higher angle and approached a straight-edged plateau that was close beneath the top of the rock wall. Two five-meter-tall head statues stood like stone sentries at the edges of the small overhang, and a third, somewhat smaller one with glowing red crystal eyes waited for him almost ten meters beyond. Sandstein stood, wrapped in blood red feathers and holding a tiny glowing sun in both hands, in the shadow of this figure and looked at him. A good dozen unnaturally large and wild-looking Bird People stood behind her. There was no trace of the other prisoners.

Indy leapt out of the basket even before it had completely touched the ground and went over to her. But his steps grew slower the closer he got to her, and finally he stopped completely. The woman in the shadows of the gigantic figure was no longer Adele Sandstein. From within her eyes a demon stared out at him.

“Come, Dr. Jones,” said Mi-Pao-Lo, smiling. “The great moment has come. The moment that my people have patiently awaited for over a thousand years.” She made an inviting gesture and signaled almost simultaneously for him not to get *too* close. Indy stopped a good meter away from her. Not close enough to make her uncomfortable, but close enough to reach her with a leap if it was necessary.

Sandstein gave a signal, and somewhere far from the edge of the crater, a drum started to pound. The fire burned higher, and after a few moments, a number of Long Ears separated from the circle that the warriors had formed around the wall of the crater.

Indy had to control himself so as to not make his agitation *too* clearly noticeable; to not look too closely, although there would have probably been nothing suspicious about his curiosity. The fires didn't burn evenly, instead were spread across the crater's edge in some pattern that appeared to be chance, but certainly wasn't. The warriors who had separated themselves from the circle now walked with measured steps towards the flickering flames and fanned them higher, using large objects that looked absurdly like flyswatters. They had created them to Indy's specifications during the last two days. The flames glowed brightly, sank back again, glowed again, sank back down... It was a monotone, slow rhythm that made one rather sleepy if they looked at it for too long.

The pounding of the drums grew louder and faster, a hypnotizing, hammering beat that forced Indy's pulse, his breath, and even eventually his thoughts into its rhythm, and the Polynesians added a dark, in and out swelling song, to the rhythm of which they started to slowly sway their upper bodies back and forth. The fires continued to flicker.

"The big moment has come," Sandstein whispered again. "My people will once more take the place in the world that is rightfully theirs." Suddenly her topic changed, as well as her tone.

"Say, Dr. Jones," she asked nearly mockingly, "are you the kind of man who keeps his word?"

It wasn't the sort of question one expected an answer to, and so Indy said nothing, but Sandstein continued after a couple of moments.

"If so- and I take it that is the case- then I would ask you to break this principle for the first time in your life and not carry out the promise that you made to that idiotic old woman."

Indy wasn't shocked- he suddenly felt endlessly relieved. The memories of Sandstein were no secret to the demon that possessed her. If he had even hinted at what he was doing, all would have been lost.

Behind him a loud crash rang out. Indy turned halfway around and saw that a door had opened in the rock wall through which Jonas and the other prisoners were led. They were tied up with thin, but very tightly wrapped rope around their hands and also fastened to each other, escorted by a number of armed Long Ears who drove them on with rough shoves.

“You see, Jones!” said Sandstein excitedly. “It is beginning. My warriors will fly up to the stars so that they can show who is the best of the best and can pass their strength to the next generation!”

Indy's breath stopped in the truest sense of the word as his gaze followed Sandstein's outstretched arm.

The large cranes that the Long Ears normally used to swing in a direct line from one entrance to another without having to go up to the top of the crater and around every time were now all upright and pointed in. Dozens of the Bird People, all covered with long feather cloaks, had climbed up the large wooden equipment- and just as Indy looked up, the first Polynesian fell with wide outstretched arms!

Not only Nancy Barlowe screamed loudly and placed a hand in front of her mouth, shocked.

But the Polynesian didn't fall.

For twenty, thirty meters he fell down like a stone, but then he suddenly spread his arms out, and the colorful feather cloak stretched out between his arms and his body so that it really looked like the man had grown a pair of large wings. The racing fall became a quickly-slowng, circling glide, a downward spiral until he reached the end of the long elastic rope that was attached to the wooden arm at the edge of the crater. The Polynesian was now at the most twenty meters above the glowing, bright orange lava inside of the crater. The heat down there must be unbearable, but the rising, glowing air also

now caught beneath the wings of the Bird Person and let him continue his majestic circling so that he really looked like a bizarre giant bird gliding over a sea of fire. Indy wondered how long the Polynesian could stand the murderous heat.

“Unbelievable,” whispered Ganty next to him. As Indy and all of the others looked down, first a second, then a third, and finally more and more Polynesians fell towards the fiery sea. Heat and light drove tears to his eyes, but he didn’t look away, didn’t even blink. “They... they’re *flying!*”

“You didn’t know about this?” asked Indy.

Ganty shook his head without looking at Indy. “No. I... didn’t know what their name really meant.”

More and more warriors now swooped down on their colorful giant wings so that it was as if a massive swarm of bizarre, oversized birds was circling beneath them. The bright light of the lava Indy was looking into made their outlines blur and made the thin, elastic ropes on which they hung invisible. They began to arc over each other, faster and faster, so that Indy found himself wondering how the ropes didn’t get tangled or the men didn’t collide in the air.

After a while he started to see a system in the seemingly senseless gliding and swooping. The Bird People didn’t swoop around with no plan, instead followed very specific, very complicated paths in which they sometimes got so close that they seemed to nearly collide, seemingly diving down in their flight, wings pressed against their bodies, or using their wings to rise up on hot air.

What they were watching was a battle. It wasn’t real, instead a stylized ritual with preplanned movements, attacks and parries, defensive and offensive movements. A majestic dance that was simultaneously bizarre and courageous, terrifying and fascinating.

For a good half hour they stood there silently and watched the dance of the Bird People, which was accompanied by the up and down swelling of the drums. Sometimes- following some pattern that Indy didn’t even trying to guess at- one of the Bird People seemed to

be pulled up out of the dance as another took his place. The number of dancers always remained the same.

Indy looked up and focused on the edge of the crater. The fires still burned, and their red glow still reflected the same pattern into the sky.

Indy had seldom found it as hard as he did now to be patient. Of course he knew that it was much too early. Even if the Henderson was out there and *if* Franklin saw his signal and reacted, his people wouldn't be here yet.

“What are you doing, Jones?” asked Ganty next to him.

Indy turned to him, but only after he had thrown a quick, securing glance at Sandstein. But Mi-Pao-Lo was just as drawn in by the happenings beneath them as all of the others and didn't waste the slightest bit attention on him or any of the other prisoners.

“You look nervous,” Ganty continued. He looked quickly to the edge of the crater and smiled. “Are you afraid of what will happen if Make-Make doesn't answer?”

Indy remained silent. He sensed that Ganty was trying to get at something very specific, and he even realized what.

Ganty creased his brow. As he continued talking, his voice sounded very serious. “I have a lot of respect for you, Dr. Jones,” he said. “But you still can't tell me that you managed to decipher that script in only three days. Whatever they are doing up there, they aren't calling the gods. But they are doing something. I'm just wondering what it is.”

Indy paused for one last second- and then he told him.

Ganty's eyes widened in confusion. “What?”

Shocked, Indy signaled for him to be quiet. Ganty lowered his voice obediently to a whisper again, but it sounded just as confused and disbelieving as he continued. “I... I don't believe it! They couldn't be that stupid!”

Indy smiled briefly, but then grew serious again. “It isn't a sign of stupidity to fall for something that one doesn't know about, Ganty.”

“You’re mad, Jones!” murmured Ganty. “If they find out that you lied to them, then...”

“... nothing will happen to us that wasn’t already going to happen,” Indy interrupted him. He pointed at Sandstein. “Look around, Ganty? Do you really think that they’ll let even one of us get out of here alive?”

Ganty followed his gaze. He remained silent, but something worked in his face. And Indy also flinched back as he looked in Sandstein’s direction.

Her face had turned completely into a grimace. The gentle old woman had transformed into a demon who looked barely human. Indy realized that she had completely become the Mi-Pao-Lo. Adele Sandstein no longer existed. Her body was only a shell that served as a pawn for an ancient, evil something.

And this something seemed to feel his gaze, because it suddenly turned and stared at him out of glowing red eyes. “The moment is near, Dr. Jones!” murmured Sandstein. “Only one thing is needed to complete the ceremony.”

Indy’s heart started to pound. Something... wasn’t right. Suddenly he had the certain feeling that he had overlooked something important, forgotten something very significant.

“A life,” Sandstein continued. “The gods demand blood if we want to send them a message.” She laughed mockingly, quietly, and endlessly wickedly. “Now, Dr. Jones- who should it be?”

Indy didn’t understand right away. “What?”

Sandstein laughed once more, louder now, and pointed with vague, fluttering movements towards Indy and the others. “Without your help, this moment wouldn’t have been possible, Dr. Jones,” she said. “So I will give you a choice. I will let you choose the sacrifice.”

A single shudder ran through Indy. “*What* should I do?” he asked once more although he knew very well what Sandstein’s words meant. But it was so monstrous that he simply refused to believe it.

The smile in Sandstein's eyes vanished. "Don't play dumb!" she said angrily. "You know very well what I'm talking about, even if you were so inattentive as to specifically *not* translate that part of the inscription. Make-Make needs blood. If you aren't ready to choose the victim, then I will do it."

She looked thoughtfully for a couple of seconds from one to the other and then pointed at Ganty. "You!"

Ganty flinched in shock. He pulled a step back, but the fact that he was still tied to the others stopped his movement.

"Why him?" asked Indy.

Sandstein laughed. "Why not? Oh, I know how you feel about Mr. Ganty, Dr. Jones. But look at it this way: Mr. Ganty has spent half of his life protecting my people. Now he will sacrifice himself so that they can be free. Is there anything more beautiful than him dying to save what he lived for?"

"You really are mad," murmured Indy.

And he leapt.

The movement was so fast that he nearly surprised himself. The two Long Ears to the right and left of Sandstein stood up, tried to react, but they came much too late. Indy collided with Sandstein, tore the crystal away from her, flung her to the ground, and sprang back again in the same moment. He raised the glowing red stone threateningly.

The Polynesians stopped. A mixture of stun and horror spread across their faces, but none of the warriors dared to take a step in their direction.

Indy raised the crystal farther up with outstretched arms until it glowed and flared directly in front of his face. The bright, blood-colored light- and also the knowledge of what this stone could *do*- had made him expect searing heat and burning, but what he felt was just the opposite. The crystal was *cold*. His fingers and hands were stiff and had no feeling, and the cold quickly moved down his arms.

But it wasn't just cold.

The wave of icy numbness was followed by something else, something worse. Something dark and ancient that had lurked for an unimaginable amount of time within the crystal, something that was as old as the world, perhaps older, and inconceivably *evil*. But he also felt the temptation that rested within it and the incomparable power that would take control of him if he gave into it.

As if through a red veil he saw that Sandstein had stood up and was taking a step towards him. “What are you waiting for, Dr. Jones?” asked Sandstein once more. “You can do it! Kill me! Kill everyone here! It’s all up to you now. You can destroy us all and save your life and your friends and secure your freedom. It’s very easy. You just have to want it!”

Indy knew that she was telling the truth. A single thought, the mere wish, and the crystal would turn the red fire that had killed Delano and his men against Sandstein and her warriors.

But he also knew that he would be lost.

The monster wasn’t the old woman in front of him.

It was the crystal. It was the evil, pulsating heart of fire that he held in his hands. Sandstein was just a pawn, and if he used the power of this crystal even a single time, he would become like her, a marionette that was no longer truly alive.

“Do it, Jones!” said Sandstein. “Save your life!”

Indy started to shake. Groaning, he stumbled an uncertain step towards her, stopped again- and lowered his arms.

Without any haste, Sandstein took the crystal from his hands. Its pulse grew slower again as it matched the calmer beating of her heart. Indy sighed audibly. He had held the devil in his hands, and for a moment he had been very close to selling his soul. He started to sway again and would have fallen if one of the Long Ears hadn’t caught him at a wave from Mi-Pao-Lo.

“You see, Jones?” said Sandstein, smiling. “Now you’ve made your choice.” She made a commanding gesture. “Prepare him. And the others too!”



