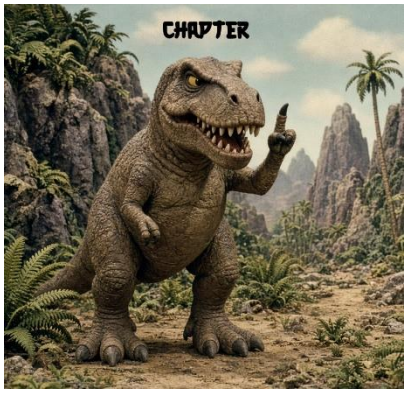
# The Land of the Lost
# -- Homecoming --

**IMPORTANT FAN FICTION DISCLAIMER:**
Land of the Lost belongs to the Krofft brothers (and whoever currently holds the rights). I'm just borrowing the Marshalls, Cha-Ka, the Sleestaks, and a few dinosaurs for a little while.
*No money is being made*, no claims of ownership are made, and if anyone official wants me to take this down, I gladly will after I receive an autographed/signed "Cease and Desist!" letter… because as they say 'any publicity is good publicity'.

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all my fellow LotL fans out there who, through their dedication, research, and detailed websites, helped me write this story.

2026

Robert P Wills




Holly walked carefully along the riverbank- if she made too much noise, LuLu would hear her and then she'd have to walk the long way around. It was slow, difficult going because her basket was very full. Too full, actually. But she was trying to carry enough to skip the chore tomorrow. She wanted to explore the far side of the ruined city tomorrow morning. Grumpy wasn't usually awake early, and the bright morning sun kept the Sleestak inside- the perfect time to explore.

"Oh, fat rats!" Holly said, as she sat the basket down again. "I need to put wheels on this thing." After flexing her arms several times, she picked up the basket and started waddling along with it again. Suddenly she spotted a familiar furry back ahead of her. "Oh great! Cha-Ka!" She called. "Cha-Ka help me with this basket." She looked back, worried her shout had drawn the attention of LuLu. All seemed quiet in the swamp. Relieved, she looked forward again; Cha-Ka was gone. "Oh, you lazy Pakuni!" She said with a headshake, tossing her ponytails back and forth. "You'll get it when I catch up with you."

She rubbed her hands together then picked up the basket again. "To the clearing." She ordered herself. "Carry it all the way to the clearing before I rest again."

And, because she was determined, she did.




Holly finally made it to the entrance to their home- a chamber in the Lost City. It was better than their original home -the cave- because it had a door they could close and seemed too low to the ground for Grumpy to notice. However, being in the Lost City, Sleestak and Enik would often come by to either cause trouble (the Sleestak) or just be annoying (Enik). Even so, she was happy they had it. "Uncle Jack!" She called. "Wil?"

"Holly. That took longer than usual." Wil said with a smile as he came out. "Stop to take a nap?"

"No." Holly said as she wiped her brown. "It was heavy." She gestured at the basket. "Real heavy."

"You're going to break that basket filling it up like that, you goof." Wil examined the basket. "Wait, I know; you're trying to get out of your gathering chore tomorrow, aren't you."

Holly put her hands on her hips, triumphantly. "I'm not trying; *I did*. That's plenty for today and tomorrow."

"It sure is." Will bent down to look at all the fruits and vegetables in the basket. He smiled again as he stood. "You should put wheels on that thing to help you pull it along."

Holly let out an exasperated sigh. "What I need is Cha-Ka to not run from me when I ask him for help." Now she gestured at the basket. "He eats this stuff too."

Wil laughed. "He sure does. More than his share, usually." He frowned. "So he ran away from you when you asked him for help?"

"Well… not exactly." Holly admitted. "I spotted him up ahead of me at the swamp and when I called for him to help, I was worried LuLu heard me so I looked back. When I looked forward again, he was gone."

"Maybe he didn't hear you?" Will picked up the basket with a grunt. "Ug. I'll get this inside before Dopey comes along and eats it all. *Again*." He sidestepped through the door.

"Oh no, he had to of heard me; I yelled pretty loud." Holly followed Wil into their home.

"Yeah, I know you are pretty loud." Wil said with a laugh. "Grumpy loud sometimes."

Holly shook her head. "Oh, I'll show you loud when I get hold of Cha-Ka."

"So why are you trying to skip your chores tomorrow?" Wil put the basket on the large stone table in the middle of the room.

"I'm not skipping my chores; I'm just doing them early." Holly corrected. "I…" Then she hesitated; she didn't think Wil would want her exploring on her own. "It's nothing important." She finished noncommittally.

Will picked up a large onion. "Exploring again?" He peered over the onion at her. "Where are you exploring now?"

"Not far." Holly said as she took several carrots from the basket.

"Holly. You know Uncle Jack doesn't like us going too far from home on our own." He put down the onion and grabbed another. "It's dangerous."

"It's not far. I already said that. And I'm no 'fraidy cat."

"I didn't say you were." Will replied. "Actually, being a little afraid now and then would be good for you, now that I think about it." Wil put his hands on his hips and raised his chin. "Holly the brave, a mighty explorer." He looked down at her, but kept his hands on his hips. "What are you looking for this time?"

Holly flopped into one of the chairs at the table. "Oh I don't know. Maybe someone who can help us get out of here? Maybe a different Pylon; like the one that Dad fell through? I won't know until I find it."

"Well, going into strange Pylons is dangerous. And so far everyone we've come across has only been interested in themselves. So where are you exploring?"

"You never know." Holly shrugged again, ignoring the question.

"Holly." Wil coaxed. "Where?"

"The far side of the city." She answered, then added quickly before her brother could interrupt: "I'd go first thing in the morning before Grumpy is awake and the morning sun will keep the Sleestak inside. It will be perfectly safe."

"Nothing in the Land of the Lost is perfectly safe." Wil let out a sigh. "But I guess you're going to do it anyway so I'll make a deal with you."

Holly crossed her arms. "I'm not doing your chores Wil Marshall."

"Oh, that would have been a good idea." Wil laughed. "No; I was going to say that you tell me or Uncle Jack exactly when you're leaving and where you are going. And you need to be back before noon. Otherwise, Holly the explorer will have one of us as companions."

Holly nodded. "I suppose so."

"Saying where you are going is just good sense, Holly." Wil pressed on. "Maybe you might find something useful. Or maybe you'll find trouble like that Medusa lady again. Knowing where you're going is important. Deal?"

"Deal." Holly nodded. "So I was going to walk around the city along the north, away from the big courtyard where GRUMPY stomps around."

"How close to the city will you be?" Wil asked. "Or how far away?"

"I don't know." Holly admitted. "I won't know until I get there."

"Well, don't go farther out than you can be and still see the city." He held up a finger. "That way if we have to come looking for you, we have an idea of where to look. If you see something interesting beyond that, mark the path and we can search it together after lunch."

"That does make sense." Holly admitted. She smiled. "Deal." Her smile turned to a frown. "Except..."

"Except what?" Wil asked.

"Now this day is going to drag before I can go exploring tomorrow morning."

"You can spend the day looking for Cha-Ka." Wil said.

Holly scrunched up her face. "Oooh. I can do that! Then I'll make that little stinker come along with me tomorrow."




Holly sat on a rock at the entrance of their home later that afternoon. She had not been able to find Cha-Ka and was now getting worried.

"Holly." Uncle Jack said as he stepped into the area. "You look down."

She looked up and smiled. "Oh, I was just worried about Cha-Ka. I saw him this morning and now I can't find him."

"What? Where?" Jack moved to sit opposite her on another large stone. Cha-Ka followed into the area behind him. "He's been with me all morning." He pointed. "Right Cha-Ka?"

"Yes! Uncle Jack make Cha-Ka walk to end of the lands. End of the lands!" Cha-Ka collapsed on the ground. "Cha-Ka tired!"

"It wasn't that far." Jack said. "We just went to where Kona came out from the high country into the valley. That's not that far at all."

"To there?" Holly tilted her head. "But I saw Cha-Ka down by the river when I went to gather vegetables." She pointed at the splayed-out Cha-Ka. "I even called your name and you just ran off."

"Cha-Ka too far away to hear. Cha-Ka at end of the lands." Cha-Ka said without moving from the ground.

Holly looked at her uncle for confirmation.

Jack nodded. "It's true. He was with me and we weren't anywhere near the river."

"End of the lands." Cha-Ka said breathlessly.

