

KELLI JAE BAELI

Lesbians. Dinosaurs. Time travel. Fun.

PITFALL

A JURASSIC ROMANTIC ADVENTURE

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Pitfall
(A Jurassic Romantic Adventure)



Kelli Jae Baeli

Summary

150 million years ago. The Jurassic. 400 thousand dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs. And Jonna and Veronica are face that face with them. Or should that be face to teeth, face to claw, or face to big scary monster?

Although Veronica's not finding them all that scary. A paleontologist, she's used that looking at these guys as nothing but a pile of fossilized bones. Now they're alive, and they're glorious.

Jonna has what she considers a healthier relationship with the beasts. They come near - she runs. Dragging Veronica behind her. That woman would watch in starry-eyed amazement while the jaws closed around her. But that can't happen because Veronica the brainy one and she has to figure out how to work the time travel gizmo that sent them on an unexpected trip deep into a dangerous past.

Lesbians. Dinosaurs. Time travel. Fun.

Pitfall

(A Jurassic Romantic Adventure)

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E-book ISBN:

Published: DDJuly2014

Publisher:

Lesbian Literati Press

New Zealand



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Special Dedication

For Kate, who had the presence of mind to give me a snazzy ring and propose marriage, officially. I look forward to a whole lifetime of dedications to you. All ways, always.



Being horny was no fun. That's why she'd had a bitch of headache all day. Ladies Night once again failed to feed that hungry beast, and she had to settle for beating the bean before conking out until the nuclear sunshine forced her eyes open again.

Luckily, she actually enjoyed her new job at the museum. Not because cleaning floors and emptying trash was a carload of chuckles, but because everywhere in the massive building, there were things to learn. And Jonna was a sponge.

Pausing at the newest display, its gray skeleton towering above her head, Jonna could not begin to know its scientific name. Just a bunch of squiggly letters that could just as well be a kid's finger-painting. She just knew the dinosaur was huge, and not something she would want roaming around in her neighborhood.

Jonna Clarke took the stairs down, to stay in shape and to avoid the claustrophobia of the elevator. She popped a fresh dose of Tylenol in her mouth, before realizing her water bottle was empty. Reluctantly, she chewed them instead, the sharp, bitter film on her tongue making her feel worse. She stepped onto the landing and opened the metal door to the corridor in the basement.

The party-life just might have been better left in her younger years. But what else was there to do on weekends? She could go back to listening to audio books and watching TV, but her life was far too lonely that way. Going to the bar--the only way to meet other women for friendship or the occasional roll in the hay. Needs were needs. It was just a downer to have to take the bus to a gay bar. There was no bringing chicks back to her place, that way. Not that she'd want anyone to see her place. It sucked.

She headed down the hall toward the janitor's closet, trying not to think about last night's disappointment. It had been hard to drag herself out of bed that morning. Her feet scuffed across the floor as if half her leg muscles were out of commission.

Getting push broom out, she slid the push broom in front of her in the basement, she noticed the 50-something man in brown shirt and matching pants, wearing a oatmeal-colored fedora. He was peeking into *the bone-room*, as Jonna liked to think of it. It was where all the dinosaur fossils were kept and examined.

As Jonna pushed the broom closer to the man, he turned and saw her, smoothing his stubbly, graying beard and mustache, and then making a production of moving along. She wondered what had captured his interest so much.

Pushing her broom past the doorway, she saw Dr. Hill. Maybe he was ogling her. Jonna had done her fair share of ogling the professor. She tried not to react to her when she remembered the scene last night, and wondered how many times she'd have to walk by before the professor noticed her. *Probably not appropriate to say anything.*

On the next pass, the doctor was leaning over a crate, writing on a clipboard. Boldly, Jonna pushed the broom into the room, and continued her sweeping. It was near-impossible for Jonna to look away from the roundness of the professor's backside, as she leaned on the crate. Jonna made another pass behind her with the broom, telling herself the floor was quite dirty down here, what with all the crates being delivered, and all the shredded paper and bits of plaster spilling out everywhere. She glanced over at the ass that now seemed almost perfect. And here it was, with no panty lines to spoil

the view. *Oh, did that mean she wasn't wearing any?*

—She'd noticed it before. ~~The ass.~~ Professor Veronica Hill's perfect, curvy, womanly butt. But she had never in her wildest dreams imagined that the professor would go to the local lesbian watering hole, that very week, or that she would ever be the least bit interested in someone like Jonna.