Chapter 8

Two Miles West at High Sea The Same Time

The soldier set the binoculars down and turned around as he heard the sound of heavy steps on the metal of the deck. The ship was moving across the sea in complete darkness, but although he could see the figure that approached him as only a shadow, he recognized him at once. He made a movement to salute him, but the captain interrupted him with an unwilling gesture.

“Stop that nonsense! This isn’t a drill.”

“As you command. I found...”

“I *know* what you found, Lieutenant,” said the captain. His voice sounded clearly agitated. He reached out his hand to take the binoculars from the lieutenant, but he didn’t finish the movement.

The binoculars weren’t needed. The red glow in the sky could probably have been seen from fifty nautical miles away with the naked eye. It looked as if part of the sky had been set on fire.

“That’s... unbelievable. How long has that been going on?”

“A good half hour,” answered the lieutenant. He sounded very nervous; like someone who just can’t believe what he’s seeing. “At first I thought that it was just a coincidence. Maybe a... a volcano or a fire. But it’s too regular for that.” He suddenly gasped, shocked.

“Look! There it is again! Always the same signal: Three-four-one. Then a minute break, and it starts again.”

“I see it,” the captain murmured. His voice sounded stunned, nearly shaken.

“How on earth did he do that?” the lieutenant whispered. “It looks as if the sky is burning!”

“I don’t know,” answered the captain. “And I fear that we won’t be able to find out, at least not from Delano.” He remained silent for a second, then noticeably straightened.

“You know what this signal means. Quickly now. We don’t have a second to lose!”

The lieutenant saluted again anyway, then left with quick steps as the captain stood there, motionless and shocked and confused, looking at this volcanic crater sending Morse Code up to the heavens.



Chapter 9

That Same Moment

Indy carefully moved his fingers and clenched his teeth so as not to groan in pain. The bonds were so tight that they had cut off his circulation. Now the life was slowly starting to return to his numb hands; a process that was just as slow as it was painful. And he wasn't sure that it was even worth it to bear this stabbing pain. He probably wouldn't live to experience the moment it finally stopped.

He turned his head quickly and looked out across the sea. From the edge of the crater he had a clear view to the horizon- at least he *would* have if it hadn't have been so dark that he could see barely a hundred meters before everything became complete darkness. Somewhere out in this darkness was the Henderson. *Maybe*. Somewhere out there stood a man with binoculars who had recognized the distress signal the Long Ears had been sending for nearly half an hour without realizing it, and had reacted. *Maybe*. And maybe a boat was on its way towards them now with a rescue party.

Indy sighed deeply. In his "plan" there were so many *maybes* that he might as well have just forgotten about it. Even if he made a "*Definitely!*" out of every *maybe*, they would still just come too late.

“Don’t give yourself any false hopes, Dr. Jones,” said Sandstein behind him.

Indy turned to her, shocked, and Sandstein continued: “Even if you personally managed to escape, you would never get off of this island. And your companions would have to pay dearly. So please don’t try anything foolish.”

Indy looked at her wickedly, but he simultaneously had trouble not making his relief too obvious. For a second he had been almost convinced that she knew everything and was just playing along with this game to humor him.

“What are you waiting for?” he asked overly furiously in order to hide his true feelings. “Just finish me off already!”

Sandstein laughed. “You’re in quite a hurry to die,” she said. “But I will be generous, Dr. Jones. I will give you a chance to fight for your life and that of your companions.” She gave a sign with her hand. Two Long Ears came over, and simultaneously one of the cranes moved in their direction, creaking. One of the two Polynesians carried a brightly colored feather cloak over his arm; the other carried a large collection of weapons with him: Spears, clubs, axes, knives. A bad feeling started to spread through Indy.

“I take it that you’ve watched for long enough to figure out the rules,” said Sandstein. “Are you ready?”

“I... I’m supposed to go down there?” asked Indy with a disbelieving gesture at the volcano. Only now did he notice that the Long Ears had ended their ceremonial fight. The Polynesians climbed up the ropes, as skilled as big apes.

“You have a choice,” said Sandstein, smiling. “Certain death for you and your friends- or my promise to let you go in peace if you survive a fight against three of my warriors.”

“Oh,” said Indy. “Just three?”

“No one can say that I was unfair,” Sandstein replied mockingly. “Choose your weapons.”

“Anything?”

“Sure.”

“Then I would like a submachine gun,” said Indy. “And, if possible, a flamethrower.”

Sandstein’s expression darkened. “Don’t test my patience too much, Jones.”

Indy bit back the answer that lay on his tongue and turned to the Polynesian. He considered for a couple of moments, then he took the knife, pushed it into his belt, and stretched his out hand towards the axe. But he didn’t finish the movement, instead suddenly turned to Sandstein. “Can I have my whip?”

Sandstein seemed to have expected this question because she just waved commandingly, and the Polynesian handed Indy the rolled-up piece of leather. He fastened it next to the dagger. Then he tried to take the cloak, but the Polynesian pushed his hand roughly aside and made it his duty to turn Dr. Indiana Jones into a Bird Person- which wasn’t half as simple as it had first appeared. The two Long Ears needed a good quarter of an hour to fasten the cloak to his shoulders and arms with a complicated system of ties and leather straps. This piece of clothing was also astonishingly heavy and astonishingly uncomfortable. Maybe one could fly with it, Indy thought agitated, but they couldn’t *walk*.

Sandstein made a requesting gesture towards the rope that hung near him. “Please, Dr. Jones.”

Indy looked around with an exaggerated gesture. “And my... *partners?*”

“You have five minutes to practice,” answered Sandstein mockingly. “It isn’t easy to fly like a bird, Dr. Jones.”

Indy turned away wordlessly and put his head and shoulders through the rope harness. As the Polynesians pulled the rope tighter and then made sure it was in position, Indy looked back to the others. The eyes of the other prisoners were all on him as if in a trance. He read fear and resignation and hope within, but also fury. He understood this feeling only too well. For anyone else, it must have

seemed as if he had held their salvation in their hands. They hadn't felt what he had felt. The only one who had anything like understanding in his eyes was Ganty.

"One minute is already up, Dr. Jones," Sandstein's voice rang through his thoughts. "Please hurry up. The hopes of all of your friends rest on you."

With a decisive step he went to the edge of the crater. A swell of boiling air hit him in the face as the volcano gave him a glowing welcome. The glow was so bright that it drove tears to his eyes. For a moment, his courage left him. Maybe it really would be better to stay up here and take a quick death at the knives of the Polynesians than to be slowly grilled alive down there. But then he looked once more into Sandstein's face and he read that there would be no quick death for him, and definitely not a painless one, and he pushed off without pausing.

Apart from the heat, which was worse than he had expected, it was almost easy. Following the example of the Polynesians, he spread his arms out wide and, already after the first meter, he felt the rising hot air catch beneath his wings and halt his fall.

Still, he seemed to be flying directly into the glowing heart of the volcano. The heat burned his face, his eyebrows, and his lungs, and as he carefully moved his arms to correct his course like he had seen the Long Ears do, he promptly started to tumble and would have fallen into the lava had the rope not been holding him. For nearly a minute he just struggled helplessly at the end of the line until he managed to get into a halfway calm position again; not even anything like a controlled flight or the elegant glide that the Bird People seemed to have mastered.

Something in the rhythm of the drums changed. Indy lifted his head- very carefully so as not to lose his balance again and start to tumble again through an unplanned movement- and watched as, one after another, three Polynesians fell into the depths with wings

spread. From below, they looked even more elegant than before. And more deadly.

Indy gripped his whip, released the handle again after a short pause, and instead pulled out the dagger. His whip might be a surprise to the Long Ears, but he only had one chance. If he used it too soon, it was over.

The three Polynesians swooped towards him like predatory birds, one from the right, one from the left, and the third from directly above him. Obviously they wanted to bring things to a quick end. Indy was planning the same thing, but he wasn't very sure that he would have the same success as the Bird People.

He saw the knives in the hands of the Polynesians who were attacking him from the side and tried to turn around and simultaneously gain a bit of height. He promptly started to tumble.

His clumsiness was probably what saved his life. Indy reached the end of his line, fell a good bit of the way towards the lava, and gained height again almost against his will with a bizarre spiral as he instinctively stretched out his arms and rode the thermals. One of the Polynesians missed him by a hair's breadth; the two others were suddenly shooting into each other instead of their intended opponent, and suddenly had their hands full with not crashing into each other and not getting their ropes tangled. Maybe in this moment he would have had a good chance of using his opponents' surprise against them and taking out at least one of them.

Theoretically.

The thermals stopped just as suddenly as they had catapulted him into the air, and Indy fell down head first and with his arms waving.

A green feathered figure shot towards him. Indy spread out his arms and tried to ride the thermals again, but he wasn't fast enough. The Polynesian glided by barely a hand's breadth away from him, and his knife slit Indy's shirt from belt to neck.

And the skin beneath as well.

Indy gasped in pain and tried to land his own stab, but his blade only cut a couple of feathers off of the Polynesian's cloak. Indy turned around, beat his wings clumsily, and tried to follow him, but was attacked by the two others in that moment. They again glided towards him from both sides, but this time from different heights so that one of the two would catch him no matter what maneuver he tried.

So he didn't even try.

Instead he turned himself around and raced straight at one of them.

His attack completely surprised the Polynesians. They moved with unchecked speed towards each other, and Indy moved so clumsily that his opponent could have slit him open had he just raised his knife. But he didn't, instead stared at Indy, stunned. Indy hacked towards him with his knife, but again got nothing but a couple of feathers, and then they were past each other, and, in the next moment, Indy quickly realized why the Polynesian had stared at him so stunned; better said: so *horrified*.

Their ropes started to tangle.

Indy and his opponent both tried an evasive maneuver, but it was too late. Their ropes twisted together, and Indy and the Polynesian started to circle, faster and faster, moving towards each other against their will. The edge of the crater and the glowing fire raced by faster and faster around them.

The collision was terrible. The knife was torn from his hand and flew away, and an almost meter long piece of the feather cloak his opponent was wearing fell off and caught fire even before it hit the lava.

Indy clung instinctively to his opponent's body. The other man did the same; but with only one hand. With the other he grabbed at Indy's throat and pressed down with merciless strength.

Indy let go of the Long Ear's shoulders and started to hit at his face with both fists. He hit. Blood ran out of the native's nose and face, but his chokehold only tightened. Indy's strength was already

giving out. He continued to hammer at his opponent, but his punches were now powerless and had essentially no effect.

A terrible jerk ran through his body. Indy looked up and recognized, horrified, that only one of the Polynesians was circling above him. The other had swung onto the twisted ropes and clung tightly to them. In his right hand he held a large knife with which he sawed tenaciously at the ropes.

This sight gave Indy renewed strength. With a desperate punch, he broke his opponent's death grip, pushed him away, and tried to gain height again somehow. Within moments, they started to circle each other again; this time in the opposite direction.

Again he felt a jerk that seemed to break all of the bones in his body. The first rope had torn. It was the one on which his opponent hung, but since the ropes had spun around each other at least thirty or forty times, the Polynesian didn't immediately fall, instead slid down with small, hard jerks, simultaneously waving his arms like he was possessed in an attempt to get to Indy. The second Polynesian continued to saw cheerfully at the rope. It would only hold for a few more seconds.

Indy desperately aimed towards the third Bird Person and simultaneously took the whip from his belt. He noticed him barely ten meters away, turned, and saw out of the corner of his eye as the Polynesian he had just been fighting rose towards him from below. His rope no longer held him, but he had caught the thermals so well that, for a moment, he really did fly. What he planned to do was clear.

Still, Indy ignored him and cracked his whip.

The tip missed the Polynesian and wrapped around the rope, right above his shoulder blades. The elegant gliding of the Polynesian became a helpless fall as Indy pulled the whip tight with a jerk and started to drag the native over. Hand over hand he pulled the Bird Man towards him.

The Polynesian began to struggle wildly and tried to flip onto his back so that he could reach the whip, but he couldn't manage it.

And then everything went terribly fast.

Indy's rope tore. He felt himself start to fall and clung with desperate strength to the whip, simultaneously he tried to throw himself forward and reach the Polynesian's stamping feet.

He would have probably made it had his previous opponent not come up in that moment and grabbed at *his* legs. He clung to Indy with all his might.

