

Louisiana Bones and the Temple of Gloom

By Josiah Lebowitz

It was August 1950, if I recall. My partner Dink E. Man and myself were sweating more than bacon on a skillet in the Sahara. And for a good reason - that's where we were! In the Sahara I mean, not on a skillet.

Anyway, after months of strenuous searching - okay, weeks of arduous - would you believe days and days of - oh fine! It was a ten minute bus ride. Are you happy now? As I was saying, after all the hardships we had been through (hey, those bus seats were hard!), we had finally reached the legendary temple of Zannahukurukututinghamend the 37 ½. Soon the famed Ruby of Zanahu, ah forget it, takes too long to write... Anyway, soon it would be ours!

Oh, by the way, the name's Bones, Louisiana Bones - treasure hunter extraordinaire.

Now, where was I? Oh yes. The legendary temple loomed before us with all the splendor of an ugly old wall of rock. With Dink following behind, I strode confidently up to the entrance only to be blocked by a skinny old man who had more wrinkles than a hippo.

"Ya want in the temple, ya have to pay the admission fee like everyone else!" the coot growled.

“You obviously don’t know who I am!” I flashed my world famous grin. “Louisiana Bones, at your service. No autographs please.”

“I never heard of a big idiot like ya. Now pay up or git out!” Mr. Wrinkly-Face had his mouth open wide enough to show us every single one of his rotting teeth.

That did it! No one calls Louisiana Bones an idiot! I leaned forward and gave the old man a hard shove, then continued towards the entrance. Just as I was about to enter and find fame and fortune, the old codger jumped in front of me and socked me right in the eye! No way would I let him get away with that! It was an all out war, folks! And I would have had him too if Dink hadn’t suddenly tossed the man a coin and dragged me inside the dark temple.

“What did you do that for?!?” I cried as I wiped my bloody lip and rubbed a swollen eye. “I was beating him!”

“Sorry Louy.” Dink walked on. “I was afraid that if you ‘beat him’ anymore we’d have to explore the emergency room instead of this temple.”

“Oh, shut up, Dink!” I turned to watch our shapely tour guide disappear into the next room.

We raced after her and arrived just in time to hear about the next area. While she went on and on about the musty old room, I tried to ignore the flashing cameras of the other tourists (while making sure that they only got my good side) and used my finely tuned eyes to pierce through the shadows cloaking the walls.

As I flicked on my Acme 5800 Ultra Krypton Flashlight, I was greeted instantly with the cries of my adoring fans. With the added light, I had them all shouting such affectionate phrases as: “Argh! You’re blinding me!” and “Shut off the flashlight you

idiot!” and the ever popular “My eyes! I’ll sue!” Ah yes, they all loved me. But, before I could kiss the swooning women, or at least pass out autographed photos, something the tour guide said caught my attention.

“And over there,” she pointed to a patch of shadows that looked remarkably like a big black splotch, “is the entrance to a secret tunnel leading into the depths of the temple.”

Secret tunnel, eh? With a cry that only a handsome intelligent treasure hunter can cry, I grabbed Dink and dove head first down the passageway to riches!

“But,” I heard the tour guide continue droning on as I slide faster and faster, “this particular passageway has been blocked for centuries...”

I missed the last part of her little speech as Dink and I skidded around a curve but that’s ok. No one knows more about junky old ruins than Louisiana Bones! Then, suddenly, a loud thunk echoed through the confined space. This was it! Lights glittered all around me! I had found the treasure chamber! Or so I thought until Dink slapped me awake. I awoke to find a large rock blocking the passage and a bump the size of Al Gore’s ego on my head.

“You ok Louy?” one of the three Dinks staring down at me asked.

“Sure...” I tried to stand and slammed my head into the ceiling. “I’m perfectly fine, Fink.” I reassured him as I attempted to climb back up the tunnel. Strangely, the darn thing kept turning on me, causing me to kiss the wall more than I do my girlfriends back home.

At last Dink grabbed my leg and dragged me up. Spitting dust, I thanked him profusely as we emerged into the flickering light of the dirty hole-in-the-rock room. Not only was I finally out of that accursed passage, but I’d also gotten to ample time to practice my making out with the dusty tunnel floor.

“So, what now, Louy?” Dink looked around for signs of the tour guide.

“We go on, of course!” I dashed down a likely looking tunnel only to smash my face into yet another wall. Stupid shadows...

“Hey Louy, look!” Dink called from across the room. “There’s a passage behind this pillar!”

“So there is, Dink!” I pushed him aside. “It’s a good thing I found it!”

“But-” he sputtered.

“Don’t worry, pal.” I slapped him on the back. “Someday you too will be a smart, famous, handsome adventurer. But until that day, just follow me and learn your lessons.”

With those inspiring words, I, the great Louisiana Bones, started off down the new passage. The ruby was waiting!

After nearly five minutes of walking through the pitch-blackness, I decided to turn on my flashlight. So, I pulled out the old Acme 5800 and flipped the switch. But, all I could see was a glaring light. How strange. I turned around and still the light was the only thing in the passage.