"That's weird. I could have sworn I saw him." Holly thought back. "It really looked like him."

"Maybe it was another Pakuni." Jack suggested. "I mean, he can't be the only one."

"No, that's true; there were two other Pakuni we knew. But they left." Holly explained.

"Well, maybe another Pakuni tribe has been brought here." Jack suggested. "We have seen others come and go."

"I suppose so." Holly agreed. "I will just keep an eye out from now on." She smiled. "So how did it go at that entrance to the highlands? Did it lead anywhere?"

"Not anywhere that looks promising." Jack replied. "But I'll keep looking. Something will turn up, I'm sure."

Holly nodded. "Maybe I'll find something tomorrow."

"Oh?"

"I was thinking of walking around the Lost City to the north to see if there is anything around that way." She shrugged. "It's worth a look."

"That could be dangerous with Sleestak and Grumpy running around."

"No, I'll go in the morning when they aren't up." She pressed on before he could stop her plan. "I will let Wil know when I leave and I'll stay in sight of the city and I will be back by noon. If I see anything farther away, I'll mark the path then after lunch we can all check it out together."

"It sounds like you have it all planned out." Jack said. He looked at Cha-Ka. "Still, I'd feel better if you didn't go alone. Maybe Cha-Ka can go with you."

"Cha-Ka walk more?" He let out a long breath. "So much walking!"

"It's tomorrow Cha-Ka." Holly said. "You can rest all day long." She considered that. "As long as you have brought in the firewood."

"Cha-Ka too tired to get firewood." Cha-Ka whined. "Too tired!"

"Fair is fair, Cha-Ka." Holly said. "I got the fruit and vegetables." She nodded at Jack. "And we all have to do our part."

"That's right." Jack agreed. "If we all live together, we all work together."

Cha-Ka sat up. "Then Cha-Ka get wood now so he can rest rest of day."

"That's a good plan, Cha-Ka." Jack said with a smile. "And while you're doing that, I'll start lunch."

"Cha-Ka come back hungry." He got to his feet. "Very hungry."

"I'll be ready for you." Jack stood. "Don't worry. If you are really hungry I can make rock soup."

"No! No rock soup. Cha-Ka want regular food." With that he stomped off.

"So do you have a plan for your expedition?" Jack asked.

"I'll stay on the cleared path around the city and walk around it until I get to the other side. I'm hoping I will find someone who can help us, or maybe even a new Pylon."

"Be careful in strange Pylons, Holly," Jack warned. "If you do find one, you should remember where it is so we can all go check it out together."

"I will." Holly said, even though that was not part of her plan. "I just miss Dad, you know?"

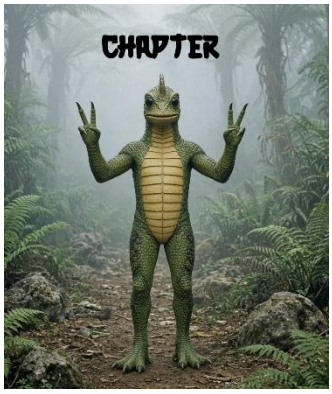
"I miss my brother as well." Jack said. "I'd like nothing more than bringing you home to him."

Holly nodded. “I’ll help with lunch.”

“Sounds good.” Jack held his hand out and Holly took it and let herself be pulled to her feet.

The pair walked into their home to prepare lunch.

As Holly had feared, the rest of the day dragged with her expedition forefront on her mind.




Holly rolled out of bed- the sun had only just risen. She looked over, Jack and Cha-Ka were still asleep. Wil's bed was empty. She looked around the large room and spotted him in the far corner. She picked up her boots as she walked over to him. "Wil, why are you awake?" She whispered.

"I wanted to make sure I caught you before you left." He whispered back.

"You aren't going to talk me out of it; even Uncle Jack said I could go."

He shook his head. "No, I wanted you to have this just in case." He held up a long pole. Tied to the end was his knife. "Just in case."

"Oh." Holly whispered. "Thanks. I will take good care of it."

Wil held up a small woven net bag. "And here is some breakfast because I know Cha-Ka will be starving in an hour."

"He's starving even when he's asleep." Holly giggled. "Thanks."

He held the bag out. "I'll build a small wagon while you're away." He said, knowing that Holly wasn't going to invite him to be part of her adventure. The fact that she was taking Cha-Ka with her was already a victory. "Good luck. I'll see you at noon."

"Noon." She took the spear then turned and snuck over to Cha-Ka.

Unlike Holly, Will, and Uncle Jack, Cha-Ka slept on a mat on the floor. When Rick had offered to build him a bed, he flatly refused: 'Cha-Ka feel like he sleeping on cliff!' he had said. 'Cha-Ka sleep on ground like other Pakuni.' So, a woven pad was what he slept on.

Holly shook him gently. "Cha-Ka, Pa shua. Let's go."

"Cha-Ka awake." Cha-Ka whispered back. "Is it breakfast time?"

Holly let out a long breath. "I have our breakfast with me. We will eat while we walk."

"Is it long way? Like Uncle Jack make Cha-Ka walk?"

Holly considered that. It was actually going to be about the same distance, or perhaps a little longer to walk around the outer edge of the ruined city around the north route- maybe ten miles. And that was not taking into account anything she found along the way that detoured her. Even so, Cha-Ka was not a good judge of distance so she just shook her head. "No, not really. We will be back before lunch time." Holly figured it was a white lie that would at least keep Cha-Ka from complaining the entire time. If she had her druthers, she would have gone alone, but if the only way she could go on her search was to bring Cha-Ka, she would begrudgingly accept those terms.

"Then Cha-Ka eat again?"

"Unless we pass some strawberries on the way." Holly offered quietly. "You can eat all your find."

Cha-Ka scrambled to his feet. "Let us go then." He whispered.

The pair walked out of the room and into the open area – practically a front patio. "Okay, we are going that way." She pointed to the right.

"But we always go that way." Cha-Ka pointed. "Cha-Ka go that way always."

"Yes, but this time we are exploring that way." She pointed again. "Maybe we will find a way to get home."

"Cha-Ka go home with Wil and Holly?"

Holly -as she had done dozens of times before- considered that. While abandoning Cha-Ka would be a terrible thing to do, bringing him to the modern world would probably be a fate worse than death. Like Colonel Roscoe had wanted to do, Cha-Ka would end up as a sideshow attraction to be gawked at. Living in a cage as the "primitive ape boy" would be a terrible thing. Leaving him also was something that she, Wil and Dad -then Uncle Jack- all discussed. When all was said and done, Cha-Ka would be able to survive just fine foraging for his own food. And since Enik knew about him, he would have someone he could go to for advice or problems. As long as Enik would put up with Cha-Ka, which according to Jack was probably not very often. Even so, living in the Land of the Lost was the better option for the young Cha-Ka. "We will have to see." Holly said finally. "It will be a discussion between all of us. Our world is very different from this one and we aren't sure you would be treated right there."

"Holly and Wil would treat Cha-Ka bad?" He gaped at her. "Really?"

"No, not us of course, but other people." She sighed. "Remember Colonel Roscoe with his balloon. He wanted to put you in a show where people would just stare at you. In a carnival."

"What carnival?"

"It is a place with rides and shows with strange things." Holly explained.

"Cha-Ka love strange things. Cha-Ka get to see these strange things?"

"Cha-Ka, *you* would be one of the strange things. You would be in a cage."

"What cage?"

Holly was sorry the discussion had gone down this path. "It is a box with bars to keep you in, so you can't get out and people can stare at you all day long."

"Cha-Ka no understand."

"It's like a big basket that you would live in."

"Cha-Ka not want to live in basket." He shook his head. "Not at all! Do not make Cha-Ka live in basket!" He said getting agitated. "No!"

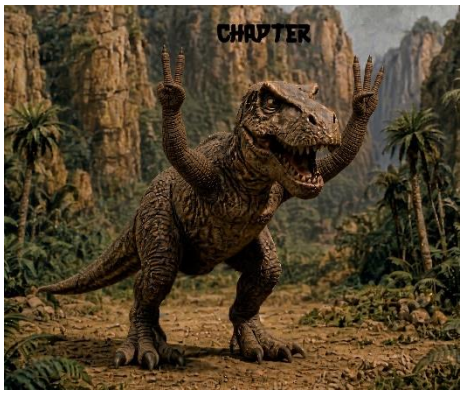
"Don't worry, Cha-Ka, I won't let that happen. You are a friend and I will watch out for you." She assured the young Pakuni, even though she wasn't completely sure she could keep some nefarious circus owner from getting Cha-Ka, or even the government authorities. It was something she and Will had discussed many times: bring Cha-Ka and keep him hidden, or leave him behind to fend for himself. Either way, it was a prospect of a lonely life. "Don't worry." She said again.