There was a double, horrifying jerk that seemed to tear his arms out of their sockets, but his supply of amazing, life-saving coincidences was apparently still not used up: Both the whip and the other Polynesian's rope held, and he somehow even found the strength to pull himself up hand over hand and grab the Long Ear's feet. The Polynesian kicked out furiously, but the sheer fear of death- and the sight of the bubbling lava beneath him- gave Indy almost superhuman strength. Although a good two hundred pounds of Long Ear pulled at his legs, he continued to climb, clung to the Polynesian's arm, and reached up again.

The Polynesian rammed his knee into his body. One of his hands felt over Indy's face and grabbed for his eyes. Indy bit the man's thumb, tasted blood, and then collapsed in pain as the man's knee landed on his stomach with the force of a hammer blow. His grip loosened; he started to slide. He instinctively reached up and grabbed the first thing he found.

It was the Bird Man's ear.

The Polynesian started to screech hysterically and shrilly as his earlobe was suddenly and brutally pulled to twice its length, even after he had carefully stretched it for the last ten or fifteen years. Indy felt another, harder jerk, and suddenly his hands were covered with blood. He desperately clawed at the Polynesian's face, slid off again, and finally got ahold of his shoulders. The Polynesian screeched in

pain and started to throw himself wildly here and there as he pressed both hands against his bleeding ear.

Beneath Indy, a shrill scream rang out, and as he looked down, his heart took a shocked leap up into his throat.

The Polynesian who had clung to his legs was on fire. His rope had fallen into the lava, and the hot, melted stone had set it alight like a fuse. The flames had already reached the edge of his feather cloak and consumed it with growing speed!

Indy had paused before, but now he had no other choice: With a decisive kick, he pushed the Polynesian off of him. The native screeched, fell down backwards, and spread his arms out as he fell. Like a massive, burning bird, he fell into the lava and vanished into the boiling mass. A gigantic flame shot into the air, and a hail of tiny, glowing droplets of lava singed Indy's back and legs.

In the meantime, the second Polynesian had himself halfway under control again. His shredded earlobe bled even more heavily, but the expression in his eyes now contained less pain than fiery fury.

Indy wrapped his left arm around his neck, cluing tightly to it with all of his strength, and rammed his right fist into his body; once, twice, three times, again and again. At first it seemed as if his punches were having no effect, but then he felt as his opponent's body slackened.

Just to be certain, he hit once more, then he started to climb up again until he stood on the shoulders of the unconscious Polynesian like a circus artist and clung to the rope with his left hand.

The third and final Bird Person glided towards him with outstretched wings. In his hands flashed a large machete, and as Indy calculated his course in his mind, he realized that he wasn't the Polynesian's target. He was planning to chop the rope so that they would both fall into the lava. The lives of their own people didn't seem to be worth very much to the Long Ears.

Indy waited calmly until the Polynesian had come close enough, then he struck with his whip. This time the technique was different:

Shorter, harder, and with a lot of strength behind it, and a quick snap of the wrist that caused the whip to lash at the rope with terrible strength.

It cut through the rope like a knife.

The Bird Man cried out in terror, but he still kept his nerves. With wide outstretched, motionless wings, he glided close to Indy, suddenly dropped his machete, and shifted into a racing fall. When Indy thought he was about to drop into the lava, he turned himself back around and used the momentum of his own fall to ride the hot air back up. He had no chance of reaching the edge of the crater, but he did hit the rocks about halfway up the cliff, slid down a bit, and finally found a handhold somewhere. His cloak smoked, and tiny flames already licked at it in one place. Fingers flying, he beat at it, tore the heavy piece of clothing from his shoulders, and started to climb up the inside of the crater. Indy hoped that he would make it.

But he was no longer watching that, instead he looked up at Sandstein, who stood at the edge of the platform and stared down at him. He could see her face only as a bright fleck, but he thought that he could feel her stunned gaze.

“I fulfilled your requirement!” he yelled. “Now keep your word! Pull me up!”

For several seconds, Sandstein didn’t even move, and just as Indy started to think that she hadn’t understood his words, she raised her hand and waved commandingly.

He wouldn’t be pulled up.

Instead he watched, filled with disbelieving terror, as three more Bird Men prepared to glide down into the volcanic crater!

“Sandstein!” he screamed. “Is this your way of keeping your word?”

“I am keeping my word, Dr. Jones!” Sandstein screamed back. “I promised to give you a chance to practice, didn’t I? Now, you’ve done that- and used it well. Now you will fight three of my warriors

who are *actually* good. The two imposers who you killed deserved nothing better!”

“Do you think that your people will trust a goddess who breaks her word, Mi-Pao-Lo?” asked Indy.

Sandstein laughed hatefully. “A good try, Dr. Jones!” she answered. “But spare yourself the trouble! You don’t know a word of their language, Jones! If you beat these three, then you are free!”

She gave a signal, and the three Polynesians dropped down one after another.

Indy cursed silently. He had been a fool to trust this madwoman. She would never allow him or any of the others leave this island alive. Not even if he managed to defeat the next three Long Ears.

But he wouldn’t be able to do that anyway.

Even the way in which they glided towards him made it clear that *these* warriors understood how to ride the thermals much better than the first three. And they had already seen his style of fighting and wouldn’t fall for the same tricks. No, he had no chance.

Still, he gripped his whip more tightly and watched the three of them, determined. He would make his life worth as much as possible.

He didn’t have to.

Something like a distant, oddly dry crack of thunder rang from the sea, then he heard a whistling, high and shrill, which continued to grow nearer and louder. Something flew, invisible, but with a hellish din over the crater, for a second there was an almost unnatural silence, then the sound of a large explosion rang through the jungle. Red flames filled the sky, and Indy thought he felt the whole island shake beneath him.

The thundering of the explosion was followed by an almost uncanny silence. The ringing of the thunder had silenced, and even the rumbling of the volcano seemed to stop for a moment. Indy also held his breath out of instinct. He saw out of the corner of his eye as the three Polynesians continued to approach; but their flight was no

longer an attack. They looked confused and scared to death, and their eyes no longer looked to him, instead to the sky.

A second thunderclap rang from the sea, and even before the shrill howling and whistling began again, the Long Ears sank down onto their knees one after another on the crater's edge and bowed their heads reverently, and Indy finally realized what was happening. For the Polynesians, the thundering was an answer from their god, who they had called with the ceremony.

The illusion only lasted for a few more moments before it was put right again in a gruesome way. The howling and whistling began again and approached, and Indy found the time to cling to the rope with his arms and legs before Make-Make's answer, which was actually a 12 centimeter grenade, reached the island and exploded among the praying Polynesians at the edge of the crater.

A red-orange fireball overpowered the light of the ceremonial fires. The crashing of the explosion seemed to make Indy's ear drums burst, and the shockwave threw his living platform out from under him and tossed the other three Bird People around wildly. One fell out of his harness and down into the lava, the two others were flung against the wall of the crater.

Indy clung with desperate strength to the rope, which had begun to swing wildly. Flames and glowing splinters of stone rained down on him, and the lava in the heart of the volcano answered with furious boiling and meter-high flames. This time he was sure that the swaying of the ground wasn't just his imagination. The entire mountain shook; and it wasn't just in answer to the grenade.

Seconds before the grenade raced over, howling, the roaring of a third cannon shot warned him. Indy began desperately to climb up. His hands were torn and bloody after several seconds, and his body weight seemed to double with every meter he climbed. Still, he continued to climb, and this determination saved his life.

The third grenade hit its target directly.

It didn't explode at the edge of the crater, instead raced, glowing hot, past Indy and vanished into the lava.

For half a second it seemed as if nothing would happen, but then Indy heard a dull, oddly dampened crack, and suddenly the entire sea of lava flared bright white. A wave of unbearable heat rose up, and then a dozen boiling geysers of lava flew up simultaneously. Hot liquid stone sprayed up, set the cloak of the unconscious Polynesian on fire, and hit one of the others. Indy climbed on with desperate strength, ignoring the murderous heat that singed his skin and made his clothing smoke, just like the gruesome pain in his hands and shoulders. Every bit of strength and energy he still found within himself was used to pull himself up meter by meter.

Another grenade flew over and exploded on the inside of the crater. The impact was far enough away that it didn't affect Indy, but it destroyed nearly a third of the crater's edge. It was just as Ganty had said: The Long Ears had thousands of years to hollow out this mountain, and it burst beneath the explosions like an anthill beneath the foot of an elephant. Tons of stone crashed in a massive avalanche towards the lava. The mountain was collapsing. For several seconds, Indy saw passages and halls that had never been touched by the light of day before they also collapsed and joined the avalanche sliding down to the lava. Indy didn't stop for a second, instead continued to climb, and somehow he managed to reach the edge of the rock platform before another shot came that found its target and caused another roaring column of melted stone to fly into the air.

On the stony platform, an unholy chaos reigned. Small puddles of cooling lava formed an almost even pattern of dark red light on the rocks. Several Long Ears lay injured or even dead on the ground, and the others were entangled in a bitter hand-to-hand combat with Jonas and the others.

Indy pulled himself up over the edge of the rocks with the last of his strength, collapsed, and for endless seconds could do nothing

more than stay there, gasping in and out, and wait for the gruesome heat to subside.

As he opened his eyes again, the fight was as good as over. Most of the Bird People had escaped when the bombardment had begun, and there was also no trace of Sandstein and her fire crystal. Indy secretly hoped that she had fallen into the crater with the cursed crystal, but something told him that it wouldn't be that easy.

A figure came towards him, but Indy only figured out who it was only when he spoke and he recognized the voice. It was Jonas. "Jones! For God's sake, are you okay?"

Indy thought that this was the dumbest question he had heard for weeks, but all he could manage as an answer was a barely noticeable nod. He tried to stand up, but he only managed it when Jonas helped him.

"Where... is Sandstein?" he forced out with trouble. He still couldn't see well. His eyes teared up constantly, and his face felt as if someone had tried to skin him alive. Judging from Jonas' gaze, he must also look that way.

"Vanished," answered Jonas. He made a disparaging noise. "She was off like a flash as soon as the first grenade hit the jungle. A fine goddess these savages found!"

Indy shook his head a couple of times to clear his thoughts again, but Jonas' words simply refused to make sense to him. "What... happened?" he murmured.

Jonas laughed. "I think your Nazi friend put us in a crossfire."

"What?" Indy murmured.

"Delano set you up," said Jonas. He sounded almost cheerful. "Do you still not understand? They got your signal, but it didn't bring a rescue party, instead gave a firing order. Ganty told me what you did. Very clever, you and your Nazi friend."

"Yes," Indy murmured. "If he wasn't already dead, then I would probably strangle him now with pleasure."

Jonas grew serious. “I think that you can spare yourself the trouble, Indy. It doesn’t seem as if we’re going to get out of here alive.”

Indy looked at him, confused. During these few words, the fight had ended; the few Polynesians who hadn’t been wounded or fled had been overpowered by the other prisoners and tied up with their own belts.

But that wasn’t the danger of which Jonas was speaking, and it took only a moment for Indy to realize that. The Long Ears were the least of their worries.

The shots from the sea had stopped. Indy only now noticed, looking back, that no more grenades had fallen from the sky since he had reached the plateau. But the ground hadn’t stopped shaking. Just the opposite.

The rock beneath their feet swayed and shook even more forcefully, and the crater spewed out more boiling flames and embers than before. The fires at the edge of the crater had mostly gone out, but the sky continued to glow blood red. An unabating roaring rang in his ear, a sound as if gigantic caves were crashing beneath them.

And that’s exactly what it was.

“Good God!” Indy whispered.

“That’s right,” said Jonas dryly. “This entire damn island is falling apart. I’m guessing that in two hours there will be nothing here but ocean.”

Indy carefully pushed off Jonas’ hand and tried to stand with his own strength. He couldn’t do it. The ground was now swaying and shaking so heavily that even Jonas and the others were finding it hard to stay on their feet. And he had used up everything he had during the last half hour. Jonas had to support him as they swayed over to the others.

“Jones!” called Ganty, shocked. “Are you hurt?”

“No,” answered Indy automatically. He tried to smile and corrected himself: “At least not badly. We have to get away from here, Ganty. Where did Sandstein and the others go?”