The word FRAGILE was printed in red stenciled letters on the crate next to the doctor. Jonna's eyes wandered back to the doctor's hips and legs. *I wonder how fragile she is?*

Dr. Veronica Hill straightened, her eyes cold over the skinny rimless spectacles. "What are you doing?"

Jonna's gaze swept up to impossibly chocolate eyes. She had to overcome an urge to step closer and lick them. "What?"

"I said, what are you doing?"

"I heard you the first time."

"Then why did you act like you didn't?"

Jonna met her penetrating gaze. "I was stalling for time so I could recover."

"From what?"

"Well..."

Facing Jonna now, one fist clenching the ink pen, braced on a hip. "From what?" she insisted.

"Your ass."

"What?"

"Now you're stalling. You heard me."

Veronica scowled like an angry cat, her eyes somehow bigger through the lenses of the *fuck-me I'm-smart* spectacles. Jonna thought that maybe the doctor was trying to create a flame on Jonna's skin; focusing the lenses just right in alignment with the sunset streaming in through the high windows. She expected her face to burst into flames at any moment.

So this was how it was going to be. There was her work personality, and then the play one.

"Who are you and what are you doing down here?"

Jonna frowned. Maybe she didn't recognize her. The bar had been pretty dark. Was this an act? Or didn't she even remember? Jonna sniffed, leaning on the broom handle, one hand sliding into her khaki pants-pocket. "Well, if you stopped trying to bore a hole through my head, you'd see I'm wearing a maintenance uniform." She withdrew her hand and offered a helpful display hand to the tag on her shirt that read, MAINTENANCE.

Dr. Hill sighed. "I mean, why are you sweeping down here?"

Jonna quirked her mouth to the side. "Um, well, it's part of my job description."

The professor looked over Jonna's shoulder as if to find someone in authority. "My understanding was that no one was allowed down here but the scientists who were--" She stopped, looked back at Jonna, leaning on her broom, and now, unabashedly checking out her cleavage. "Stop it."

Jonna's eyes lifted again, to chocolate bon-bons, having changed from milk chocolate to dark. "Is this some kind of game? Or don't you remember me?" Jonna said.

Dr. Hill frowned. "I'm sorry?"

"Last night. At Maiden's."

A rush of crimson colored the doctor's face. Jonna imagined that she had used her own lesbian super powers to reflect the evil plasma ray back onto the professor.

Jonna pushed the broom again a few feet and swiveled it around to come back. "I guess you were too drunk to remember."

Veronica Hill studied her face like it was one of her dinosaur bones in a delivery crate.

"Don't worry. I won't rat you out or anything."

"I was...we...met?"

~~"Met?" Jonna laughed. "Yeah. We met. Our lips met, our tongues met and--"~~

Dr. Hill stuttered, "That was you?"

"That was me." Jonna watched the woman squirm for a second and then pushed the broom by one a parallel path again, her eyes playing at the delicate nape of the neck, revealed beneath the hastily wound up and pinned hair, the color of a Hershey bar.

"I didn't realize..."

"Yeah, apparently."

The professor's eyes darted around the basement, probably for onlookers or anyone within earshot. "This is...awkward."

"It wasn't so awkward last night," Jonna said.

"I'm sorry...I had too much to drink and it was dark and--"

"I'd seen you around here, in your official capacity. I just thought it was a scream to see you shaking your tail feathers on the dance floor with that cute little blonde chick. So I bought you a drink."

Veronica held the clipboard, her pen aloft over the paper, blinking at Jonna over her compact, rimless reading glasses.

"It's okay. I just wanted you to know that you weren't the only one here at the museum."

"The only one?"

"Lesbian."

"I'm not--"

"Again, you were at a gay bar, dancing with other chicks, and then you made out with me."

Dr. Hill pressed the clipboard against her chest, perhaps to block access to at least one of Jonna's favorite locations. "Don't you have another area to clean?"

"This is the last part before my shift is over. I work from the top floors down to the basement. This is the basement."

"Well I don't discuss my personal life with strangers."

"Define strangers," Jonna challenged.

Dr. Hill sighed heavily and slid her fingers under her glasses, pinched the bridge of her nose.

"I get it," Jonna said. "We're going to pretend it never happened."

"I didn't know you were...I didn't know you worked here."

"You mean, you didn't know I was just a janitor. You must really be humiliated, to stoop that low. You should probably go see a therapist or something."

"Stop it."

"Stop what? Stop telling the truth?"

Veronica shook her head as if some voice in her mind was screaming at her. "Hurry up and just...don't touch any of these specimens."

"Specimens? I thought that was a term you used for things that were alive."