"*No worry*? Now Cha-Ka worrying thinking of living in basket. Even basket full of strawberries would be bad."

Holly let out a long breath. "Well, let's just explore while we eat." She handed him a piece of bread she had baked. "Ayo?"

"Okay." Cha-Ka said nervously. Eating the bread seemed to calm his nerves.

Within only a few minutes, the pair were on a path around the city they had never been on. While the jungle and sounds seemed similar to the ones on the paths they had already walked, they still seem strange.




Wil walked into the front 'patio' of their home. Jack was sharpening a stick. There was a pile of them on the ground in front of him; at least seven of them.

"Are we expecting an attack?" Wil asked as he gestured at the pile.

"Well, the Sleestak seem to come here whenever they have some sort of grievance that Enik has concocted." Jack explained. "And at some point, Grumpy or some other dinosaur is going to find their way here. It's better to be prepared." He added the newly sharpened stick to the pile. "What have you been up to this morning since Holly snuck out with Cha-Ka in what was probably the least quiet sneaking out in the history of the Land of the Lost?"

"My latest invention." Wil pivoted to bring a small wagon into view. "Tada!"

The wagon had a basket tied in between the axel. There was a small peg leg at the front that would allow the wagon to sit level when it was being loaded. With sides almost three feet tall, it looked like it could hold almost a hundred pounds of supplies. The only thing it did not have were wheels.

"Where are the wheels?" Jack asked.

"Down at the river. I am bending bamboo there by soaking them and pulling them into circles. They should be completely done by tomorrow then I'll fire them to make them stay like that. They're a couple of feet tall." Wil bent down and held his hand at about knee level.

"That is indeed a fine-looking wagon, Wil." Jack said. "William Marshall, master wagon builder."

Wil sat on a stone. "I was thinking about that; coopers make barrels, carpenters make furniture; what's a wagon maker called?"

"I have no idea." Jack said honestly. "But if you build more of those, you could become the best used wagon salesman in the Land of the Lost."

"I'm not sure who I would sell them to," Wil examined his wagon.

"The Sleestak." Jack deadpanned.

Will laughed. "They'd pay me in crystals."

"They are handy to have."

"That's true." Will pushed the wagon toward his uncle. "So you heard Holly leaving?"

"Cha-Ka isn't the quietest of houseguests." Jack pointed out.

"That's also true." Wil let out a long breath. "Do you think she's going to find a way home? It seems like the Land of the Lost does everything it can to keep us here."

"I don't think the Land of the Lost is a living entity determined to keep us here," Jack answered. "Sometimes nature can seem like it's actively working against you but it's just doing what nature does." Jack shrugged. "Bridges are just bridges, and skyscrapers are just skyscrapers no matter how big they are."

"Do you think she'll find a way?"

"Holly is a very determined young lady, Wil. I'm sure you've noticed." Jack leaned back. "Keep in mind that the last time I saw her, she was twelve years old, just a kid really. Worried about silly things at school; what boy liked her, who was the popular singer of the week. That sort of stuff. Now, she's lived in the Land of the Lost for three years." He held up three fingers. "*Three* years. So she's not only fifteen now, she's dealt with aliens, ancient cities, Sleestak, and more than anyone's share of dinosaurs. She's grown a lot in these three years." He leaned forward. "In case I need to remind you, she is currently off on an adventure all by herself in a landscape filled with dangers right and left and we just let her go. She's grown up a lot" He pointed at Wil. "You have too, Sir. Quite a lot."

"There's a lot to deal with here." Wil admitted. "Things I'd never even dreamt of back home."

"I'm an adult, and an engineer and it's been a lot for me to take in as well. She's just a young girl." He raised a finger. "An impressive young girl, that is."

"She's pretty determined to get home. She's sure she's going to find something to make that happen."

"She may very well." Jack gestured at the wagon. "In the meanwhile, she is going to be very pleased with your wagon. The strawberries around here are pretty tough to carry."

Wil laughed. "You can say that again; the ones in a grocery store will seem puny compared to these things."




"Cha-Ka not think that good idea. Not at all!"

"You worry too much." Holly said even though she wasn't sure it was a good idea either.

The pair had walked the better part of two hours along the perimeter of the Lost City with nothing to see besides plenty of jungle, lots of strawberries and apples that they stopped and ate, and another T-Rex Holly decided to call 'Angry'; 'Grumpy's older, more annoyed brother, and a Ankylosaurus who she dubbed 'Thumper' because of how he would whack his tail on the ground when they got too close. Now they stood in front of a Pylon. A Pylon like they had never seen before; it was crystal clear.

"Holly not going in there."

"If I go inside, you'll be able to see me." Holly said. "It will be fine."

"Do not go in there, Holly Marshall." Enik said as he stepped out of the underbrush. "Do not."

Holly startled. "Oh! Enik, you scared me. What are you doing here?"

"I have been following you, Holly Marshall."

"How did you know I was here?"

"I was told by the Skull of Wisdom that there was an interloper along the northern path."

"What's an interloper?" Holly asked.

"It is an intruder. A trespasser. An invader."

"I can't be an invader; I live here." Holly replied. "And this path is free for everyone to use so I'm not a trespasser either."

"This path is forbidden." He pointed at the Pylon. "That is forbidden."

"Why?" Holly asked, innocently.

"Because it is." Enik replied.

"That's not a reason." Now Holly pointed at the Pylon. "What if that is the way home for me and my family?" A thought occurred to her. "What if it will get you back to your time, before the Sleestak became like they are so you could warn them? What about that?"

"That is not the case, Holly Marshall. You are a little girl who does not understand such things. Even your Uncle Jack who is older does not understand."

"I think I can still look." Holly protested. "You aren't in charge here."

"I am in charge everywhere." Enik replied sternly.

"No. I think I will…" Holly's voice trailed off as she spotted a very familiar furry back in the bushes well behind Enik. She turned to look at Cha-Ka. "Cha-Ka! You are here."

"I am where I am." Cha-Ka said. "Where else could I be?"

"This is why I am in charge." Enik said. "He has the mind of a child. And you are also a child. I am in charge and you cannot enter."

Holly looked from the clear Pylon to the bushes where she had seen the furry creature. "Oh, why don't you go away, Enik; I am getting confused."

"Of course; that is because you are a little girl." Enik informed her.

"Cha-Ka. Go over to those bushes and see what's there while I look at this Pylon."

"I forbid it!"

"Which one?" Holly asked, genuinely curious.

"BOTH!"

Holly let out a huff. "Cha-Ka go to those bushes." She pointed. "See what is there then come back here and wait for me. I thought I saw a Pakuni over there."

"Where Holly go?" Cha-Ka asked as he looked from the Pylon to the bushes and back. "Where?"

"I will go in there."

"I FORBID IT!"

Holly ignored Enik. "Go Cha-Ka. Go see what's there in the jungle.!" With that she walked to the front of the Pylon and touched the diamond stone at the top of the doorway.

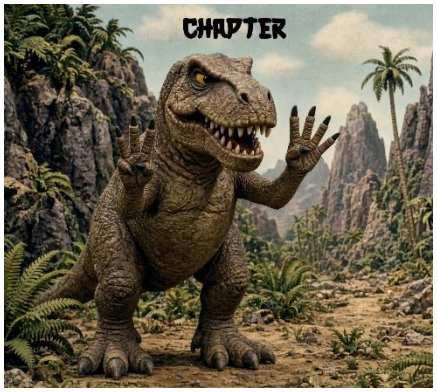
When it opened, she stepped through into the clear Pylon.

Cha-Ka looked in horror as she disappeared from sight; the Pylon continued to look clear with the jungle behind it visible through it. "Holly!" He exclaimed. "Holly gone!"

"She is a fool."

"Cha-Ka go do what Holly said." Cha-Ka scurried into the bushes where she had pointed. "Cha-Ka go!"

Enik stood alone in the jungle. "Both of you are fools." He said to no one. "Foolish children." He stood there alone on the path, then with a headshake walked off.