Ganty pointed silently at the double winged door made of black basalt at the end of the plateau. It was closed. Indy didn’t even take the trouble to guess at its weight. He also didn’t try to fool himself. Without tools or, even better, a crate of dynamite, they had no chance of opening it.

“Then we’ll have to climb,” he said with a heavy heart.

“Climb?” Ganty sounded horrified. Indy looked up at the rock wall and suddenly understood the shrill tone in the old man’s voice. The wall was twenty meters high at the most, but it rose completely vertically, and the lava was as smooth as carefully polished glass. No creature that didn’t have wings could get out that way.

Indy looked thoughtfully at one of the unconscious Polynesians. The native wore one of the green feather cloaks; maybe it was one of Sandstein’s “elite” men who she had been preparing just in case of the improbability that he had been able to defeat the next three Bird People. He was badly wounded; maybe dead. A splinter of lava had hit his throat and burned deep into his flesh. But his cloak was untouched...

Indy knelt down next to the Polynesian and, fingers shaking, started to loosen the complicated tangle of leather ties and ropes that had attached the Polynesian to his artificial wings.

“What are you doing, Indy?” asked Ganty.

Indy didn’t answer. The mere thought of what he was trying to do caused him to break out in a cold sweat. But it was probably the only chance they had. He worked faster, pulled the Polynesian out of his cloak, and slipped into it himself.

“Are you mad, Indy?” gasped Jonas. “You can’t do that anymore! You don’t have the strength!” This comment didn’t stop him from helping Indy pull the cloak on tight. Simultaneously, he continued: “Be sensible, Indy! You can’t stand on your own!”

“I don’t need to,” answered Indy. He smiled tiredly and moved his arms as if he were testing his wings. Jonas prepared to answer, but Indy didn’t give him a chance to talk, instead pointed with a head movement to the edge of the crater. “We have to get up there, and I don’t see any other way. Do you want to try it?”

He didn’t wait for Jonas’ answer, instead stepped to the edge of the plateau and looked down.

The heat was now even worse up here than it had been before when he had glided over the lava. The glowing stone had clearly risen higher, and the air boiled. He couldn’t breathe. A glowing storm wind whipped into his face and drove tears to his eyes. He hastily took another step back from the edge and looked around. “I need a rope.”

Ganty’s lips became a small, bloodless line. Indy could basically see him starting to work something out. But he said nothing of what he had been thinking, instead turned around silently and came back after a few moments with a rolled-up rope that he handed to Indy. Indy tied one end around his hips and gave the other to Jonas.

“Don’t try to stop me if I fall,” he said, before he stepped back to the edge of the cliff.

He was terribly afraid. The lava had risen even farther and now seemed even closer than before, when he had fought for his life in the crater below. The mountain continued to shake even more forcefully. From the opposite side, large and small chunks of rock started to break off and slid into the lava. Jonas was right, thought Indy, horrified. The entire island was collapsing.

He pushed this aside as well as all of the other discouraging thoughts, spread his arms out, and pushed off with all of his strength. Almost instantly he was grabbed by the burning storm wind and carried up; much faster than he had expected and in completely the wrong direction.

Indy fought back his impulse to turn and move his arms at the last moment, which would have undoubtedly been his end because he

would have started to tumble and fall like a rock. Instead he tried to swim on the thermals with wide outstretched, motionless arms, returning to his starting point.

It didn't work. The flying itself was easier than he had dared to hope because the boiling storm from below had reached a speed that would have pulled a person from their feet even if they didn't have the right equipment. But it was completely impossible to steer this flight in any way. Instead of being at the edge of the crater, Indy was pulled towards its center.

Suddenly he felt a hard jerk. Indy still suppressed the impulse to move his arms, but he did look down and discover that the rope had reached its full length. At the other end, minuscule and absurdly far beneath him, Ganty, Jonas, and two of the SS soldiers pulled and braced themselves against the ground, holding him there like an oversized, bizarre kite.

Very slowly, they started to pull him in. The hot air hit at him like invisible claws. His feather cloak started to smoke, and as if the volcano was trying with all of its might to pull back its prey, a thirty meter high column of lava flew out of the boiling mass. It missed him, but the heat made him cry out and set the material of his feather cloak on fire. He rolled in the air, fell a couple of meters, and found flight again, tumbling as Ganty and the others pulled at the rope with all of their might. Slowly he glided back to the edge of the crater and began to lose height. His cloak burned again. The flames naturally found fuel in the feathers as he approached the edge of the crater like a burning glider.

For the last five or six meters, he exited the thermals and fell. Dazed, he remained lying there for a moment before the heat brought him back to consciousness. He hastily sprang up, tore the burning cloak from his shoulders, and beat at the flames licking at his pant legs.

He had landed directly at the edge of the crater, twenty meters above and perhaps fifty meters away from Ganty and the others. Smoke took away his sight as he felt along the still tensed rope.

Up here, countless fires also glowed. Dead and dying Long Ears lay at the edge of the crater. Small clumps of glowing red lava blocked the path and caused him to move in a senseless zigzag until he finally reached the crater's edge directly above the others. Loosening the rope from around his hips and tying it to a rock took almost all of his strength.

He must have lost consciousness, because the next thing that he remembered was Nancy and the two Australians kneeling over him and taking care of him with their combined efforts, as Ganty and Jonas stood at the rope and helped the other prisoners reach the edge of the crater.

The next half hour seemed like a bad dream when Indy thought back to. There were only twenty of them left as they climbed down the side of the volcano and reached the edge of the forest. Ganty was their guide since he was the only one who at least somewhat knew this island, but Indy wondered in vain *where* he was leading them. The volcanic island was sinking, there was no doubt about that. The explosions had shaken the already fragile structure of the island so much that it would simply fall to pieces. Maybe in just a few hours. Even here in the jungle, the ground now swayed and bobbed constantly, and the tremors didn't lessen in intensity, but got stronger. Crashing and splintering, ancient trees fell, and here and there, flames shot out of the jungle.

And all of this was probably just the beginning. Indy thought, shuddering, about what Ganty had told him about this island on the first day: The lava sea at the heart of the volcano lay *beneath* the surface of the ocean. If the tremors continued, then sooner or later, the rocks would be so weakened that water would flow into the boiling lava. The explosion with which the island would fly into the air would probably be heard all the way to Hawaii.

At least the Long Ears were leaving them alone now. The whole way down to the beach, they didn't see a single native. They had all probably fled with their goddess in a different direction to leave the island.

Ganty didn't lead them back to the place on the beach where they had come onto the island, instead in nearly the opposite direction. The way became more and more difficult. Between the trees, there were sharp-edged lava rocks, and a couple of times they had to climb over the glassy lava, which cut their hands and feet. Several times they had to go back the way that they had just fought their way through because flames raged before them or the ground tore open and heat and poisonous steam flowed out.

Finally they reached the beach. It wasn't a white stretch of sand like the one that they had first arrived at, instead a broken-off rock ledge barely twenty meters from the edge of the forest and five meters above a roiling sea, the white foam of which broke, roaring, on the lava. The coastline stretched for as far as the eye could see.

Indy fought his way over to Ganty and grabbed his shoulders roughly. "What is this?" he cried over the raging surf. "Why did you bring us here?"

Instead of a direct answer, Ganty pushed his hand aside and pointed with his other arm at the sea. Indy's gaze followed this gesture, and then he saw that the ocean wasn't as empty as he had previously thought: On the other side of the surf, dozens, if not hundreds of long, slim outlines moved across the sea. It was a harbor like the one Ganty's yacht had entered.

"There!" Ganty screamed. "You see?" his arm moved sideways and he pointed at a place along the coastline, maybe half a mile away. When Indy looked now, he recognized that this was the launching point for the fleet of boats- they floated one after another and very quickly out of a cave that lay hidden beneath an overhanging rock; a perfect natural hiding place.

“They’re fleeing!” Ganty yelled. “They know that this island is doomed! Maybe we can manage to take a couple of boats!”

“Are you mad?” gasped Jonas. “They’ll just kill us!”

“Maybe not,” answered Indy in Ganty’s place. “Think about it, Jonas- these natives don’t even know what a canon is. They probably think that Make-Make’s fury is to blame for the destruction of their homeland. None of them have attacked us since the barrage started. They all tried to escape instead!”

Jonas considered for a moment, straining. Indy could see that he clearly wanted to believe this- but he couldn’t do it. “Even if so,” he said. “It would be impossible for us to paddle one of those things three hundred miles to the next island!”

“And we don’t need to,” said Indy. He made a hand movement towards the sea. “The Henderson is somewhere out there, Jonas. Maybe we’ll reach it before everything explodes. We have no other choice.”

As if to underline his words, in that moment a particularly heavy shake ran through the ground. Indy flinched in shock and watched a large column of fire shoot from the mouth of the volcano. Glowing lava rained down onto the ground around it for miles and set dozens of new fires in the jungle.

Without another word, they continued on.

It was only half a mile, but they needed nearly half an hour for that distance. The island shook worse and worse, and here and there the flames had nearly eaten through to the edge of the forest so that the heat and roaring tongues of flame reached towards the escapees. The earth kept opening up in front of them, and glowing rubble rained down from the sky. Finally, they made it.

But they came too late.

The stream of boats stopped long before they had reached the door in the rock, and beneath them lay nothing but an empty, dark cave.

“And what now?” asked Jonas dully.

Indy didn't answer. His gaze slid searchingly over the dark cave entrance and the roiling water. Sometimes, the breakers hit against the rocks with such force that foam sprayed at them. To swim in this boiling sea was unthinkable. And even if so- where would they go? The Henderson was on the other side of the island, miles away, if Franklin hadn't yet decided to take his ship to safety before the entire island blew up.

"Maybe... they left behind a couple of boats," said Nancy haltingly.

Indy just looked at her silently, and after a few seconds Nancy looked away almost self-consciously. After what he had done in the crater, she seemed to think that he could work miracles. Maybe that was true sometimes. But walking on water wasn't in his repertoire.

"There's something out there," said Ganty suddenly.

Their attention turned back to the ocean. During the course of the last hour, it had become noticeably darker, as volcanic ash and dust darkened the sky, so that Indy found it hard to make out anything that was farther than 100 or 150 meters away. The fleet of boats had become a collection of blurred outlines, just at the border of being visible, so that one could really only see them if they knew they were there.

And still, after a few minutes he thought he could see a movement out there.

It wasn't that he truly *saw* it; it was more of the *feeling* that something gigantic, silent, and invisible was nearing the island. And he wasn't alone with this feeling. Other than Ganty and Jonas, the others looked out across the sea with a mixture of curiosity and growing discomfort.

"What is that?" whispered Nancy. Her voice shook. But she wasn't the only one who was afraid; she was just the one who made it the most noticeable.

No one answered. Out on the sea, something was happening. Indy couldn't make out exactly what it was, but several of the reed boats

suddenly changed course and started to row in all directions so that two or three of them were even approaching the island again. Whatever was coming from the sea, it must have made the Polynesians panic.

Suddenly the water between the tiny boats started to foam. Boiling blasts of air flew up, and beneath them appeared a gigantic, black shadow. Moments later, the turret and deck of a submarine broke through the surface.

Indy gasped quietly, shocked, as he recognized the markings on the turret. It was a German U-boat!

“That damn dog,” Ganty mumbled.

“Who?” asked Jonas.

“Delano!” Ganty laughed completely humorlessly. “He tricked us all, don’t you get it? Jones wasn’t giving the signal to the Henderson, it was for that ship there! They were probably just waiting around this island the whole time, watching for the signal. That damn dog!”

“Why are you getting so upset about it?” asked Jonas sharply. “At least they aren’t cannibalistic savages.”

“Are you sure?” asked Ganty quietly.

Jonas looked at him almost furiously, but didn’t answer, instead looked out across the sea.

The waves from the surfacing U-boat had knocked over several reed boats. The Polynesians swam from the steel giant in panicked fear, several back towards the island, but others were headed straight out towards the open sea as if they preferred certain death on the waves to even being near the iron monster that the sea had spit out. The U-boat itself moved on very slowly towards the island without taking any notice of the Polynesians or the fleet of tiny reed boats.

“Why don’t they hurry up?” murmured Nancy. “My God, we... we’re all going to die before they get here!” Her voice was shrill. Indy realized that she would probably soon become hysterical.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “They’ll make it.”