"Not necessarily."

"These are ancient bones, right?" She glanced over at the plaster chunk with dirt and gray object inside, and then to the other plaster encasement that held the triangular object with mysterious knobs about the size and shape of a road construction cone, except the sides were flat like a cabinet. There were different sets of knobs on each tier of it. It was a dark brown color, with dark red and gold carvings all over it. The object lay nestled in soil. "Except that. That looks like a Flintstones radio."

"Don't touch this either."

"What is it, Dr. Don't-Touch?"

She ignored the jibe. "We don't know yet. It could be a very important artifact. I'm about to

examine it. So if you touch it, you will contaminate it."

"Oh, you mean like I contaminated *you* last night?"

Her warning sounded like verbally stomping brakes. "Don't. Touch. It."

Dr. Hill pulled blue surgical gloves from her pocket and slipped them on. Jonna was unable to stop the twinge of excitement that gave her. How much would she like to play doctor with Dr. Hill? But it was only so the professor could handle the weird radio-artifact-thing in the plaster cocoon. Not so she could handle Jonna. She was a bit surprised that the sexy professor was even interested, since it was clear that Veronica Hill was sorry she'd ever laid a hand on Jonna. Or her lips.

Dr. Hill loosened the soil around the stone object, lifted the contraption out, and set it carefully on top of the crate. It lay flat against the rough wood, about as thick as a big city phone book, as she leaned over it, frowning and thinking professorish thoughts, to include huge words that Jonna could never possibly understand.

Seeking some supporting evidence for kicking her to the curb, Jonna checked out the doctor's clothes. It wasn't exactly what academic types usually wore. But she understood that this professor worked in the field a lot. Digging up bones. She looked like she was about to do it again today, but here she was in the basement, inspecting this Flintstones radio. Khaki pants and shirt, hiking boots. Pretty close to the clothes Jonna was wearing. Only hers had a maintenance patch on it. And of course that made all the difference. Maybe the doctor needed her own patch that said, *High-Falutin' Fossil Goddess*.

The coat Veronica Hill had on over it all, looked Australian. Like something Crocodile Dundee would wear. Canvas. A buckskin color, with a leather collar and patches on the sleeves, and those little snaps on the back, she knew was for pulling apart to drape over a horse's rump while riding. She wondered if Professor Hill rode horses, hypnotized by an image of Dr. Hill clinging to her as they rode across a field of fossils. She shook the image away.

Around the professor's neck was an expensive looking scarf. It didn't really match the coat, but it was cold down here.

The doctor was now effectively ignoring her, so Jonna tore her eyes away from the clothes, the Flintstones radio and the professor's backside, swept up the paper and plaster debris in front of her broom with a flourish, and pushed it out into the hall to her previous pile. After sweeping it all into the upright dustpan, she returned the items to the closet in the corridor, and pulled on her canvas coat lined with fake sheep's wool. Her backpack waited on the shelf where she'd stowed it. One thing all her self-study and jobs had taught her was to be prepared. She carried everything that she felt she might need in a pinch in that backpack. And it went everywhere with her.

A formal education had never been in the cards for her, but she firmly believed that universities weren't the only source of information. These days, there were hundreds of educational programs on television, and Jonna paid for the most expensive package at the cable company. It was her one splurge in her otherwise anemic budget. Her other source of information was her job. Whichever one it might be at any given time.

She changed jobs rather frequently, taking them mostly according to whim. Usually, she worked as janitorial staff or maintenance, at the places where she thought she might learn something that mattered. In the last few years, she had worked at a national park, a law firm, a hospital, a library, a police station, and now, a museum. Though she'd only been here a week.

She was on her way to the stairs, when she thought about the Flintstones radio. Drawn back into the room, as much for the artifact, as to catch another glimpse of the ultra-sexy professor, Jonna strolled into the main room of the basement again.

The doctor was gone. But the weird radio was still lying there. Unable to resist, Jonna moved over to it for one last look before going home for the night. She wouldn't be going out again this

evening. She'd be watching TV. She had several episodes of *Survivorman* on her DVR. Probably what she should have done last night, too, instead of pursuing the professor.

Pausing, she hovered over the triangle artifact. It looked like it had been carved from stone. But it also looked like wood. Maybe it was petrified wood? Jonna wondered how old this thing really was. There were an awful lot of knobs on it, for something that had been dug out of the ground next to dinosaur bones. Two big knobs at the top and then more and more of them toward the bottom. The second knob at the top was in the middle of a five-pointed star. The knobs looked like dials of some sort, with arrows in different positions. Some of the knobs were more like buttons, for pushing.