Holly stepped into the Pylon then looked around. The door seemed to close behind her but since the walls -and the door- were clear, it was hard to tell. She reached out and touched where the door was; it was solid so the door had apparently closed.

She looked out as Cha-Ka and Enik spoke back and forth. Finally, Cha-Ka scampered into the underbrush, leaving Enik alone. It was hard to tell what his emotions were but his headshake definitely made her think he was not pleased with either of their actions. She watched in satisfaction when he walked off. "Good bye mister in charge." She waved as he left.

Holly let out a long breath then looked around the Pylon. "Let's see." As with the other ones she had been in, there was a central control panel with a large number of crystals in it situated in a nine-by-nine pattern. She leaned over and examined the crystals. "This looks kind of like the same pattern as that one that showed me all those different places. Almost." She removed a red crystal and swapped it with a blue one. "Maybe that."

"WHO GOES THERE?" A booming voice asked.

Holly ducked at the loud voice. "What?"

"WHO GOES THERE?" The booming voice said again.

She looked up at the ceiling. "Just me; Holly. Holly Marshall."

"I REMEMBER YOU HOLLY MARSHALL."

"Remember me? From where?"

"THE OTHER PYLON."

Holly examined the crystals. They seemed to pulsate with the voice. "There are lots of Pylons. Which one?" A thought occurred to her. "Oh, was it the one that the groceries came from?"

"I DO NOT KNOW GROCERIES."

"Oh, well. The food that appeared. And it had those other places. One looked like my home."

"THE PATHWAYS. YES. YOU WERE WARNED ONCE."

"Right!" Holly said with a smile. "So you told me to not go out? It looked like my dad's writing but he said he didn't write it. That robot got blown up instead of me. So thanks for saving my life."

"YOU SPEAK CORRECTLY ABOUT THOSE EVENTS. REPLACE THOSE CRYSTALS TO THEIR THEY ORIGINAL POSITIONS. YOU UNBALANCE THE ALIGNMENTS."

"Oh! Sorry." Holly swapped the two crystals back to their original spaces. A low tone sounded. "So who are you? Do you have a name?"

"IF YOU NEED A NAME TO CALL ME, YOU CAN USE MOBIUS BECAUSE I HAVE NO BEGINNING OR END. OTHERWISE, I HAVE NO NAME."

"It is good to meet you Mister Mobius." Holly said with a nod. "Enik told me this Pylon was forbidden. Why is that?"

"THERE IS DANGER HERE. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED ONCE HOLLY MARSHALL."

"If it's dangerous, can you just warn me again?" She looked around. "Does this Pylon open other portals that we can go through? Like the one that my dad fell through? Can it get me and my brother and my uncle home?"

"YOU ASK MANY QUESTIONS HOLLY MARSHALL. THE RESPONSE TO YOUR MANY QUESTIONS IS ONE ANSWER: YES."

"Oh, that is great!" Holly did a little hop. "That is really great news! I really miss my dad and my friends. And my horse. Do you know what a horse is Mister Mobius? Can I go get my family now?"

"YOU CONTINUE TO ASK MANY QUESTIONS HOLLY MARSHALL. ONE RESPONSE DOES NOT WORK FOR ALL YOUR QUESTIONS."

"Well, I guess it doesn't matter if you know what a horse is, so forget that question. The important one is can we go home from this pylon?" She fought to not add another question.

"YES HOLLY MARSHALL. THIS PYLON WILL ALLOW THAT."

"That's great! Can we go now?" She turned toward the door. "I can get them right now; they aren't that far away."

"YOU CANNOT GO NOW HOLLY MARSHALL. THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE."

"But you said we could get home."

"THE TIME PATH TO YOUR HOME IS NOT HERE. THE RETURN ALIGNMENT WILL ALLOW YOU TO GO HOME BUT IT IS NOT OCCURRING NOW BECAUSE THAT TIME PATH HAS NOT CROSSED THIS PYLON YET."

"Then all of us can go?"

"WITHIN REASON, HOLLY MARSHALL. YOU CANNOT BRING HUNDREDS WITH YOU. YOU WILL ALSO NOT BRING ONE OF THE LARGE CREATURES WITH YOU."

"Oh, that's fine Mister Mobius, it will just be my brother and uncle and me. Dopey wouldn't do well back home, I don't think." She hesitated as she considered Cha-Ka. "Any maybe one more. I have to talk to my uncle about that."

"IN TWENTY-TWO HOURS, THE RETURN ALIGNMENT WILL MEET THE TIME PATHS. YOU MUST BE HERE WITH YOUR COMPANIONS AT THAT TIME OR WAIT FOR THE NEXT RETURN ALIGNMENT."

"When would the next one be?" Holly asked, curious.

"THE NEXT RETURN ALIGNMENT WILL BE IN EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS, TWENTY-TWO HOURS."

"Oh! Then we definitely want to be here for this one! Are there other kinds of alignments?"

"THE ALIGNMENTS ARE NUMEROUS. THERE ARE RETURN ALIGNMENTS, FORWARD ALIGNMENTS, BACKWARD ALIGNMENTS, AND SEVERAL SIDEWAY ALIGNMENTS AND A DIRECT ONE LIKE YOUR FATHER USED."

"So a backward one goes back in time to our world?"

"YOU ARE CORRECT HOLLY MARSHALL."

"Oh." Holly considered that. "Could we go back before my mom had her car accident and keep her from having it?"

"WITH VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS, YOU CANNOT BE IN YOUR SAME TIME WITH YOURSELF HOLLY MARSHALL. THERE IS ALREADY A HOLLY MARSHALL IN THAT TIME. IF YOU WENT THERE, SHE WOULD BE NO MORE. THIS IS ALSO TRUE FOR YOUR BROTHER AND YOUR UNCLE."

"So when did my dad go back to?"

"HE RETURNED AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT WAS HERE; A DIRECT ALIGNMENT."

"Oh, I didn't consider that. So he went home almost two years later?"

"YOU ARE CORRECT HOLLY MARSHALL."

"Oh! Except we weren't with him! I wonder how he explained that." She frowned. "Oh, that must have been terrible! Do you know how it went for him?"

"YOUR FATHER WAS UNABLE TO EXPLAIN HIS MISSING CHILDREN AND WAS CONVICTED IN YOUR DISAPPEARANCE. HE IS CURRENTLY IN A PENITENTARY"

"Oh no, Daddy! Can we go back to the same point in time when he went back so he doesn't get in trouble?"

"THAT WOULD REQUIRE A BACKWARD ALIGNMENT NOT A DIRECT ALIGNMENT."

Holly's heart sank. "Oh right. When is that alignment?"

"THE NEXT BACKWARD ALIGNMENT IS IN FOUR HOURS."

"Just four hours? When is the next one?"

"THIRTY-TWO YEARS AND FOUR HOURS."

"Oh no! I need to get Uncle Jack and Wil now!" Another thought occurred to Holly. "Oh! What about a Sleestak? Can a Sleestak go?"

"IT WOULD NOT BE ADVISABLE TO BRING ONE OF THEM TO YOUR WORLD."

"Oh, not to my world, but to their world. And he said he was an Altrusian; they were here before the Sleestak. You see, he is here from another time and he's trying to get back so that he can save all the Sleestak from ending up mean and dumb. His name is Enik."

"I KNOW OF THE ONE YOU SPEAK. GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN REVERSE HE WOULD NOT CONSIDER YOUR DILEMA."

"Well, I guess that's what makes us different." Holly said. "So can he go back to his time?"

"IF HE IS HERE AT THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT HE WILL BE PERMITTED TO RETURN TO HIS TIME. ALL CAN USE THE ALIGNMENT."

"Oh, that would be great." Holly frowned. "I hope he is still out there so I can tell him."

"I HAVE NO RESPONSE TO THAT."

"That's fine, Mister Mobius. I'll be back soon." She smiled. "Thank you!"

"THE ALIGNMENTS HAPPEN WHEN THE ALIGNMENTS HAPPEN; I DO NOT CONTROL THEM. I HAVE DONE NOTHING FOR YOU."

"You explained them to me which really helped." Holly waved. "I'll be back!" She pushed through the door onto the path. "Cha-Ka! Cha-Ka!" She called. "Enik! Cha-Ka!!" She stomped her foot. "Fat rats! Where is everyone!" She looked at the Pylon and then the path leading back to the Lost City. "Four hours. That's not a lot of time. It will take me two hours just to…" Her words trailed off as she realized the return trip would also take two hours. "Oh no! There is no time to save Daddy!" As she started running, Cha-Ka burst from the underbrush and grabbed her.