Then, just when I thought I was going blind, I heard Dink call from behind me. “Uh, Louy, wouldn’t the flashlight be more useful if you shone it in front of us instead of in your eyes?”

“Of course!” I hastily reversed the Acme 5800 and let the spots clear from my vision. Ah, much better. “I was just showing you what not to do, Dink. Remember, always point your flashlight forward. Now, let’s continue.”

Full of confidence, I charged forward several meters only to skid to a stop on the edge of a long pit. Dink stopped beside me and peered down.

“Ah!” I shone the light into the hole, revealing a humungous mass of writhing snakes.

“Snakes, very dangerous.” I turned to Dink. “You go first!”

“All right, Louy.” Dink took a running leap and landed halfway through the pit. Then, with all the speed of a peanut being chased by an elephant on roller skates, he sprinted across the other half and scrambled up onto the snakeless ground. “Coming, Louy?” he called.

“Of course!” I stepped back and prepared to take a running leap.

My form was perfect as I dashed towards the pit. I probably would have even got an Olympic medal for the jump, if my feet hadn't slid out from under me at the last second. With all the grace of a world class Olympic diving rock, I slammed head first into the bottom of the pit. After peeling my face off the granite, I realized that I was completely covered with snakes! Now, normal human being might panic in such a situation, but not Louisiana Bones. Instead, I began to sing. Now, I can't exactly remember all the words but it went something like this... “ARGH! ARGH! GET THEM OFF ME!!! HELP!!! GET THEM OFF!!!” Lovely, isn't it?

Anyway, I finally made it out of the pit and, with some help from Dink, managed to throw all the snakes back down where they belonged. Then, after taking a few minutes' rest to recover from my brief mental breakdown, we continued down the tunnel.

To my relief, it soon led out into a vast chamber with a large hole taking up most of the floor. And there, on a pinnacle in the center, sat the object of our quest! The famed Ruby of Whatever-His-Name-Is was right before my eyes! But, how to get to it? It seemed the only way would be a series of perilous jumps to various rock pinnacles dotting the pit. Hmm...

“Dink,” I turned to my assistant, “after all your years of loyal service I’ve decided to give you a reward!”

“Really, Louy?” he asked.

“Of course! For all your help, I’ve decided to let you brave the chasm, risking life and limb, to get me the ruby.”

“Uh huh...” he looked at me suspiciously. “I don’t think so, Louy. Why don’t you get this one?”

“Oh, fine. Be that way. Now stand back.” I leapt to the first pinnacle. “Let me show you how a real adventurer does it!”

Suddenly, I noticed a minor problem - the pillar beneath me was shaking slightly. Unfortunately, it soon became a major problem as I saw that the entire platform was going to collapse! I rapidly jumped to the next...only find that it was crumbling as well. With no time to spare, I jumped from pillar to pillar as fast as my handsome tootsies could carry me! With a powerful leap, I snagged the ruby then turned and followed a different path of pillars back towards Dink’s waiting form. The last pillar was far away from the safe ground but, with a mighty jump, I cleared the gap and fell flat on my face next to my wimpy assistant.

I slowly got to my feet and held the ruby up triumphantly. But then it slipped from my hands and went hurtling towards the hard rock floor! Dink and I dove to catch it, but only managed to bang our heads together as the priceless jewel hit the floor and shattered into a million pieces. Dink and I looked at each other in horror when, to my astonishment, a balding man with thick glasses ran over to us, waving his arms and shouting.

“Idiots!” he screamed. “What are you doing in my picture?!? First you knock down all those pillars! Do you know how long they’ll take to set back up? And then you have to go and break my fake ruby!”

“Fake ruby?!?” I gasped.

“Yes!” Four Eyes shrieked. “And how do you expect us to film Indiana Jones and the Absolutely Totally Final Crusade if people keep coming in and destroying all of our props?”

“Props?” I repeated like a stunned mimic.

“Yes! And I expect you to pay for everything you wrecked!”

“What? Me? Your stupid movie props nearly got us killed! And who’s this ‘Jones’ guy anyway?”

“You’ll pay or I’ll sue!” the little guy got into my face.

“Oh yeah?” I got into his.

“Come on!” Dink grabbed my hand. “He can’t sue if he doesn’t know our names.”

“Right!” I dashed towards the large flashing exit sign while Four Eyes the director fumed behind me. “Ha!” I yelled back. “That’ll teach you not to mess with Louisiana Bones!”

“Louy!” Dink gasped.

“Oops...” I muttered as we sprinted out into the warm desert sunlight. “Oh well...”

With the well rehearsed sigh that he uses for just such occasions, Dink took my arm and we walked off into the sunset just like all heroes do at the end of these corny stories.

Well, I guess I learned my lesson. All that glitters is definitely not gold! Don't forget to tune in next time for more adventures with me, Louisiana Bones, adventurer extraordinaire!