Jonna glanced over her shoulder for any sign of Dr. Hill. She must have needed a potty break. *She got so excited about the Flintstones radio, she nearly peed on herself.*

Her eyes back on the object, Jonna set her backpack down and wiped her fingertips on a clean spot at the bottom of her khaki shirt before gingerly grasping the top knob. She felt it turn a little under her fingers; and twisted it to the left, and it clicked. Then she turned the knob below it to the left. And the one below that, as well, but nothing happened. No cuckoo came out, no AM talk radio. No gophers that needed bashing with an oversized sledge hammer.

There was a slider button resting at the bottom of the object. She pushed it slowly upward.

In a sudden whirling dervish of shouting and hands upon her, Dr. Hill was there, her voice high-pitched. "I told you not to touch it!"

In her blue rubber gloves, with her pinned up hair falling down on one side and the crazy gleam in her eyes, she looked like a mad scientist about to perform surgery on Jonna. *Without permission. C*
anesthetic.

Had this been any other situation, Jonna might have enjoyed the presence of the professor's body within kissing distance again, but anger was generally not the emotion she wanted women to have when they were that close to her.

Jonna took a step back, stumbling on the backpack, her foot tangling in the strap. She reached her hand back for balance, her fingers landing, unfortunately, on the stone fossil, right on top of the slider knob. The pressure caused it to skate all the way up, with another clicking sound.

Dr. Hill shrieked like a banshee, "You touched it again!?"

As Jonna snatched her hand away from the stone pyramid, she said, "If you weren't all up in my grill, I wouldn't have touched it again! I lost my balance!"

But they both noticed the clicking and humming sound. It was coming from the artifact.

Somehow, Jonna had animated it. She smiled as she turned to look down at it, the professor beside her, managing to make her eyes look both bulbous and scrunched up.

"There, see? I got it to work. You're welcome."

The professor grabbed her arm like she was going to jerk her away from the precious stone object. A searing light enveloped them. A whooshing sound, a sucking, and Jonna was a dustbunny on its way into a high-powered vacuum like she used.

Then she was compressed, crushed, and everything went dark.



Chapter
Jurass

Bedspins. How long had it been since Veronica felt that? College? She smelled something earthy and wet. A distinctive odor of moss, dead leaves and lichen.

Lifting heavy eyelids, a searing light accosted her eyes, intensifying the pounding headache. The source of the light was above. Her cheek pressed against gritty, uneven ground, and her breath was a puff of vapor.

Chilly air.

Refocusing through a squint, she saw a dirt floor, mixed with rock. She inhaled, discerning the scent of calcium and limestone. A light beam about six feet in circumference blasted down from the ceiling. She rolled to her back, lolling her head to the right, and saw the other young woman next to her, splayed face-down, eyes closed. *Is she dead?*

Veronica turned over on her elbows, reaching a blue-gloved hand to jostle the shoulder of the woman in the old canvas coat.

Janitor-girl's eyelids popped open, and she turned her head, hazel eyes going wide. "What the fuck just happened?"

"I have no idea." Veronica sat up, scooting away, out of the blinding circle of light. She watched the young woman draw a leg up, and fumble with the backpack strap around her ankle, sending buoyant dust into the light beam.

Freeing the pack, she looked over at Veronica. "What did you do?"

Veronica shook her head. "I didn't do anything."

The young woman seemed to be thinking it over. She stared at the walls of the cave around them, took a long breath. "I think that radio artifact is some kind of zapper. A transport device."

The professor looked at her, wondering if maybe she was dealing with one of those people who liked to believe that everything was mysterious and spooky, while most things in this world had--if not a simple explanation--at least a rational one. *Occam's Razor.*

"Well, what else? We were in the museum basement and now we're here in this...cave. I'm sure you saw that light--" she paused, following the light beam between them upward into the rock ceiling of the cave, where it blasted through a small opening. "And did you also feel that crushing sensation? Something zapped us. We changed locations. The Flintstones radio was a sort of transporter."

"You've watched far too many Indiana Jones movies." Veronica didn't mention the fact that she'd seen all of those movies herself, repeatedly. What young aspiring archaeologist or paleontologist wouldn't have watched them?

The janitor-girl pushed herself up and wiped the dirt from her hands. "Not ashamed of that. They were good movies." She looked around at the cavern. "This does sort of look like the Temple of Doom."

Veronica stared at the craggy walls of the cave. It wasn't the first time she'd seen a view like this. But usually, she was more purposeful about being in a hole in the ground. It wasn't a location one found oneself magically transported to.