"Holly!" Cha-Ka said as he grabbed her arm. "I went into the bushes like you told Cha-Ka!"

Holly looked at the pylon then the path. Time was precious. "Good, Cha-Ka. I really need…"

"And Cha-Ka found other Pakuni!" He did a little hop. He turned toward the bushes and spoke in Paku.

A voice answered hesitantly.

Cha-Ka gestured at the ground beside him and spoke again.

An argument ensued between Cha-Ka and the voice in the bushes. It was far too fast for Holly to follow it in Pakuni.

"Cha-Ka, I have to go; I don't have a lot of time." She looked at the bushes. "Ba. Come here! BA!" She said. "Come out here!"

Hesitantly a large female Pakuni exited the bush. With her were two smaller Pakuni.

"That Sha-Laka." Cha-Ka said. "And Pak and Tak. They children of Sha-Laka." Cha-Ka said helpfully.

Sha-Laka spoke quickly at Holly as she gestured at her and Cha-Ka.

"I only got some of that." Holly said "Amurani. We are friends. Amurani!" Holly switched to English. "Tell her we are friends, Cha-Ka."

Cha-ka obliged.

Sha-Laka hugged Holly.

"Oh great. So that's good you have found three other Pakuni." Holly said, as she wondered how much time she had lost standing there.

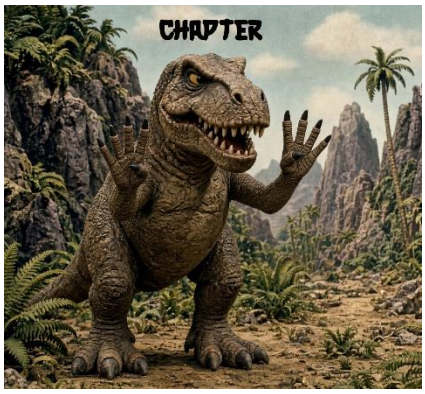
"Oh, Cha-Ka find more than three." Cha-Ka did a little hop. "It whole tribe; twenty-one Pakuni."

"That's wonderful Cha-Ka," Holly then cut to the chase: "Because we are leaving and this way I won't be worried about you being alone."

"Holly leave?" Cha-Ka looked at the pylon. "From pylon?"

"Yes. And I have to go get Uncle Jack and Wil." Holly started to walk away. "I don't have a lot of time, so I have to run." She started to jog off. "Get to know your new tribe, Cha-Ka. I will be back here in a couple of hours." She called over her shoulder.

Holly moved to a desperate run, hoping she would make it back in enough time to explain to Jack and Wil what was happening.




Jack stoked the fire. “So Holly will be back by lunch?”

“She should be.” Wil shrugged. “That’s what we agreed to anyway. Sometimes Holly gets sidetracked.”

“That is true. Well, just in case, I might run out to get some water.” He gestured at the sky. “Looks like it might rain later.”

“I can do it while I check on my wheels.” Wil offered. “Maybe I can get a little more bend in them; they’ve been soaking for a couple of hours.”

“Okay then; I’ll start lunch.” Jack looked at the sun. “She’s got a couple of hours until she gets back so I’ll start boiling the potatoes now.”

“Okay.” Wil grabbed a bucket. “I’ll be back in a little while.”

“Take your time.” Jack said.

Just as Wil wandered off with the bucket, Enik stepped into the clearing. “Get ready with those sticks, Uncle jack.” He called as he walked off.

“What?” Jack asked.

“Jack Marshall. We must speak.” Enik said. “Now.”

“Oh. I see. Listen Enik, I’d really rather not.” Jack admitted. “But I probably don’t have any choice.”

“You must do something about that child.”

“Holly?”

“That is the one.” Enik confirmed.

“What’s wrong with Holly?” Jack asked as he glanced at the large pile of spears he had made.

“She puts us all in danger.” Enik shook his head. “Her actions are irresponsible.”

“What’s the problem, Enik?”

“I have told you; Holly is the problem.”

“Enik, if you’re just going to talk in circles, you should go someplace else. I’m not in the mood for your condescension.”

“If I speak down to you, it is only because of my elevated status.”

"And now I don't want to talk to you anymore." He stirred the pot. "Have a good day being stuck here in this time with your speechless, barbaric descendants who the Marshall family have saved several times because you in your elevated status were unable to."

Enik stared at Jack.

"Spit it out, Enik; how has Holly…"

Holly sprinted into the clearing. "Uncle Jack! Uncle Jack!" She looked at Enik. "Did you talk to Cha-Ka?"

"Fortunately, I have not." Enik replied. "Here she is." He gestured at her. "Meddling with things she does not understand. She will be the ruin of us all."

"Holly, what's going on?" Jack asked.

"We have to go. *Now*." She looked at Enik. "You too. We all need to go. Where is Wil?"

"Will went to the river." Jack said. He pointed at the wagon. "He's built you a really nice wagon. The wheels are soaking in the river as he bends them." What she said registered. "Where do we have to go?"

"Home! We have to go home! NOW!"

"The child is ranting." Enik waved a hand dismissively.

"Holly, what is going on?"

"I found a Pylon."

"It is forbidden to enter the clear Pylon!" Enik said harshly. "Forbidden!"

"Enik, let her speak."

"I went into a Pylon while exploring around the northern edge of the Lost City and it was like the one that Dad was in when he disappeared."

Several Sleestak shuffled into the clearing.

"I need more spears, I think." Jack observed.

"Seize her!" Enik gestured at Holly.

The Sleestak turned to Holly and started shuffling toward her.

Jack picked up a spear. "Everyone stay back!" He jabbed it several times. "Holly get behind me."

"We don't have time for this!" Holly said. She moved to Enik. "Enik, you can go home too! Mister Mobius said so."

"Who is this Mobius?" Enik asked.

Jack moved between the Sleestak and Holly. "Keep back!" He warned. "Who is Mister Mobius?"

"He's a voice in the Pylon." Holly explained. "He doesn't run it or anything, but he explained it to me. He said that we can all go home right now. There is going to be a backward alignment that will get us back to our time right when Dad got there. And we have to do that because Dad is in jail!"

"She continues to rant." Enik said.

"And," Holly turned to Enik. "He said that you could go back to your time and then you can talk to your people so they don't destroy their city and become Sleestacks."

"The portal was broken. No one can enter or leave here."

"Why is Rick in jail?" Jack asked, ignoring Enik.

"He was arrested. But Mister Mobius said we could go back to when Dad got there so he won't be arrested." She gestured at herself. "When he went back alone, he couldn't explain where Wil and I were so he was put in jail."

"That does make sense; two missing kids." Jack was still between the Sleestak and Holly. "And this Mobius said he can get us back home?"

"Well, no; he said the Pylon does what it wants and he doesn't control it. He just knows when we can use it. If we don't do it now, the next time is tomorrow, but that will be after dad is in jail."

"But once we show up, they would have to let him out." Jack pointed out.

"But he still went through the ordeal of getting arrested, being on trial, and then put in jail. If we get back to the Pylon within two hours, we can go back to the day he got home, before he is arrested. And so can Enik."

"I have never been detained by the authorities." Enik said. "It is preposterous to even suggest it."

"We need to get Wil." Holly said. "It's about two hours away and we will be close to not making it back in time. Otherwise, we will have to wait thirty years to get another chance. Thirty years!" She stomped her feet. "Let's get Wil and go!"

"Enik," Jack turned and lowered his spear. "If what she is saying is true, then we can all get home."

Three Sleestak grabbed Jack when he turned his back to them.

"Seize the girl too!" Enik ordered.

"You have to listen to me, Enik." Holly shouted. "Why are you always mean to us when all we do is try to help you? I could have just gotten Uncle Jack and Wil and we could have just left but I wanted to help you too. You are going to ruin this for all of us."

"The clear Pylon is forbidden for anyone to enter."

"Why? Who said so?" Holly sidestepped the slow moving Sleestaks.

"It has always been so."

"So, you don't want to go home then?"

"I gave up my hope of going home long ago. I exist here now."

Holly scooted over to a spear and picked it up. "Uncle Jack, we have to go!"

"What if she is telling the truth?" Jack asked.

"I'm not lying!"