“We should probably warn them,” Barlowe added. “It won’t be of much use to us if they run aground on a reef and get stranded. We won’t get out of here with a leaky boat!”

“That certainly won’t happen,” said Jonas, convinced. “The captain is good at his job.”

“How do you know that?” asked Indy.

Jonas flinched very slightly, but quickly had himself back under control. “Logic tells me that much, Indy,” he answered, smiling. “Just because the Germans are our enemies doesn’t automatically mean they’re idiots. Would you give an idiot control over a U-boat?”

“No,” replied Indy. “But they still gave an idiot control over all of their people.”

The words were a conscious provocation, but if it had worked, then Jonas must have had himself well enough under control to not show his true feelings. He just smiled and said: “I wouldn’t describe Hitler as an idiot. He might be mad, but he’s not a fool.”

Indy decided against answering. He wasn’t sure whether he was just seeing ghosts. But he used this as a chance to watch Jonas a little more closely than before.

The turret hatch on the U-boat opened. A figure appeared in the turret, and moments later a powerful spotlight flared up and bathed the coastline in almost unnatural light. A voice called something that Indy couldn’t understand, but one of the German soldiers answered in his native language, and after several moments the deck of the boat started to fill with figures. Rubber dinghies were pulled out and hastily inflated.

The volcano roared a furious welcome to the intruders and spewed flames and smoke. Glowing rubble rained down around the U-boat from the sky and made the water spray up as if grenades were exploding. The soldiers on the deck of the U-boat ducked down in shock, and Indy and the others also instinctively looked for cover.

One of the SS soldiers lost his nerve and jumped into the water. The roaring foam claimed him. He didn’t resurface.

And suddenly Indy heard a sound that made the blood in his veins run cold. Horrified, he turned around and screamed as he saw the crater.

The mountain continued to hurl sparks and melting stones into the sky, but in the middle of this glowing inferno was a massive gray-white cloud of steam, and the terrible hiss that Indy had heard grew louder.

“The water is getting in!” screamed Ganty, voice breaking. “This is the end! For God’s sake- *jump!*”

Indy realized a fraction of a second too late what Ganty was planning to do. He tried to hold him back, but he came too late. Ganty took a two-step head start, pushed off with all of his strength, and sprang into the water.

Like the SS soldier before him, he immediately sank down, and Indy was convinced for a moment that he also wouldn’t reappear. But he was either lucky or he had chosen his position better: Instead of being dragged down or crushed against the rocks by the waves, he appeared only a few moments later and started to swim towards the U-boat. Finally Indy realized what had saved him: From the cave in which the subterranean Long Ear harbor lay came a strong current that Ganty had used to avoid the waves. He approached the U-boat very quickly and climbed on deck with the help of a rope that was thrown down to him.

A terrible tremor knocked Indy from his feet. He fell, rolled quickly onto his back, and gasped in horror. The volcano seemed to truly explode behind them. House-sized pieces of rubble flew into the air, and the fight between flames and steam had become an inferno. The island was falling apart. Not sometime, not in an hour, but *now*.

“Jump!” he screamed. “Swim to the boat!”

His voice was lost beneath the roar of the volcano, but the others had also seen what Ganty had done and followed his example. One after another risked the leap into the roiling flood; better chances than the certain death that awaited them there. The Kommandant of the U-

boat seemed to have also realized the danger into which the ship was floating. The soldiers had stopped inflating the rubber dinghies and instead threw ropes and life preservers into the water as the ship started to move slowly away from the island.

Indy, Jonas, and one of the soldiers were the last to approach the place over the cave entrance from which Ganty had leapt, and Indy turned once more and looked back into the jungle.

He almost wished that he hadn't done so.

The edge of the forest was no longer empty.

At least fifty Long Ears had appeared from the underbrush and formed a nearly straight line in front of the jungle. And in the middle of this chain, towered over by a three-meter-tall colossus made of black basalt, stood Sandstein. In her hands she held the fiery crystal.

They had been there the whole time, Indy suddenly realized. They had thought they had escaped them, but that wasn't the case. It hadn't been for a single second. Sandstein and her warriors must have been following them from the first moment; and Indy now knew why. If not the Long Ears themselves, then their master had realized that it hadn't been the fury of their god that had destroyed the island, and they had come to take their revenge. The hellfire that pulsed within the crystal to her heartbeat would hit the U-boat and destroy it just as it had Delano's ship.

Sandstein laughed; it was a shrill, almost demonic sound that was no longer human. Then she took a step forward and raised the glowing crystal with both hands.

The U-boat's canon let out a meter long tongue of fire. The grenade howled so close above Indy that he could feel the heat of the projectile, hit the stone giant behind Sandstein, and tore a half dozen Long Ears and Adele Sandstein herself to pieces. The crystal flew in a high arc and fell to the ground. The pulsating red light at its heart went out.

And Jonas ran.

“Jonas- *no!*” roared Indy. He realized what Jonas was planning on doing and he also knew that he would come too late. Still, he ran after him, gathered all of his remaining strength for a massive leap... and missed him.

His wide outstretched arms grabbed air. He fell hard to the ground, tried to stand up, and groaned in pain as he felt his left arm. His wrist was sprained, if not broken.

“Jonas, don’t do it!” he screamed desperately. “For God’s sake- *don’t touch it!*”

But he was too late. Jonas had reached the fiery crystal, leaned over with a hasty movement, and picked it up. Inside of the blood-red orb, a dark light began to pulse.

Perhaps it still wouldn’t have been too late if, in this moment, the surviving Polynesian warriors hadn’t turned to attack Jonas and take their holy relic from him. Arrows and spears flew in his direction. One of the projectiles hit his shoulder and flung him to the ground. But he didn’t let go of the crystal during this fall.

Indy closed his eyes at the last second, but it was like in the cave below- the light penetrated through his closed eyes with no trouble, so he still saw every single detail of the terrifying scene. A red, pulsing beam shot from the crystal in Jonas’ hand, hit the approaching Long Ears, and burned them to ash.

But he didn’t stop with this one bolt of lightning. Jonas got onto his feet, stumbling. He screamed as if he had lost his mind and held the crystal high above his head. Bolt after bolt shot from the crystal. The red death mowed down the Polynesians like a scythe of light, even as they tried to escape in a panic, and killed every single man, as if Jonas had a bloodlust he could no longer control. Even when there was no longer a living target for him, the crystal continued to spew flames and light that set the forest on fire for over a hundred meters.

“Jonas!” Indy groaned. “Stop it!”

Jonas stopped. The flood of wicked, red light dried up as he slowly turned to Indy. His face was distorted. In his eyes burned a fire that was nearly as hellish as the lightning from the fiery crystal. The face into which Indy looked was the face of a madman.

Still, he tried to reason with him again. “Jonas!” he said imploringly. “Throw it away! Fight against it! You can do it!”

Jonas groaned. His eyes flickered, and for a short moment the hellish fire was replaced by an expression of deep horror and fear, a feeling of the same gravity and horror that Indy had also felt when he held the crystal in his hands.

“Fight it!” he said, pleading. “Fight against this, Jonas! Throw that damn thing into the sea!”

He could nearly see the agonizing fight playing out within Jonas’ mind. Jonas whimpered as if in unbearable pain, began to sway, and crumpled. And he lost the fight.

Indy leapt to his feet and ran towards him. The expression of pain and suffering in Jonas’ eyes vanished a second before Indy reached him. From one moment to the next, he was looking into the eyes of a creature that looked human, but wasn’t.

The crystal in Jonas’ hands started to pulse. A blood-red, dark light glowed with the rhythm of his heartbeat, and Indy was almost certain that he would soon be consumed by the red light.

But Jonas didn’t kill him. Indy never figured out why his life was spared, but it was. Instead of sending a bolt of lightning at him, Jonas limited himself to dashing the crystal so forcefully against Indy’s head that he immediately lost consciousness.



Chapter 10

Thirty Meters Beneath the Sea

An Hour Later

He came to again as someone carried him aboard the U-boat, but Indy only remembered what had happened in the following hour as if it had been a dream: hazy and blurred. The boat had immediately gone out to sea and probably submerged, because he remembered an uncanny roaring and droning, followed by a shaking that tossed the boat wildly here and there, and the steel hull groaned as if it were a living creature suffering from pain. After that, the hull of the boat had been filled with the ringing of alarm bells and excited voices and the sound of running people for a while, and only then did Indy really understand what had happened: The island of the Long Ears no longer existed.

Indy found himself truly conscious again for the first time when the door was opened and someone stepped into the tiny cabin in which he found himself. Very briefly, he considered what a luxury it was to have this “single cell” he had been placed in. Space must have been very tight on this U-boat with all of the additional passengers and prisoners.

He opened his eyes. At first, he saw nothing but colorful veils and movement, but then he noticed a bright fleck above him, which

quickly formed the face of a dark-haired man who he didn't know. A moment later he could also make out the uniform the unknown man wore.

"Oh," he murmured weakly. "So soon?"

The other man creased his brow. "So soon what?" he asked in almost accent-free English.

"The firing squad," said Indy. "I thought that I would have a bit more time."

The stranger made a face as if he didn't quite know whether he should laugh or be furious, and finally decided on an expression that lay somewhere in between. "They warned me about your somewhat strange humor, Jones," he said. "I'm Dr. Müller, the ship's doctor. I'm supposed to take care of you." He studied Indy with a very long, testing glance, grimaced, and added: "It looks like you need it."

Indy carefully sat up on the small cot and clenched his teeth as Müller routinely, but anything but gently started to examine his various injuries.

"I didn't know that the Nazis tortured their prisoners before they shot them," he groaned.

Müller looked up briefly. In his eyes glinted an amused expression, but his face remained completely expressionless. "We don't," he said, and leaned back over Indy's upper body. "Shoot them, I mean. We normally nail them to a cross."

Indy couldn't see what he was doing, but it at least felt as if he was preparing to put these words into action.

"I hope that it's in the shape of a swastika," said Indy, strained.

"Of course," answered Müller. "The only problem is that we will have to break your arms and legs first so you can fit."

Indy grinned, but gasped a second later, pained, as Müller pushed down hard on his wrist. "Ow!"

"It isn't broken, at least," said Müller cheerfully. He shook his head. "You are either the toughest man I've ever met, or else you

have been extremely lucky. What did you do, Jones?” Try to break the world record for the 100 meter dash in boiling lava?”

“No. I fear that I flew too low over it,” answered Indy.

Müller blinked, looked at him for a moment in confusion, but then just shrugged his shoulders. “You will probably need to be in a hospital for at least fourteen days,” he said. “Still: Can you walk?”

“I think so,” answered Indy. “Why? I thought that this ship had a motor.”

“Two, in fact,” replied Müller. “The Kommandant wants to talk to you. Do you feel strong enough for that?”

“What will happen if I say no?” Indy inquired.

Müller just smiled, stepped back, and made a requesting gesture, and Indy got up with some trouble and followed him.

His guess about the available space on board of the ship was obviously wrong. It wasn't as bad as he had thought. It was worse.

The ship was nearly overflowing with people. Besides the normal crew, the prisoners, and the survivors of Delano's group, there was also an astonishingly large number of naval soldiers on board, so that they had to literally climb over people to make their way to the command center. Even in there, not much space remained. Indy didn't know very much about U-boats, but he guessed that this ship had at least three times its usual crew. If his guess was correct and this boat was in fact a part of Delano's little fleet, then the hours in which they had lain in wait for them must have been hell.

Müller pointed towards a man who stood at a periscope with his back to the door. Although he didn't say a word, he seemed to sense their presence, because he turned around as Indy and the other man were two steps away, and studied him for several seconds with an uninterpretable expression. Indy guessed his age at around fifty years old, maybe a bit younger. He looked like a man who could be very harsh. Yet he didn't seem unlikeable.

“Dr. Jones, I take it,” he said. “I am Kapitänleutnant Brenner. Welcome aboard.”

“Oh, I assure you,” said Indy. “The pleasure is all mine.”

Brenner noticed the sarcastic undertone in Indy’s voice, but he didn’t react to it. Only now did Indy notice that he wasn’t just as exhausted and tired as all of the others here looked, but also very worried.