There had to be an explanation. A rational one. Not one borne of Hollywood fantasy.

~~—She watched the other woman wander toward the far wall, and tried to think back to the sequence of events. They were in the museum. *Right.* Then the maintenance gal--*what was her name?*--touched the artifact, and there was a bright light and a compression sensation, and then they both woke up here~~
Elsewhere.

Pushing at her spectacles with a blue-gloved finger, the digit landed on the bridge of her nose instead. Her glasses were gone. She blinked. She couldn't recall if she'd still had them on when--had she really been transported to another location? *Not possible.* Although she was no physicist. But what else could it be? They had been knocked unconscious by some noxious gas in the artifact and then someone moved them while they were out? *But who would do that? And why?*

As her eyes adjusted to the shrouding darkness around the beam of light, she had déjà vu. This wasn't just any cave. It was strangely similar to the one she'd been in, not ten days ago. She let her eyes trail up the beam of light, originating some twenty feet in the air at a small aperture in the ceiling. *Just like the Pitfall Cave.* But how could she be there, in a remote region of New Zealand, when she was just at the museum in the United States a few moments ago?

Wiping mindlessly at the dirt on her cheek, she pulled the rubber gloves off and stuck them in her coat pocket. Crawling over, she placed a steadying hand against the cave wall, and got to her feet.

How did one formulate an explanation for something so immediately inexplicable?

Her rational mind had served her well throughout her career and her life. It had gotten her scholarships to the best universities. It had garnered her a PhD in paleontology and lesser degrees in paleobotany, archeology and biology; and it had kept her from making terrible mistakes in her personal life. *Well, perhaps except for that lustful faux pas in the bar last night with the janitor-girl.* Other than that, she always made decisions based on her intellect, and not her primal desires. Veronica had watched many of her friends fall prey to such things and tried to be there for them to help pick up the pieces of their shattered lives after they realized their mistakes in letting their emotions guide them.

There was in fact, only one time when Veronica Hill allowed herself to throw caution to the wind, and it was on the weekends she went out dancing. Sometimes she would have trysts with the women at the bar, but never did she allow them to come home with her, not anymore. Nor did she even let them know her last name, or what she did for a living.

Her social arrangement was enough to feed the fires of inevitable desire, but not enough to endanger her carefully planned and prescribed life in the professional world. It just so happened that this time, she had picked the one woman who worked in the same place she did. She hadn't recognized her. Why would she? The woman was a janitor.

Was it inevitable that she would cross paths with one of those women she used and tossed aside?

Her attention back in the cave, she looked around again, her eyes snagging on the floor below the beam of light. *Just like the floor of Pitfall Cave.* Where she had found the pyramid-shaped stone artifact. She'd noticed a slight anomaly in the surface of the ground, and when she investigated by taking her brush to the floor, she'd found the artifact. She had dug it out and wasted no time getting it back to the museum so she could examine it properly. She'd beaten it back, in fact, since shipping and customs took a bit longer than a few, albeit lengthy, plane rides.

Now, sitting in a place so similar to Pitfall Cave, the light shifted just-so. She stared at the illuminated ground beneath the beam of light. *Silly. What were the chances?*

Ignoring her self-recriminations, Veronica crawled over to the bright spot and could swear there was something rough just under the sediment, there.

Tentatively, she reached to brush the dirt away. In a moment, she was stunned to find the stone artifact. *Again.*

But how could it be here, when it was just at the museum? As she grabbed a loose stone to help her dig the object out, she thought it over.

Was there some correlation? The fact that she had been looking at an artifact found on that very dig, and now, here it was in this new location, which she had somehow been transported to in a flash of light. *This new location that seemed to be...the same location?*

She glanced up at the beam, particles dancing through it like meandering gnats. *Light. A recurring theme, here.* Something about the light was meaningful, maybe.

Pitfall Cave had been a cornucopia of dinosaur bones, dating back to the late Jurassic period. Some, marine animals, but an appreciable portion were also terrestrial, which had been itself a surprise to the scientific community. As yet, none of the bones had been arboreal. There was only one bird in the late-Jurassic, the *archaeopteryx*, and it was rare to find a fossil of it.

She peered up into the opening above. It had apparently been covered in vegetation and unsuspecting animals would wander around and sometimes fall into the pit. Since there was no easy exit from the cave, except for smaller creatures. The hapless victims of the pitfall would either die of internal injuries from the impact, or from dehydration and starvation. Most of them from the latter two, since she'd discovered many skeletons curled in various corners of the cave. If they'd all died on impact, there would have been a massive mound of bones directly under the opening. Directly in the beam of light. But she had only found a few in that location.