"Yes, I believe you Holly. It's Enik I'm asking." Jack looked at him. "What if she is telling the truth Enik?"

"Going home would be worthwhile if I can prevent my people from becoming uncivilized."

"Then let us go and come with us." Jack said.

"We need Wil!"

"Holly, go get Wil; he's at the river getting water." Jack said knowing that having Wil there would tilt the odds in his favor. "Enik, do you know where this clear pylon is?" He looked at Holly. "Holly GO!"

Holly startled then darted off into the jungle, and to Jack's relief, she didn't drop the spear.

"I do." Enik finally said.

"You should start going there now because we can run faster than you. You can't be late either."

Enik looked from Jack to the Sleestak and back. "Preventing this is worthwhile so I will trust you just this one time."

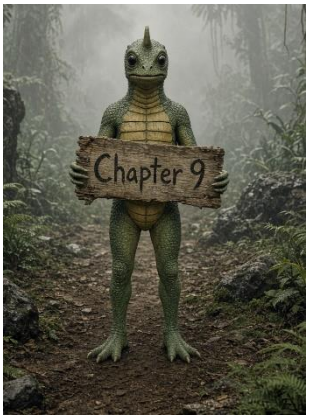
Jack shrugged out of the Sleestacks' grip. "From what the kids tell me, it's *you* and the Sleestak that aren't trustworthy. It is a testament of how good a person Holly is that she even thought about getting you home as well. If the tables were turned you wouldn't have given us a second thought."

"That is indeed true."

Jack shook his head. "Disgraceful. The Altrusian might be able to speak but I don't think they are any more civilized than Sleestak. Pompous and selfish; I can see why you ended up as Sleestak.

There isn't even a speck of honor or decency in the entire species." Jack put his hands on his hips. "Now get going because if we beat you there, we will go first and leave you to figure out the Pylon on your own with your superior intellect."

Enik stood for a moment as if he were considering saying something, then just turned and shuffled off at what was a fast pace for Sleestak but not even a jog for Humans.




Holly ran as fast as she could down the path toward the river. To run quicker, she dropped the spear. As she made a turn, she ran headlong into Wil. He spun around as he grabbed her by the waste, dropping the bucket of water in the process.

"Holly! What is going on?" Wil asked. "Great; now I need more water."

"Wil, we need to go! Now!" Holly said, excited.

Wil looked around. "Go where? Is Uncle Jack in trouble?"

"No, we can go home but we have to hurry. We have to go now, Wil!" She pleaded.

"Well explain on the way. Where are we going?"

"Back to Uncle Jack fist of all, then to a clear pylon that will take us back to Dad!" She turned and ran off down the path. "Come on, Wil!" She called over her shoulder.

Wil easily caught up with her after just a few yards. "Holly, are you sure about this?"

"I am. Mister Mobius said there was a return coming up that would take us back home at the same time Dad got there."

"In the past?" Wil spied the dropped spear and bent over to scoop it up as he went. "How do we get to the past?"

"It's how the clear pylon works." Holly said between breaths. "There are backwards alignments, forward alignments, direct alignments, and even sideways ones. I'm not sure how those work."

"So we can jump backwards to when Dad disappeared into that pylon?"

"Yes. And we need to do this backward alignment because the next one is in thirty years. The next direct alignment is tomorrow."

"So why don't we just do that instead of rushing like this?" Wil asked. While Holly was running fast for her, it wasn't more than a quick jog for himself. "We can be better prepared by tomorrow."

"Because if we go tomorrow, it will bring us back right now and Dad has been in jail since he got back!"

"What?"

"He couldn't explain where we were so he was arrested, Wil! We have to go back now! We have to!" Holly started running faster.

"Okay, Holly. Okay." Wil said. He grabbed her arm and slowed her to a jog. "So where is this clear pylon?"

"It's on the path I found. Oh! There's Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack!" She called as she bolted into the clearing.

"Holly." Jack said. "Just calm down a moment."

Wil skidded to a stop behind her. "Holly says we have a way home?"

"It seems we do, Wil." Jack said. "And we need to get to where this pylon is." He looked at Holly. "You remember how to get back there?"

Holly nodded. "It's on the northern path around the Lost City."

"Okay. That will be easy to find." Jack said as he thought things over. "How far away it is?"

"Two hours! It took me two hours to get there and Mister Mobius told me the alignment was in four hours."

"Right. Except you had Cha-Ka with you when you went, right?"

"Yes." Holly replied.

"And you were just walking slowly and stopping to look at things, right?" Uncle Jack asked.

"Well... yes." Holly considered it. "We did stop a couple of times for strawberries and we were just walking."

"Well, I think we are okay on time since you ran back. You did run straight back, right?"

"Well." Holly looked down. "It was more a jog, really."

"Still, you got back a lot faster than you spent going out there. At least fifteen minutes, I'd guess. There's a big difference between walking slowly and jogging." He looked left and right. "So… do we really need anything from here?"

"Not really." Wil answered. "If we get home, we'll have clothes there if we are really going home."

"I'm not lying!" Holly said loudly. "I'm not!"

"We believe you, Holly." Jack said. "Okay, we really don't need to bring anything with us so let's just get going. If we jog we will definitely make it there in time."

"Right." Wil looked at Holly. "Think you can jog back there?"

"To get back to dad? You bet I could!"

"Then let's go. Maybe we can beat Enik there." Jack gestured at the path. "That way?"

"Yes."

"Lead the way, Holly." Jack coxed. "You set a good pace the whole way back. We'll rest once we're back home."

"Okay!" Holly started off at a very quick jog, then after a hundred yards, slowed down to a pace she knew she could keep the entire way.

After a couple of minutes, Holly spoke up: "Wil, I'm worried."

"About what? I think we are okay on time." Will answered.

"I'm worried about Cha-Ka. What is he going to think if we just disappear?"

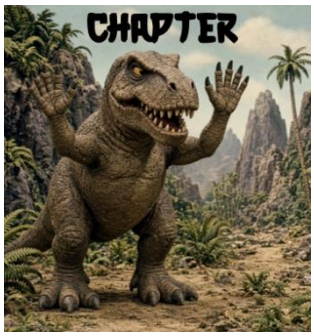
Wil considered that for a moment. While Chaka was young, he was still a Pakuni and familiar with the Land of the Lost; he would definitely be able to adapt to life alone. Earth was definitely not for him. "He will be fine here. Remember he was living here before he met us." Wil finally said.

"We also found a Pakuni tribe. Cha-Ka said there were twenty-one of them. But they are all strangers to him. I'm worried he'll be alone."

"In that case, he will be fine, Holly." Jack said. While he cared for Cha-ka, he was more intent on getting the children to their father- and himself home. In just his short time in the Land of the Lost he had seen both Ta and Sa both treat Cha-ka as a subservient. Being on his own without them was probably the best life he could have. A tribe of Pakuni was actually the best option because as least some of them would be friendly toward him. "Cha-ka will live just fine without any of us; he'll make friends with some of the Pakuni, I'm sure."

"I hope so." Holly said, even though she was worried they wouldn't accept him.

The trio continued to jog in silence, stopping only once to rest for a moment before they arrived at the clear pylon.




Holly slowed to a walk as she entered the small clearing where the clear pylon was. “Here it is.” She said as she tried to catch her breath.

“Are we in time?” Wil asked. “How can we even tell?”

“I’ll go ask Mister Mobius.” Holly walked over to the doorway in the crystal pyramid and turned the tetrahedron crystal above the door.

Since the entire pyramid was mostly see-through, it was hard to tell if a door actually opened. “Did that open?” Wil asked. As Holly stepped into the pylon, she disappeared even though it was still clear through and through. “What? What is going on?” He asked surprised as he took a step toward the pylon. “Hey! There’s my spear. I guess we can at least bring that back with us.” He looked at the Pylon. “I hope she’s right about this.”

“She knows what she’s doing, Wil. Let her handle it.” Jack said, even though he wasn’t completely convinced. While the prospect of going home was definitely forefront in his mind, he still wasn’t sure if it was completely possible. Several times when they seemed on the verge of going home, something happened to prevent it. It was as if the Land of the Lost was preventing it. Or perhaps a larger entity behind the scenes. “We just have to trust her.”

“Okay Uncle Jack.” Wil said. He stretched up and took several deep breaths. “I hope I get to catch my breath before we go…” He was interrupted as Cha-ka ran into him.