“Where are the others?” asked Indy. “Ganty and the Barlowes and...”

“Your friends are doing well,” Brenner interrupted him. “Miss Barlowe has a slight injury, but there is no reason to worry. You can talk to them a little later.” He paused for a short moment in which he studied Indy in an oddly calculating way, then he sighed and straightened up noticeably.

“I will be completely open with you, Dr. Jones, because we have little time. We have... a problem.”

“How nice,” said Indy. “Is the boat sinking?”

Brenner looked at him angrily, but controlled himself. “Your bitterness is understandable, Dr. Jones,” he said. “But right now it is of no use. I’m not sure whether we are truly enemies at the moment.”

“How do you mean that?” asked Indy, alarmed.

Instead of answering, Brenner took a step to the side and pointed at the periscope with a requesting gesture. Indy paused for a second, in which Brenner just stared at him, confused, but then he carefully stepped over to the periscope and pressed his eyes against the ocular.

Outside, deepest night ruled, and it took a while for his eyes to grow accustomed to the weak light. But then he realized what Brenner meant.

The sea was full of ships.

Hundreds of tiny, slim reed boats covered the ocean.

“They’ve been following us since we left the island,” said Brenner. “Don’t ask me what they’re doing. We’ve been submerged the whole time, but they somehow picked up our trail. And more are coming. The waves toss them around a lot, but those things seem to be unsinkable.”

“And rather fast,” said Indy without looking away from the ghostly fleet. It wasn’t just a few Polynesian warriors who had followed them. It was the entire Long Ear people who had left the sinking island to take the same, seemingly endless trip they had over a thousand years before.

“No,” Brenner said after a noticeable pause. “I fear we’re just that slow.”

Indy now looked away from the eyepiece and studied him questioningly.

“The ship is damaged,” Brenner clarified. “The shockwaves weren’t kind to us. We can barely gain any speed, and my First Officer thinks that we can only remain submerged for another hour.”

“So you fear that they’ll attack if the boat surfaces?”

“That’s exactly what I want to know from you, Dr. Jones,” answered Brenner seriously. “Don’t misunderstand me- I don’t think that they could truly be a threat to us. But we don’t have enough torpedoes on board to sink all of them, and mostly I’m reluctant to cause a senseless bloodbath. Anyway, my men are completely exhausted.”

“And our supplies are basically gone,” Müller continued. “The fuel as well. We’ve been circling around this damn island for two weeks. Those savages could just hold us here and starve us out if they wanted to.”

Brenner’s angry glance betrayed that this information hadn’t been meant for Indy’s ears. But he controlled himself again. “That’s our situation at the moment, Dr. Jones,” he said.

“And you want me to tell you what you should do,” Indy guessed. “I fear that I must disappoint you, Herr Kapitänleutnant. I know little about these...”

“I want to know what happened on the island, Jones,” Brenner interrupted him. “You see, those savages out there are only part of our problem. The other half...”

He broke off in mid-sentence. But it also wasn't necessary for him to continue, because the other (and probably far larger) part of their problem stepped into the room at the same moment.

It was Jonas.

Indy wasn't even that surprised to see him there instead of barricaded in with the other survivors. Just as little as the dark gray Wehrmacht uniform that Jonas wore now in place of his ripped clothing surprised Indy. He had a suspicion, at least since their conversation on the beach.

But he flinched back as he looked into Jonas' face.

Jonas was no longer himself.

He looked as he had before, he moved the same, and when he spoke, it was with Jonas' voice, but that was all just a façade. The creature that he now faced was... no longer a person. It was something else, something wicked and dark that came from an age long past; yes, maybe not even from this world.

And he wasn't the only one who felt that. The men near Jonas pulled away from him instinctively, and Brenner also showed signs of nervousness, perhaps even fear.

"Dr. Jones!" Jonas began with a smile that really wasn't one. "How nice to see you back on your feet. I was afraid that I had actually hurt you."

"That isn't so easy," answered Indy coolly. He measured Jonas with a long, consciously dismissive glance. "I see you must be doing better again too. But you should change your tailor."

Jonas laughed, then saluted Indy mockingly. "Would you prefer it if I introduced myself properly to you? Obersturmbannführer Heinrich, commanding officer of Operation Phoenix." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a filthy sheet of paper. "Please."

Indy took the paper, unfolded it, and glanced at it quickly. The sheet told him nothing. It held nothing but columns of numbers and letters. Questioning, he looked at Jonas.

“Go ahead and keep it,” said Jonas/Heinrich, grinning. “That is what you came for after all, right? On this list are all of the positions of secret U-boat bases owned by the German navy that Agent Jonas could find. I just fear that it may be a bit unreliable. Latitude and longitude were always difficult for me.”

“What is this nonsense?” asked Indy. Furious, he crumpled up the sheet and threw it onto the ground.

Heinrich laughed. “The German secret service thought that it would be a good idea,” he said. “And to be honest, I did too. Don’t you also think that it would be funny if the Americans wasted their best people and countless millions of dollars to search for U-boat bases that don’t even exist?”

“Not in the slightest,” said Indy.

“How regrettable.” Heinrich sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and his smile vanished as if it had been turned off. “You’re probably right,” he said. “But that no longer matters, does it?”

Indy was probably the only one in this room who truly understood what Heinrich meant by that. And he was also probably the only one who knew who he was really up against.

For endless seconds they stared at each other silently, then Heinrich/Jonas/Mi-Pao-Lo turned with a jerk and pointed at the periscope. “Are they still following us?”

Brenner nodded. “There are more now,” he answered. “At the moment, it seems as if we have no chance of escaping them.”

“Do I hear a trace of fear in your voice, my dear?” asked Heinrich mockingly. “You aren’t afraid of a group of uncivilized savages, are you?”

Brenner remained silent. Heinrich studied him mockingly for several seconds, then he turned with a jerk and left. “Call me if something changes,” he said as he left.

“I think that I understand what you mean,” murmured Indy as soon as Jonas/Heinrich was out of sight.

Brenner looked at him very seriously and for quite a long time. “What happened on that island, Dr. Jones?” he asked once more. Indy began his report.

Brenner had kept his word and took him to the other prisoners after their discussion was over. The word “prisoner” had taken on a new meaning aboard this ship- Ganty, the Barlowes, and the two Australians were in a small room at the rear that was perhaps eight square meters and so low that they couldn’t stand upright. Still, they had more room available than anyone else on board, the Kommandant and the officers included.

Ganty and the others were obviously glad to see him alive. But the relief didn’t last for very long. As Indy told them what he had seen through the periscope, it grew very quiet in the small chamber. Ganty most of all looked more than shocked. He was clearly *horrified*.

Nevertheless, it wasn’t he, but Nancy Barlowe who broke the uncomfortable silence. “But they can’t do anything to us, right?” she asked fearfully. When no one answered, she continued, voice. “I mean... this is a U-boat. It... it is armed and... and made of steel, and they only have a few knives and spears!”

“It isn’t about that,” said Indy gently. Although he was terrified by the thought, he had already played through all of these scenarios himself. Brenner’s soldiers would have probably been able to destroy the entire fleet of Long Ears with their submachine guns and grenades. But that wouldn’t be just another fight for the Polynesians. It would mean nothing less than wiping out an entire people.

Anyway, he wasn’t even sure that would be the end. Maybe it was really as Brenner had said and the Long Ears were the least of their worries.

“Why?” asked Nancy.

“Jonas,” Indy murmured. “He has the crystal.”

“But then... then everything is fine,” answered Nancy. “He... he can help us. This crystal is a weapon, and...”

“Jonas isn’t really Jonas, Nancy,” Ganty interrupted her gently. “He’s a Nazi agent, don’t you understand?”

“I fear that he’s no longer even that,” Indy continued. “You didn’t understand what I said. Jonas *used* the crystal. He’s no longer himself.”

“What nonsense!” Nancy replied. She laughed; shrill and nervous and much too loud. “I recognized him when they carried him on board!”

“Remember when I held the crystal in my hands for a moment?” asked Indy gently. Nancy stared at him out of wide, fearful eyes, and Indy continued: “I didn’t use it because I felt its power, Nancy. I felt what it *really* is. It imprisons everyone who uses its power. Heinrich or Jonas or whoever he really is only looks like the man who he once was. But he’s no longer that person, believe me. What happened to Sandstein is also happening to him. Only faster. And worse.”

“Then someone should kill him,” said one of the two Australians. His brother nodded. For the first time in their lives, they were of the same opinion.

Indy remained silent. He was no longer sure whether it was even possible to kill Jonas- or whatever his name really was. But that wasn’t the real problem.

“It isn’t about him,” he said after a while. “It’s this stone. I don’t know what it is, but it is... *more* than a crystal.”

With the exception of Ganty, they all just stared at him, not understanding. Ganty seemed to be the only one who truly understood what Indy meant. He continued to look horrified.

“But now you’re exaggerating, Dr. Jones,” said Barlowe. He laughed, but it sounded nervous and barely convincing. “I mean, this thing is... dangerous, sure. A terrifying weapon, but not much more than that. Sandstein just didn’t use it correctly, and Jonas...”

“Whatever it is, it took eight months to change Sandstein,” Indy interrupted him. “For Jonas, a few hours were enough.”

“Maybe it grows stronger,” mumbled Ganty. “With every life it takes.”

Yes, Indy thought, shuddering. And maybe all of this was just the beginning. Maybe the crystal was just starting to awaken...

But there was still something. Some information that he already had but couldn't put in place. Something that he had seen or heard or experienced. And it was important, massively important. But he just didn't know *what*.

Their discussion continued to move in circles for a good hour without leading to any results. Then the door was opened again, and two of Brenner's men appeared to get Indy.

Like the first time that Indy had entered the command center, Kapitänleutnant Brenner stood at the periscope. He now looked even more worried than the first time as he turned and looked at Indy.

“New problems?” Indy asked directly.

Brenner pointed wordlessly at the periscope.

Above the sea, day was beginning to break. The darkness had become a gray twilight in which the contours of things seemed to blur as if in a fog. The fleet of Polynesians hadn't come any closer, but had grown larger. There had to be five hundred reed boats covering the sea in a wide circle.

“Five degrees farther west,” said Brenner.

Indy turned the periscope in the wrong direction, smiled apologetically, and hastily corrected his mistake. The horizon and the fleet of Polynesian boats moved past as blurred shadows. Then he saw what Brenner meant. A large shadow was approaching the position of the U-boat.

“Oh yes, that looks like a problem,” said Indy. He stepped back from the periscope and turned to Brenner. “One of yours?”

“I fear not,” answered Brenner. “But that is the question that I called you to answer.”

“You think that it could be one of ours?” Indy shrugged his shoulders. “I doubt that I can help you. And to be honest, I also doubt

that I *want* to,” he continued after a short pause. “That’s *your* problem, Herr Kapitänleutnant.”

“If they attack and sink us, then it will probably be yours too, Dr. Jones,” Brenner replied coolly. “Anyway, I had the feeling that you wanted to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.”

Indy remained silent for several moments. “Sorry,” he said, audibly embarrassed. “I don’t want...”

“It’s fine,” Brenner interrupted him with a hasty gesture. “Just forget it. You don’t know this ship?”

Indy threw another, much more attentive glance through the periscope. “It could be the Henderson,” he guessed.

“That would make sense, wouldn’t it?”

Indy flinched as he recognized the voice. It wasn’t that of Brenner or the ship’s doctor. With forced calm, he turned around. He left his hands around the grips of the periscope so that no one could see how much they were shaking. Jonas/Heinrich stood next to the Kommandant of the U-boat and looked at him with a smile lacking any trace of feeling. “You and the alleged Mr. Delano are quite long overdue. And due to the importance of your mission, it’s only logical that someone should worry about you and come looking. Right?”

“We’re hundreds of miles away from Pau-Pau,” said Indy.

Jonas smiled dismissively. His smile was starting to twist into a grimace. “Dr. Jones, please,” he said. He shook his head. “You Americans will *never* understand. You are a great nation that has produced very good men and good ideas, but you have one massive flaw- you tend to underestimate your enemies. We don’t.” He turned to the periscope. “If I were the commander of such a mission, then I would have spent days searching for you and Delano. After all, they knew that you left Pau-Pau in Ganty’s boat.”