On the dig that began six years ago, she'd stumbled upon the cave, and noticed right away the aperture in the ceiling, and the beam of light. Below it, had been several fossilized skeletons. Beneath the *Dicynadon* bones, she'd uncovered the stone artifact.

Now, she and the janitor-girl had awakened in this same light. As if they had fallen into the pit the same way the prehistoric animals had. Did that mean they were also trapped and doomed to die of starvation or dehydration? She checked herself. That would mean she had to accept the janitor-girl's suspicion that they had been magically transported here by the artifact.

The artifact she knew was in the museum, but now, she was digging up out of the ground again.

Pausing, she stared at the revealed portion of the face, peppered with knobs, the engravings here and there, where they peeked out of the soil. She had to get it out of there. Had to examine it. Veronica wished she'd had more time to examine the artifact before, while she was in the basement. She hadn't even taken a sample to send to the lab for radiometric dating.

Halting her digging, she sighed. The rock was not getting the job done. She needed a proper tool to dig with. A spade. A trowel. Even a kitchen spoon would be better than the round stone in her hand. If only she had her field gear with her, now. She sighed down at the stone façade and pushed to her feet.

The janitor-girl was gone. Veronica wiped sweat from her brow with the back of her hand. She moved toward the far wall, finding a passage there that had not been in the cave where she had originally found the artifact. Did that mean this was another cave, that just happened to be almost identical? Or did that mean it was the same cave, but there was an exit created later? *Later.* Meaning, this cave was in the past? Or there was an exit, now, and this cave was in the future? She shook her head. This magical supposition was doing nothing to relieve her headache.

The short corridor was littered with bones. Far too many of them on top of the ground. An eerie tickle fluttered around on the skin of her chest. Ancient bones were hardly ever on top of the soil, although a cave environment made that possible. Yet, the passage of great chunks of time usually ensured that they would be covered by sediment. And although she and the other scientists and students on the dig had found evidence of a thriving terrestrial fauna, believed to be nonexistent, the Pitfall Cave she had been excavating over these last few months had no bones completely exposed on the topsoil. This Pitfall Cave, however, did.

In the adjoining chamber, the professor squatted in front of an intact skeleton. To her educated eyes, it was clearly prehistoric. It wasn't a modern possum skeleton. Nor was it one of the modern introduced or invasive species, such as a cat, ferret, hedgehog or pig. This was the skeleton of a small theropod from the Jurassic period.

Dr. Hill made a concerted effort to still her thumping pulse with a few slow breaths. Her rational mind was now essentially standing in the middle of her consciousness, with its fingers in its ears.

Continuing around the corner, Veronica saw the janitor-girl, peering up at the stalactites adorning the ceiling--dripstones caused by the limestone-enriched condensation leaving deposits over long periods of time. Gravity did the rest. Sometimes the dripstones looked like teeth.

Veronica's eyes fell to the backpack slung on the woman's shoulder. *The backpack.* "Do you have something to dig with, in that bag?"

The woman turned. "You think there's going to be a cave-in?"

"No."

"Then, what--"

"I need something to dig with."

That's when she noticed the round shard in the woman's hand. Had the janitor broken a stalactite off the ceiling? *Oaf.* "Why did you break that?"

"I didn't break it. It was on the ground, here." The woman looked over at her, held it in her fist like a knife. "It might come in handy."

"In case you want to stab me?"

"Are you thinking I might want to at some point?"

"Possibly."

Suddenly chagrined by her own myopia, Veronica looked around on the floor, and finding no other broken pieces, she crossed the hard floor and reached up to another stalactite, pushing at it.

"Um...are you trying to break that?" the woman asked.

"Yes."

"Didn't you just reprimand me for that?"

"I need something to dig with."

"Oh I see, it's okay if you're the one breaking it..."

Ignoring her, Veronica glanced around and found a hefty rock, and hammered the side of the stalactite that looked like the fang of a *tyrannosaurus*; close to 14 inches. It broke off, and she headed back to the pitfall chamber.

"Shouldn't we check out these other passages, first, and find one that leads outside?" the other woman said. "What do you need to dig for?"

"I need it to dig up the artifact."

The janitor-girl spoke to her back, with a measured amount of derision. "You do know that's still in the basement of the museum, right?"

"It's at this location too."

A hand grabbed her arm, and turned her around. The janitor wore a deep frown.