Chaka bounced of Wil’s hip and fell to the ground. He looked up at him. “Wil!, have news! Cha-Ka have news!”

“We have some too, Cha-Ka.” Wil said as he bent over and extended his hand. “Are you okay?”

“Cha-Ka better than okay!” He gave a little hop after Wil pulled him to his feet. “Better than okay!”

“How is that Cha-ka?” Jack asked.

“Cha-Ka find other Pakuni!” Chaka did another little hop. “Family of Pakuni! Holly see them in jungle, think it Cha-Ka but it not!”

“Oh! That’s great Cha-Ka,” Wil said. He looked at the clear pylon. “Are they… are they here?”

“They hiding in jungle.” Cha-Ka said. “They not sure about talking to Wil and Jack.”

“Listen Cha-ka.” Jack said as he stepped closer to the Pakuni. “There is a good chance we are leaving right now so it is great you found another family to live with.”

“You all leave now?” Cha-ka gaped. “And not take Cha-ka?”

“Our world is not the place for you.” Jack explained. “This place is where you belong; with your own people.”

"Cha-Ka is happy he find others." Cha-Ka said matter-of-factly.

"Then that is a great thing. Live with them, Cha-Ka." Jack put his hand on the young Pakuni's shoulder. "I… we are really happy for you. But we need to get home to our people and it looks like that chance is now."

"Where Holly?"

"Holly is in the pylon." Jack looked that way. "I hope she comes out soon."

"She not leave without telling Cha-Ka good bye?"

"No. She will say good-bye." Jack said, even though he wasn't sure that would happen. In the grand scheme of things, saying 'good-bye' to a young Pakuni was nothing compared to getting home.

"I have arrived." Enik announced as he entered the area. "Let this begin."

"Just hold on, Enik." Jack said. "We are waiting on Holly."

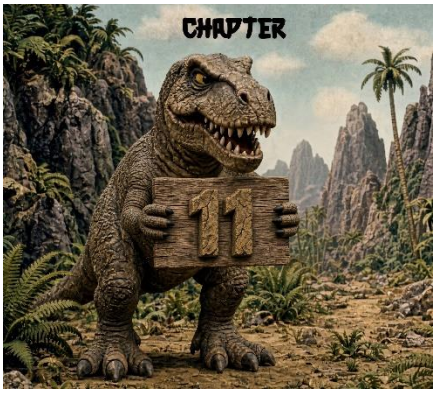
"That foolish child?"

"That foolish child might just save your entire race." Jack snapped. "So perhaps a little patience is in order."

"I have patience beyond belief." Enik said.

Wil stifled a chuckle. "I think so because I don't believe it."

"I am glad you can wait a little bit." Jack said diplomatically.




Holly dashed into the pylon. “Mister Mobius, are you there?”

“I AM ETERNAL. I AM ALWAYS.”

“Oh, thank goodness.” Holly said. “Did we make it back in time?”

“THERE ARE TEN MINUTES UNTIL THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT.”

Holly let out a long breath. “Oh, I was worried there wasn’t time left when you said there was only four hours.”

“TIME IS IRRELEVANT; IT PASSES BY ME.”

“Well, it’s important to people like me, Mister Mobius. We need it to move along smoothly.”

“YOU ARE A WELL-SPOKEN PERSON HOLLY MARSHALL.”

“Thanks. So is there time for Enik to get back home to save the Sleestak?”

“THE PROBABILITIES ARE THAT HE WILL NOT.”

“What? Why not?”

“THERE HAVE BEEN MANY INSTANCES FOR SUCCESS ALONG THE SLEESTAK PATH AND THEY ALWAYS REMAIN THE SAME.”

“What?” Holly asked confused. “I don’t understand. They can’t be saved?”

“THE SLEESTAK ARE AS THE SLEESTAK ARE.”

“So Enik can’t make them act better where they don’t destroy their home and end up in the Lost City without being able to talk?”

“THERE ARE SEVEN MINUTES UNTIL THE BACKWARD ALIGNEMENT OPENS.”

“Oh!”

“I THOUGHT YOU WOULD WANT TO KEEP TRACK OF THAT EVENT.”

“I do Mister Mobius, thank you. Keep letting me know about it. But how can Enik keep the Sleestak form becoming like they are.” She considered that. “I think a better question is how can Enik keep the Aleutians from becoming Sleestak?”

"THE SLEESTAK ARE WHAT THEY ARE BECAUSE THE ALEUTIANS ARE WHAT THEY ARE. THEY ARE THE SAME IN THE TIME PATHS I SEE SO THEY HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF CHANGE. THERE ARE NOW SIX MINUTES INTIL THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT."

Holly frowned. "Fat rats! So there is no way for the Sleestak to not be like they are?"

"A TURTLE IS LIKE A TURTLE. A DINOSAUR IS LIKE A DINOSAUR."

"But we became better people." Holly gestured at herself. "We Humans started out living in caves and not writing, and now we have space ships and other things."

"THERE IS A SPARK YOU HAVE THAT THEY DO NOT. IT IS FIVE MINUTES UNTIL THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT."

A thought occurred to Holly. "How long will the alignment stay open?"

"AGAIN, A GOOD QUESTION FROM YOU, HOLLY MARSHALL." Mobius said "THE ALIGNMENT WILL BE OPEN FOR HALF AN HOUR."

"Oh good." Holly looked out of the pylon- Cha-Ka was there speaking to Uncle Jack, and from how he was waving his arms around, he was agitated about something. Enik was standing there looking disgusted. "Oh, we are leaving him behind. I have to talk to my friends, Mister Mobius; I'll be back."

"THE ALIGNMENT OPENS IN THREE MINUTES."

"Okay, thanks." Holly moved out of the pylon and to her family. "Uncle Jack, we have just a few minutes."

"Holly! Holly sent Cha-Ka off then she disappeared. Now Jack say you disappear forever!" Chaka gesticulated as he spoke. "And he say Cha-Ka cannot go!"

"No, Cha-Ka." Jack said. "Our world isn't for you." He pointed. "You said you have other Pakuni here you can live with."

"I figured it was another Pakuni I saw." Holly said. "Sorry I got mad at you when I thought you were ignoring me. So there is another Pakuni here now?"

"A lot of them." Wil offered. "Cha-Ka has found a whole tribe, apparently."

Holly looked at the pylon. "Oh, all of a sudden there isn't enough time." She bent down and hugged Cha-Ka. "We have to go."

"All go?" Cha-Ka asked. "Even him, the meanest of Sleestak?"

"I am offended. I can assure you I have never been mean to anyone."

Wil just shook his head. "Oh boy."

"Cha-Ka, if there is a way to come back to visit you, I will okay?" Holly hugged him again. "But we are short of time so we have to go into the pylon now."

"Okay, Holly. You go. Cha-Ka stay with new Pakuni family."

"I hope they treat you nicer than Ta and Sa did." Wil got on one knee and hugged Cha-Ka. "Good bye Cha-ka, you have been a good friend."

"Good by Wil." Cha-Ka hugged him back. "They like Cha-Ka. Cha-Ka can make fire with crystals and make smoke and loud noises. Plus Cha-Ka can make baskets. All things they cannot do."

"You are a very smart Pakuni." Jack said. "They are lucky to have you in their tribe."

"Thank you, Jack." Cha-Ka said as he hugged the man.

"The amount of emotion I am observing is unsettling."

Everyone ignored Enik.

Jack hugged Cha-Ka back. "Good bye, Cha-Ka. I wish you all the happiness in the Land of the Lost."

"Good bye Uncle Jack." Cha-Ka wiped a tear from his eye. "Good bye everyone!"

"Okay, the alignment has probably started by now so we need to go." Holly said. "Follow me."

"Why is this child in a position of authority for such an important endeavor?"

"Because she discovered this, Enik." Jack said. "So she's in charge." He gestured. "Lead the way, Holly."




Holly led the group into the Pylon- as with the others there was more space inside it than it should have had from looking at the exterior of it.

A dull blue glow filled the area.

"THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT HAS ALREADY BEGUN. WHO WILL TRAVEL FIRST."

"I should go first." Enik said. "Because my trip is more important."

"But if you go back first and are able to change the past, does that mean this Pylon won't exist anymore and we will be stuck?" Holly asked.

"I am willing to risk that." Enik replied.

"I'm not." Wil said. "This is the best chance to get home we've ever had. I say we go first."

"Mister Mobius, if Enik changes the past, will that affect this Pylon?" Holly asked.