“And then they just happened to find us here, right?” Indy tried to make his voice contain a slightly mocking tone, but the expression on Jonas’ face remained unchanged.

“Barely,” he answered in a cool tone. “But they would have to be blind if they didn’t notice the volcanic eruption. And that small armada out there also can’t be overlooked.”

Of course he was right. The same considerations had also gone through Indy’s head as he had looked through the periscope for the second time and studied the outline of the ship. He couldn’t recognize it, but that meant nothing. “If that really is the Henderson,” he said after a while, “then... you really are in trouble.”

Again it was Jonas who replied and not Kapitänleutnant Brenner. “I fear that you didn’t completely understand the good Kapitänleutnant, Dr. Jones,” he said with a mocking side glance at the officer. “If it comes to a fight between your people and ours, then we might die, maybe end up in prison or even win.” He shrugged his shoulders. “As for you and your friends, Dr. Jones, things are completely different. I will personally make sure that one of you pays for every shot that the Henderson fires at us.”

“You will certainly *not* do that,” said Brenner. “Dr. Jones and his friends are civilians.”

“They are our prisoners at the moment,” said Jonas.

“And I will treat them as such,” Brenner continued decisively. “No one will be killed on my ship!”

Jonas didn’t even take the trouble to answer. He just smiled, but there was something in this smile that made an icy shudder run down Indy’s back. On this U-boat, Jonas had taken command the moment he had stepped on board, and Brenner knew that very well. “What do you want from me?” The question wasn’t directed to anyone in particular, and at first, neither Jonas nor Brenner answered; then, after a quick, almost fearful side glance at Jonas, the Kapitänleutnant said:

“You’ve understood correctly, Dr. Jones- we do have problems. Our fuel supply is as good as gone. We can’t get away from this ship. And we can also no longer remain submerged.”

“But we could torpedo them,” Jonas added with a wicked smile.

Brenner ignored him. “We have to surface, Dr. Jones. If we do that and if it comes to a fight between us and that ship- can you imagine what will happen?”

Indy could. The Henderson was not a warship. They were not defenseless, but also not quite armed enough to sink this U-boat with a single volley. If it came to a fight between the ships here in the open sea, then there would also be countless dead among the Polynesians floating in their reed boats.

“We will surface now, Dr. Jones,” said Jonas, “and you will make contact with this ship and its captain and make sure that they leave us alone.”

“Why do you think I could do that?” asked Indy.

“You will have to do it,” answered Jonas. “Because if not, then your friends will be the first to die, I promise you that.”

“And if that doesn’t matter to me?”

Jonas just laughed. “Don’t try to play games with me, Dr. Jones,” he said. “I know too much about you. You aren’t the kind of man who would sacrifice human lives, even if he thinks it could help him.”

Indy no longer answered. It was senseless, because Jonas was right. He would have certainly risked his own life to stop the crystal and the evil ancient power within. But this wasn’t about *his* life.

Jonas turned to Brenner with a gesture. “Surface. Dr. Jones will do what we’ve asked him to. If not, have one of the prisoners executed. It would be best to start with the old man.”

Brenner measured him with an icy glance, but he no longer argued, instead watched silently and with an expressionless face as Jonas began to climb the small iron ladder to the turret.

It was rather cold as Indy climbed out of the turret behind Jonas. From the sea rose an icy breeze, and the gray twilight had lightened, although it wasn’t yet day. Still, Indy could make out that Jonas had been right with his guess: The ship that approached them *was* the

Henderson. The alleged research ship had also slowed and barely moved from the spot, but this was much less due to the sudden appearance of the U-boat than the fleet of reed boats that covered the sea as far as the eye could see. The Polynesians did their best to avoid the steel giants, but the small boats driven by paddles had trouble moving from the spot. Afterwards, it seemed to Indy like a miracle that they had managed to keep pace with the U-boat.

But maybe that wasn't chance. He had been secretly watching Jonas since they had climbed up out of the turret. Jonas had just sent the Henderson a quick glance before turning his attention completely to the Polynesian fleet. And whether he was possessed by an alien ghost or not- his expression, and, above all, the look in his eyes remained those of a human. What Indy saw in his eyes was no fear of the Polynesians. Not even awe that they had managed to come so far out to sea in such great numbers. It was something like... Indy found it hard to put it into words at first. Was it pride? No. The way in which Jonas looked at the Long Ears was like a commander looking at his army. An army he actually despised; that he would command and sacrifice as needed like a chess player, but also consciously taking their strength into consideration.

Indy's gaze loosened from Jonas' expression and slid back out to the sea. Most of the boats that lay in the path of the Henderson had meanwhile managed to get to a safe distance away. But not all. And not all of them were *trying* to. A number of the little ships- not many, but just enough that it was noticeable- moved parallel to the much larger ship, and an even smaller number moved directly towards it.

And finally, Indy realized why.

"You can't be doing that!" he called, shocked.

Jonas turned slowly to him and smiled.

"What?"

"You... you want them to *attack* the ship?" he said in disbelief. He turned to the Henderson with a gesture. "The soldiers over there will slaughter your warriors, Jonas! They don't have the slightest

chance!”

Jonas' smile grew wider. “It’s all up to you whether there will be a bloodbath or not, Dr. Jones,” he said in a tone that was so friendly that Indy would have really liked to knock out all of his teeth for it. He turned back to where two of Brenner’s soldiers were busy getting a rubber dinghy ready. “The boat is ready. You will go over and ask Captain Franklin to surrender, and no blood will be spilled. Either on your side or ours.”

“You’re completely mad!” Indy exclaimed. “Even if I do what you want, you can’t really believe that Franklin will listen.”

“He will have to,” answered Jonas in a still friendly tone. “And it really would be better to convince him to do it, Dr. Jones. Because if he doesn’t, then I will have no choice but to destroy him and his ship and all of his men. You know how easily I *can* do that.”

Indy’s gaze wandered nervously from Jonas to the two men on the front deck and back again. The rubber dinghy was nearly ready. He had only a few seconds to make a decision, the results of which he couldn’t even guess at.

The decision was made for him. A dull crash rang from the bow of the Henderson, and a second later, ten meters from the bow of the U-boat, a thirty-meter-high, white column of water shot up from the ocean’s surface. Jonas turned and looked at the slowly dissipating cloud of foam for a moment, stunned, then his face was distorted with fury. With a jerk, he stepped back from the turret and reached into his pocket. As his hand appeared again, the dark red crystal lay within it. “Those damn fools!” he said, pressed. “But fine- if they want a demonstration of power, they can have it!”

He held the crystal up. The dark red light within the stone began to pulse more quickly and gain strength, and Indy thought that he could feel an uncanny electrical cracking, a feeling as if lightning had struck nearby.

“No!” he yelled, horrified.

Jonas stared at him. In his eyes flickered a fire that was worse than that at the heart of the crystal.

“Don’t do it,” said Indy. “I... I’ll do what you want. I’ll go over there and talk to Franklin. I’ll definitely be able to convince him.”

Jonas remained silent. The insuppressible, inhuman hatred in his eyes was joined by distrust. The crystal pulsed, and Indy could see a vein start to pulse in his throat, quickly and hectically and in the same rhythm as the uncanny fire in the stone.

“You win,” he said. “I give up.”

Endless, painfully long seconds passed. The glowing light in the heart of the crystal pulsed on, and Indy thought that he could feel the unimaginable strength that collected in it and was trying to get out like something greedy, something alive. But then Jonas lowered his arms very slowly, haltingly, and nearly against his will.

“Good,” he said quietly. “Go.”

Indy left the turret, balanced across the swaying deck of the U-boat to the bow, and approached the two soldiers and the rubber dinghy. The two men were also pale and looked shocked and uncertain. They had seen the light in Jonas’ hands, and although they didn’t know what it meant, it seemed as if they could tell that there was a foreign, unspeakable evil that had overcome Jonas and now spread through the boat like a contagious disease. And it was the expression in their eyes that made Indy realize that he had been right with his supposition down in the luggage room.

It *was* just the beginning. The power of the crystal was just starting to awaken. It had slept for a thousand years. And what he had experienced with Sandstein, with the hellfire that had burned Delano’s ship and his men, the wicked glow in Jonas’ eyes, all of that was only the beginning. It grew stronger with every second, and maybe it would just continue to grow stronger. He had to stop this “something” from spreading across the world, which had no idea of its existence and no chance to defend against it. He had to stop it no matter what the cost.

He walked between the soldiers, waited until the U-boat tilted slightly on another wave, and acted as if he were losing his balance. The two men reacted as he had expected: They tried to help him. Indy grabbed an arm that reached towards him, stumbled back a couple of steps, and pulled the man along with him so that he lost his balance. He let out a surprised scream and fell, and Indy fell back onto the deck with him, tore the pistol from his belt, and hit him over the head with the grip. The soldier lost consciousness. His comrade, who had been pulled down with him, got up again with a shocked gasp and went to draw his own weapon. Indy kicked his legs out from under his body, gave him a second shove as he fell, which sent him stumbling back, arms waving, and fall overboard, and leapt to his feet.

Jonas stood upright in the turret and looked down at him. He hadn't moved, and he didn't move now, instead just stood there and stared at Indy as he grabbed the pistol with both hands, aimed it at him- and shot.

He hit. He could see as Jonas stumbled back as if he had been punched, and he spread his legs in an attempt to keep his balance. A dark, quickly growing stain spread across his uniform. But he seemed not to feel the injury. Slowly he stepped back into place, looked at Indy out of hateful eyes, and raised the crystal. The red pulsing within had become a racing flicker that was reflected in Jonas' eyes and made them glow with a demonic light.

"Fine, Dr. Jones!" he yelled. "This is exactly what you've asked for!"

Indy shot for a second time. The bullet hit Jonas in the shoulder, but this time he didn't even sway beneath the impact, instead turned with a mocking grin and raised the fire crystal higher.

The light and the final, terrible pain that Indy had expected didn't come. The fire crystal let out a blinding, blood colored ray of light, but it didn't move towards him- instead at the Henderson.

Indy watched as the bow of the ship vanished in a cloud of fire. The dull thundering of an explosion rang across the sea, then the scream of a siren, which stopped again after barely a second. Flames raged above the bow the Henderson- then went out.

Jonas let out a furious growl and stared at the ship. The lightning had grown more powerful than that which had killed the two Polynesians or Delano's men on the beach, but the Henderson wasn't a small boat, instead a large warship. Part of the railing and several square meters of the armor plating on the bow glowed dark red, but the lightning didn't have enough strength to destroy or even seriously damage it. And as surprising as this unexpected attack must have been for the crew, Franklin and his men reacted quickly. The large gun on the bow of the Henderson let out a roaring tongue of fire, and Indy realized almost too late what danger he was in. He quickly turned in horror and lay flat on the deck.

The grenade exploded at the front of the U-boat, tore the gun there to bits, and left a gigantic, glowing gap in the armor plating. A large tremor flung Indy across the deck as the shockwave hit him. He collided with the turret, searched desperately for a hold somewhere, and clung tightly. His fingernails broke. Blood ran down his hands and was washed away as a second grenade exploded near the hull of the U-boat and roiling surf flooded the deck. This time he no longer had the strength to hold on. He was flung into the water, went under, and fought desperately to surface.

A third shot howled over, missed the turret by a hand's length, and detonated several dozen meters away in the sea. The shockwave knocked Indy against the hull of the boat and nearly robbed him of his consciousness. He reached up instinctively, grabbed something, and clung to it with desperate strength. The U-boat shook like a wounded animal. He saw flames and figures running here and there above him, felt as the diesel motors in the hull of the ship started up, although the men up there must have known how senseless any

attempt at escape would be. Then a red flickering light swallowed the sky, and Indy turned his head with a groan and closed his eyes.

Seconds passed in which he clung, helpless and nearly blind, to the hull of the U-boat and waited for the end. But the canons of the Henderson were silent.

Surprised and gripped by a terrible premonition, Indy raised his head and looked over at the warship. The Henderson had taken another hit; a door-sized piece of armor plating was burned black, and the middle of it glowed a dark red. Still, it was no more than a pinprick, one that might hurt this giant, but would really just make it even more furious. Why weren't they shooting back?

As Indy looked at the turret, he knew the answer. Jonas was no longer alone. Brenner and two of his officers had appeared next to him in the turret and tried to overpower him.