Veronica sighed. "I just found the stone artifact buried beneath the beam of light where we worked up."

The woman blinked at her. "How...how is that possible?"

"I don't know."

"Isn't it your job to know?"

"I'm not a pastor. I'm a scientist. It's okay for us to say we don't know."

"Well do you have a theory?"

"Not at the moment. I just know we've been relocated. And there's another artifact in the same

place where I found the one I had shipped to the museum." She turned and continued to the previous chamber.

The woman stayed behind a few beats longer and then said, "I've got to see this."

In the pitfall chamber again, Veronica knelt in front of the exposed frontispiece.

"I'll be damn," the janitor-girl said.

Damned. You'll be damned, Veronica mentally corrected her. The professor bent to the task of jabbing at the dirt around the artifact.

After a minute, Veronica sat back and sighed. "This is better than a rock, but still, it's going to take too long. Do you have something sharper in your bag?"

"How can that thing be here when it was at the museum a few minutes ago?"

"Once again, I don't know."

The woman blinked and looked at the partially exposed façade and then back up along the beam of light, now waning as the sun moved.

"So?" Veronica looked at her.

The janitor-girl shook her confusion away. "Oh." She slid the backpack off her shoulder, looked at it and then said, "I don't have...all I have is this." She held the stalactite out. After a moment, she dropped to her knees and began stabbing her own stalactite into the soil around the right side of the stone triangle.

The woman. The janitor-girl. Veronica knew almost nothing about this person, although apparently while in a drunken stupor, she had swapped saliva with her only the night before. *The night before, millions of years in the future?* Her mind dismissed the rumination. It was just too crazy. Still, she supposed introductions were in order. "What's your name?"

"Wondered when you were going to ask." She stabbed the dirt with the stalactite fang, and glanced over at Veronica, who was still waiting for an answer. "Jonna Clarke."

John-uh? "Did your father name you that because he wanted a son?"

Jonna stopped digging and sat back on her haunches. "I think I've just decided I don't like you."

"I'm crushed."

Jonna looked down at the stalactite. "I see what you mean about needing to stab you..."

A threat, but probably not serious. Veronica ignored her and went back to the spot under the beam. Jabbing the point of the fangish limestone tool into the earth, she was making only slow progress loosening its grip on the stone.

Jonna sat staring at the far wall of the cave for a moment before she spoke. "What the fuck is going on? Where are we?"

The professor looked over at her, sighing, the back of her hand swiping at the beads of sweat that had freshly formed on her forehead. "I wish I could tell you for sure. I can only guess."

Jonna turned the cave-dagger over in her hand, and rubbed a thumb across the rough area where it had broken off. "What's your guess?"

"I think we're in a place called Pitfall Cave."

"How do you know?"

"I've been here before."

Jonna looked over at her curiously.

"On a dig," she explained. "I left that location just a few days ago." She jabbed at more dirt and shoveled it out with her fingers. "It's where I found this stone artifact. Or...at least, it's where I found the one I had in the basement."

Veronica paused to regard her. Jonna studied her face, then looked at the half-buried object, trailed her eyes around the floor of the cave, looked up into the waning beam of light and the opening where it originated. "What happens when that sunlight goes away?"

Veronica stopped and cast her eyes to the ceiling. "We'll be in the dark."

~~She was rather running out of time to get this relic excavated. That's when another thought~~ occurred to her. She was so used to having help in the field, used to having tools and supplies, that she didn't stop to think about how they would move and transport this hunk of carved stone. It might be too cumbersome to carry very far, and she had no canvas strips or sticks to suspend it from. But if the niggling ideas in her head proved true, there wasn't much point in carrying it anywhere. She needed to study it and figure out if it was going to help them get back to where they were. She sat back and propped her elbows on her knees.

"What's wrong?" Jonna asked.

"We'll have to leave it where it is until I can rig something to carry it in." She looked up at Jonna's JanSport.

"Oh, no, I'm not emptying out my stuff so you can shove that thing in my pack."

"Well then we'll have to think of something else."

"Why did you want to take it in the first place?"

She frowned over at Jonna. "I'm sure it's the key to getting us out of here."

Now Jonna sat back with a frown. "Oh, now you're considering the magical transport-thing. Now that it's *your* idea."

Professor Hill knew there was no point in engaging this woman in verbal sparring about whose idea was whose. She sighed and looked at the tooth-shaped stalactite in her hand.

Jonna shoved the stalactite dagger into her coat pocket and stood up, wandering toward the passageway.