"HOLLY MARSHALL, YOU SHOW INTUITIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIME PATHS. TO YOUR QUESTION, NO; THIS PYLON REMAINS CONSTANT WITH ALL THE CHANGES IN TIME; IT IS ABOVE THE TIME PATHS SO IT IS NOT INFLUENCED BY IT BUT YOU WILL WITNESS THE CHANGES TO THE TIME PATH AROUND IT."

"So Enik can travel first to save the Lost City?"

"AS I SAID, THE PROBABILIY OF SUCCESS IS UNLIKELY."

"You do not believe I will be able to convince my people?" Enik looked up as he spoke. "That is impertinent of you."

"Mister Mobius said you didn't have a spark." Holly said. Now she looked up. "How long will the backward alignment be open?"

"IT WILL BE OPEN FOR TWENTY-SIX MINUTES."

"Okay." Holly said. "So we have a little time. Just listen to me Enik. Really really listen to me."

"My ears work well at all times, Holly Marshall. I hear equally well now as I always have."

"She means to take the words she is going to say to heart. Listen to her advice and do it."

"I do not see how listening to a child will make me successful."

"IT IS WHY THEY ALWAYS FAIL AT CHANGING THEIR PATH." Mobius interjected.

Enik took a step back, visually shocked. "You say this has happened before? My failure?"

"Mister Mobius is above time, just like this Pylon, Enik." Holly said. "He sees the changes in time and what works and what doesn't. He said that Aleutians are Aleutians and because of that, they fail in not becoming Sleestak."

"We are what we are." Enik said.

"But you have to try to become *more* than what you are. Like I told Mister Mobius, we humans used to live in caves and weren't even able to write. Now we have airplanes that fly around, ships that are on the oceans. Even space ships that fly to the Moon. Because we try to be more than we are." She hesitated, not sure how to explain it better. "You need… I don't know what to call it."

"This all sounds like an insult to me."

"Enik," Jack said. "What Holly is trying to say is that you need to convince your people to strive to be better. Remember when I said you were condescending? Pompous and selfish as well?"

"I remember."

"Okay, and do you remember when we were dealing with Malak the King of the Teutons and when Wil was sick and wouldn't wake up and I tried to explain human decency and honor to you?"

"I remember those strange concepts."

"I remember you said they did not seem worthwhile." Holly said. "But they *are* worthwhile. Sometimes they are the only thing that keeps us going. That's why we help you even when you wouldn't help us. You need to get the Aleutians to understand that. To love each other and support each other. That's what Mister Mobius says you are missing. And if you can't figure out how to get it, you won't be able to stop your civilization from falling apart into the Lost City."

"HOLLY MARSHALL, YOU SPEAK WELL OF THESE CONCEPTS. TRULY YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY."

"Thank you, Mister Mobius." Holly said.

"WHEN YOU ARE OLDER, THERE MAY WELL BE A PLACE WITH US OVERSEEING THE TIME PATHS."

"Me?" Holly asked. "I don't know if I'd…" Her voice trailed off as she remembered when her own older-self had come to visit her- calling herself Rani and said she was a much older Holly. "Oh, I think I already did travel in time; I had my older-self come talk to me."

"TIME PATHS DO CROSS OVER EACH OTHER, HOLLY MARSHALL."

"But you said we can't be in the same time as our past selves." Holly replied.

"I SAID WITH VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS."

"Okay, so you go first Enik." Jack said. "And keep in mind what Holly and Mobius said; it is probably your only chance at saving your people."

"I will endeavor to do that." Enik said. "And to make sure that this pylon remains in place so that I will be able to travel home to my time and you to yours, I will ensure that it is deemed forbidden to all."

"Oh!" Holly did a little jump.

"What is it now, child?"

"So when I asked you who made this pylon forbidden you said you didn't know." She snapped her fingers. "But it's really you in the past that does it."

Enik opened his mouth, then closed it.

"On that note, you should go, Enik." Jack said.

"Yeah, I'm ready to get home myself." Wil added.

"I go now." Enik looked up. "How do I achieve this, Mobius?"

"TO RETURN TO YOUR TIME PATH THE DAY AFTER YOU LEFT TO COME HERE, TOUCH THE YELLOW, THEN RED, THEN BLUE CRYSTAL ON THE TOP ROW. THAT WILL OPEN THE APPROPRIATE PORTAL. THEN PASS THROUGH IT."

Enik let out a long breath. "I go now, and I will… take to heart what you said Holly Marshall." He touched the yellow, red, then blue crystal. After a moment, the door swirled those colors then shimmered. On the other side, was a scene of the Lost City except it wasn't destroyed at all; there were Aleutians walking about and vehicles moving past.

Without another word, Enik stepped through the portal and spiraled from sight.

"Good luck Enik." Holly said. "I wonder how long it will be before we…"

The entire lands outside the pylon shimmered then shifted. Suddenly the pylon was in the middle of a large plaza. Vehicles passed by and several flew overhead. Aleutians and Sleestak walked here and there, appearing to be engaged in conversation.

"Well, look at that." Wil finished. He punched Holly on the shoulder. "Good job Holly."

"Yes, that was outstanding Holly. I'm very proud of you." Jack said. "Your dad will be as well."

Holly blushed. "Oh, thanks."

"HOLLY MARSHALL, YOU HAVE ADJUSTED THAT TIME PATH FOR THE BETTER. PERHAPS LATER YOU WILL HELP WITH OTHER ONES."

"In the meanwhile, we'd love to get home." Jack said.

"How much longer is the backward alignment open?" Holly asked. "We have to have at least fifteen minutes."

"THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT IS CLOSED."

"What?" Holly stomped. "You said it would be open for thirty minutes and it hasn't been that long."

"TIME IS IRRELEVENT, HOLLY MARSHALL. THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT IS CLOSED AS IT RESETS FROM THAT OTHER TIME PATH."

"How long do we have to wait?" Wil asked. "All of a sudden I'm not too happy we didn't go first."

"THE BACKWARD ALIGNMENT IS NOW OPEN AND WILL REMAIN OPEN FOR SIXTEEN MINUTES."

Holly let out a long breath. "Well, that wasn't so bad. So what colors do we touch to go back to the day that dad went home?"

"YOU MUST TOUCH THE BLUE THEN THE YELLOW THEN THE NEXT BLUE AND FINALLY THE RED CRYSTAL TO OPEN THAT PATH."

"That's it?" Jack asked.

"YOU MUST ALL TOUCH THOSE CRYSTALS IN THAT ORDER AT THE SAME TIME TO TRAVEL TOGETHER. OTHERWISE, THE TIME PATH WOULD NEED TO RESET AGAIN FOR EACH PASSING."

"I say we all go at once." Wil suggested.

"I agree." Jack held his hand out. "Fingers together. Holly?"

"Wait!" Holly said, worried. She gestured out of the pylon at the bustling city. "If that's what the Land of the Lost looks like now, what happened to Cha-Ka and the Pakuni? Did they all just disappear?"

"BECAUSE THE CHANGE IN THE TIME PATH HAPPENED IN THE PAST, THE ONES YOU KNOW ARE UNAWARE OF IT."

"What happened to them?"

"THE PAKUNI ARE NOW MERCHANTS. SUCCESSFUL MERCHANTS. CHA-KA IS AN APPRENTICE IN A POWERFUL MERCHANT GUILD NOW."

"So he wouldn't remember me if I came back because we were never here as far as he knows?"

"THAT IS THE MANNER TIME PATHS WORK WHEN THEY ARE CHANGED."

"Okay. At least he is taken care of; that's the important part." She looked at her uncle. "Ready Uncle Jack?" Holly brought her hand up and extended a finger. "Blue, yellow, blue, red. Ready?"

"Ready." Jack said

"Ready." Will said.

The trio touched the crystals with their fingers at the same time. Within moments, the door of the pylon swirled and shimmered. A large grassy field filled the doorway.

"It's the farm!" Holly said. "Oh, let's go!" She looked up. "Thank you, Mister Mobius. I hope we can talk again!"

"WE SHALL, HOLLY MARSHALL TIME PATH MENDER. WE SHALL INDEED."

With that, they stepped through the door and swirled out of the Land of the Lost and into their home world six hours after Rick Marshall had arrived, and a mere ten minutes after the police had.

While Rick, Jack, and Wil's adventures were over, Holly's had just begun.

## The End

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