They were unable to. Jonas had tumbled back against the turret. He bled from the two wounds that Indy had given him, but he seemed to not even feel those injuries. He held the crystal above his head with raised arms. Red fire flew like glowing fog out of the pulsating stone, grabbed one of the men, and made him tumble back, burning and screaming, and fall to the ground. Brenner and his second officer let go of him, and Indy watched as the Kapitänleutnant's hand flashed twice as he shot at Jonas from close range. He hit. But the bullets seemed not to affect him. Something defended Jonas and protected his body, which had become a tool, from harm, because he was still needed.

On the deck of the Henderson, a machine gun began to hammer. Indy instinctively pulled his head down as the shots drew a sparking trail across the hull of the boat and approached the turret. Up on the Henderson, they had obviously seen what was happening; and drawn the correct conclusions. But it was too late. The trail of sparks reached the turret, raced on, sparking- and stopped! A sound like the pounding of water droplets on a glowing stovetop rang out as the

machine gun bullets were stopped by an invisible power and burned to ash.

Jonas laughed; it was a shrill, barely human noise that rang oddly in Indy's ears. Upright and covered with blood, he stood on the turret, a figure like a demon from a nightmare which had become real, and from the stone in his hands pulsed an unbearably bright, glowing red light.

The grenade launcher aboard the Henderson fired. The shot exploded twenty meters from the turret of the U-boat and made fire and glowing chunks of metal rain down onto the sea and the fleet of Polynesians. Jonas laughed again. The stone in his hands pulsed brighter and faster, but the destructive lightning still didn't come. Indy could feel as the strength within this fiery crystal grew and grew as it gathered unimaginable amounts of energy. A loud, vibrating sound suddenly rang through the air, and a bright blue electric spark raced over the steel of the boat's hull.

Indy finally managed to pull himself back up onto the deck. The deck swayed. All around, the sea seemed to have caught fire as the grenade launcher aboard the Henderson fired shot after shot and the grenades exploded against the invisible barrier that now protected the U-boat. Many Polynesian boats were now on fire. Dead and injured warriors floated on the water, and a couple of the small ships that had come too close to the U-boat and the crystal in Jonas' hands began to smolder.

Indy stumbled on, reached the turret, and began to climb up the small ladder hand over hand. Jonas must have noticed him, but he ignored him just as much as he seemed to overlook Brenner and his soldiers.

Despite all of that, Indy flinched as he reached the turret and saw Jonas up close.

It was unbelievable that he was still alive. His uniform jacket was black with blood, and his hands burned. The fingers that held the crystal were burned black, the flesh was hanging off in shreds, and

the light within the crystal was so intense that Indy could see his bones as if in an x-ray. Jonas continued to let out this mad, inhuman laugh, a sound that was no laugh, but instead the triumphant cry of a creature that had finally escaped its cell after a thousand years of imprisonment. Indy no longer thought of the danger he was facing. He knew that his plan would probably cost him his life, but that was okay. With all of the strength that remained to him, he leapt forward and threw himself towards Jonas with outstretched arms.

He didn't reach him. An invisible fist hit him in mid-leap and flung him back against the turret with such force that he felt his ribs break as he slid, half-conscious, to the ground.

Jonas turned to him and stared. His eyes burned, and his face was pulled into a mocking grimace. It was the pale, desiccated face of a dead man who still moved despite all laws of nature, possessed by something that wasn't alive, something undeniably strong and hostile. Something that wasn't of this world and that would destroy it when it was *finally* free.

"You asked for this, Jones!" gasped Jonas. His voice was also no longer recognizable. It was no longer the voice of a person, it was a sound like Indy had never heard before in his life and would never hear again. "Now you will feel the true power of the gods!"

"Oh?" Indy tried to laugh, but it was lost beneath a painful cough. He could barely breathe. A glowing dagger seemed to bore into his chest. Nevertheless, he continued: "Not even *you* can damage this ship. This isn't a toy boat like Delano's."

Jonas' face pulled into a hateful grimace, and Indy added: "You might be able to impress those savages out there with your hocus pocus, but not a warship of the American *Navy*."

Jonas kicked him, hitting his broken ribs and making him cry out in pain. He whirled around, furious, turned to the Henderson, and held the fire crystal in its direction, arms outstretched. The light within it became so intense that Indy groaned in pain, even though he had closed his eyes and turned his face away. The pulsing had

become an uninterrupted, bright red glow, and the uncanny sing-song could be heard again. Blue sparks and cracking electric fire covered the steel hull of the U-boat in a web of light, and the water around them seemed to boil.

Jonas cried out and pulled his arms up. Indy could feel as the unimaginable energy within the crystal prepared to finally break out.

Jonas' hands flamed up like dry wood and fell to ash. Screaming, he tumbled back studied the blackened, burned stumps of his arms. The crystal had transformed into a pulsing ball of light, floated over the turret, bounced off the hull of the ship like a metal ball, and sank into the sea.



Chapter 11

Te-Pito-o-Te-Henua The Navel of the World

Easter Island - Three Days Later

Although the sun stood at its zenith and even the wind that blew over the coast from the direction of the sea was warm, Indy was shuddering as he climbed out of the boat alongside Franklin and slowly approached the figure who crouched on the beach next to a freshly-dug trench. The sight reminded him too much of the island of the Long Ears, although they actually had very little in common. Beyond the small, nearly white sand beach stretched a flat grassland on which only a few bushes and a handful of trees had taken hold. Only a few miles away, but shimmering in the heat of the midday sun, rose a mountain with a green, forested crown. Instead of an uncanny lava sea beneath the surface of the ocean, there were two extinct volcanoes here, the craters of which had filled with water hundreds of years ago, and instead of an army of long eared, silent giants, there were only a handful of nearly extinct natives who would soon share the fate of many native cultures that threatened the influence of the so-called civilized world: In a few decades, they would cease to exist.

No- *outerly*, Easter Island certainly had nothing in common with the Bird People's sunken world. What made him shudder, what filled him with the feeling that he was taking a step into a cold, forbidding world that only had the appearance of being alive was the *knowledge* of what had happened here. What had *been* here. For a moment he believed that he could feel the presence of the fiery crystal as if some part of it was still there, as if its mere *presence*, even a thousand years ago, had been enough to burn something out of this part of the world and turn this island into a part of creation where it would be better if people didn't live.

Indy banished those thoughts. The bareness of the landscape before him was the work of humans; the natural catastrophes that made survival on this island possible for only a very limited number of people the result of the unchecked use of resources by the previous inhabitants of this island.

The real reason for Indy's discomfort was something completely different. Before this, he had spent his entire life figuring out the secrets of vanished cultures, solving the puzzles of forgotten civilizations, shoveling away the not so fine dust of the millennia that had spread across the past. But on some nameless island at the end of the world, he had come across something for the first time that would have been better had it stayed hidden for all time. Perhaps it wasn't always good to poke around at the secrets of the past, and perhaps the powers of fate sometimes had good reasons for letting something remain forgotten. His nightmare hadn't come true, at least not *this time*. But it probably hadn't been too far off.

"Is that Professor Grisswald over there?" Franklin's voice interrupted his thoughts.

Indy nodded without sending the hunched over figure fifty steps away more than a quick glance. Grisswald didn't seem to have noticed them so far, although the half dozen natives who stood around the trench had stopped working and now studied them curiously.

“I know that this is probably unnecessary,” began Franklin in a nearly embarrassed tone, “but still. You know everything...”

“...that I saw and experienced is top secret,” Indy interrupted him. The embarrassment on Franklin’s face deepened, and Indy smiled. “Don’t worry, I won’t say a single word about this to *anyone*. I don’t think they would believe it anyway.”

Franklin said nothing, but Indy felt that these words filled him with great relief. He wondered whether Franklin *really* understood what danger they had faced. Probably not. And that was probably also for the best. He would soon begin to forget what had happened, and, in a couple years at the latest, Indy knew, he would swear on everything he held sacred that he and his men had fetched a slightly mad professor from New York for nothing but to track down a Nazi plot and destroy a secret superweapon. The human mind was incredibly good at changing things that it didn’t understand or didn’t want to understand.

“But you have to promise me something, Franklin,” he said.

Franklin looked at him questioningly. He remained silent.

“Take care of Ganty and the natives.”

Franklin still didn’t answer, but he nodded after several seconds, and Indy knew that no further words were necessary. None of them really knew how Ganty had managed to regain the Long Ears’ trust. But he had managed it, and, that evening, he had gone to sea himself in one of the Henderson’s lifeboats to follow the fleet of reed boats and lead them to a new homeland. Not *here*. Without the magical strength of the crystal that now lay unreachably deep at the bottom of the ocean, the fragile reed boats had no chance of making the distance of several hundred nautical miles. But there were a number of smaller uninhabited islands that weren’t marked on any nautical maps and lay in range of the little fleet. Indy was convinced that Ganty would manage to get these homeless people to a new island. His plea to take care of them didn’t mean that Franklin should

actually look for this island; just the opposite. He would make sure that no one else did.

“I promise,” said Franklin after several seconds. “But then *you* have to answer a question that I’ve been wondering about for three days, Dr. Jones.”

“Yes?”

“Promise that you will answer *honestly*.”

“If I can.”

“How did you know that he couldn’t actually destroy the Henderson?”

Now it was Indy who remained silent for several seconds and stared past Franklin. This question didn’t surprise him. He had also often thought about this during the last few days without really finding a good answer. “I don’t really know,” he said finally.

“So you mean that you consciously risked my ship and its crew.” What he heard in Franklin’s voice and saw in his eyes, that was no fury, not even reproach.

Indy smiled. “In fact it was Nancy Barlowe who made me realize it,” he said. “She told me that someone brought Jonas on board of the U-boat.”

“And?”

“She actually said that someone *carried* him on board,” Indy continued. “Sandstein was dead tired every time she used the crystal. You know, Franklin, whatever it really was, I don’t think that it was *alive* in the sense that we use the word. It was something that could be used to gain massive power, but it also consumed him.”

Franklin remained silent for a while, and it was a very shocked silence. “And if you had been wrong?”

“Then neither of us would be here,” answered Indy very quietly and very seriously. “And maybe *here* wouldn’t even exist.”

Franklin laughed nervously. “Now you’re exaggerating.”

Indy no longer answered. With an all-knowing smile he turned and left.

The figure that crouched over the pit on the beach was in fact Grisswald. When Indy got two steps away from him, he finally looked up from his find, turned his head, and a half surprised, simultaneously happy and angry expression appeared on his face. “Dr. Jones!” he called. “I had almost given up hope of ever seeing you again! Where on earth have you been?”

He sprang excitedly to his feet and didn’t even give Indy a chance to answer, instead continued on as he pointed excitedly at the hole behind him, and his voice shook with pride and the excitement of discovery: “You know, Jones, while you were probably on one of your useless adventures again, I made an important scientific discovery.”

“Oh?” asked Indy.

Grisswald nodded heavily. “Yes. I’m not quite certain yet, but I believe that we’ve found a grave. A very odd grave.”

Indy walked past him and leaned forward curiously. The hole was knee deep, half a meter wide, and barely three meters long, and all he could see was damp earth and a couple white splinters of bone. Questioningly, he looked at Grisswald. “Of course we have to examine this find more closely and analyze it in a lab,” Grisswald continued, “but if it really is a human skeleton, then the original inhabitants of this island must have been very different than those people there.” He pointed at the natives behind him. “I know that it’s a daring theory, but I nearly believe that they didn’t come from here, but a completely different part of the world.” His voice became even more excited, just like the glimmer in his eyes. “Just think about it Jones- we might be able to solve the secret of Easter Island.”

“Definitely not,” Indy murmured. “At least not as long as I can stop it.” But he said that very quietly. So quietly that Grisswald couldn’t hear.

INDIANA JONES™ **and the** **Secret of Easter Island**

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Washington is a peaceful place. But that peace vanishes for good when Indiana Jones is approached by a certain Mr. Franklin and a certain Mr. Delano, who have a small favor to ask. It concerns an expedition to Easter Island, but Indy suspects from the outset that it will not be a simple research trip. Franklin and Delano are sly old dogs, and they smile too much. An American agent, on the tail of a German conspiracy in the South Pacific, has disappeared, and Indiana must find him.

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