Aware of an odd feeling of displacement, Veronica thought it was not unlike the one she always got after a 16 hour flight over the ocean, landing in Auckland, or when she'd landed at LAX again, on her way back to the States. It felt like being in a dream; her brain heavy, foggy. She didn't like it. She needed to think.

A skittering noise took the professor's attention to the nearest wall ahead of her. *A lizard*. Not just any lizard though. The kind that had its own classification. A Tuatara. She recognized it right away, with its dragon-like appearance and olive-green-gray coloring. It was often referred to as a living fossil, since the species had survived without much alteration in form for 200 million years. The indigenous Maori people believed them to be keepers of knowledge. Veronica wished it could tell her what the hell was going on. This particular Tuatara basking in the periphery of sunlight was a baby, only around six inches. Full grown adults grew to almost two feet.

Because of this, Veronica knew that she was indeed in Aotearoa - *the Land of the Long White Cloud*. Better known as New Zealand. The Tuatara only existed there, and still existed in modern day though an endangered and protected species.

It at least answered one of her questions. The *where*. She might never know the *how*. But the more sobering question that came next was *when*? Still, it would be helpful to know at least what she was dealing with. Somehow they had been--to use Jonna's term--*zapped*. And not just to another county or state, but seven thousand miles away.

Veronica dusted off her hands and stood up. "We should find a way out and have a look around. See what we're dealing with." She looked up at the hole in the ceiling, and back down at the half-buried artifact. Squatting, she covered it back up with the loose dirt.

"What did you do that for?"

"I don't want it to get damaged."

"How is it going to get damaged?"

She continued shoveling loose dirt on top of it with her hands until it was covered as completely as before. "Just being careful. We might need it."

Jonna seemed to have another question, but apparently decided against asking it.

~~Veronica headed for the passageway, with Jonna right behind her. She paused, engaged in staring at the claw marks by a tiny crack in the wall. The same claw marks she'd seen in Pitfall Cave. As if some creature had been madly raking to get out. Probably, it had been seeking an escape route. The image of those claw marks had been embedded in her mind, and these were exactly the same. In the same location relative to the cave chambers. In a sudden tingling certainty, Veronica knew that she was in Pitfall Cave. Again.~~

If she ignored the obvious questions that wanted to emerge in her brain, she could instead focus on the fact that she knew where the exit was.

In the adjoining chamber, Jonna peered around while Veronica headed right for a small corridor. Jonna followed, and soon they were standing in front of a small fissure, the daylight making a swath of white on the cave floor. The opening was smaller. *Odd*. But perhaps not so odd, if she believed that this was an earlier time. She'd walked in and out of this cave a hundred times during the dig, and this opening had been large enough to step through. Regardless, it was a way out.

Sighing with relief, she crossed the stony threshold and stood outside under the early afternoon sun, blazing with a ferocious amount of intensity through nearby trees and singeing the underbrush. They were closer to the sun. The orbit of the earth was closer to the sun here, than in northern hemisphere. The lower level of air pollution was also a factor. Maybe a bigger one at the moment, if her creeping suspicions were accurate.

Engaging her paleobotanist brain, she looked closer. A particular leaf, a certain insect trundling along the forest floor, specific mosses and ferns. The absence of flowers. When she saw the centipede it might as well have been crawling onto her neck for the sensation it gave her. She swallowed hard and looked up at the sky. In the distance, winged creatures, much too large to be hawks.

They had indeed moved through time as well as space. Inexplicably, horrifyingly. She took a measured breath and tried to remain scientific. It would do them no good to panic.

Stepping around a verdant bush, she paused and touched the trunk of a massive tree she recognized as a totara. Indigenous to Australia and New Zealand. As she stepped farther into the forest, she noticed the tall podocarps, relatives of *Agathis australis* --the modern kauri--as well as *Wollemia nobilis*, the Wollemi pine. Within view, her trained eyes also noticed the vegetation growing beneath the pines. Hornwort, liverwort, horsetail, particular mosses. Yards away, she thought she could make out an ancient ginkgo that was now extinct.

Another careful breath released through her pursed lips, and she swallowed the fear that perched at the back of her throat. For a scientist, this could be construed as the ultimate playground. But she was also just a human being, and human beings had evolved, but not without the inclusion of the amygdala. The lizard-brain. The seat of the flight-or-flight response. Her leg muscles twitched, and she quashed a sudden urge to run.

Scientist. Be a scientist.

The super continent upon which she now stood originally included India, South America, Africa, Antarctica, and Australia, as well as New Zealand. It appeared that they were indeed in New Zealand. All around her, she saw more evidence of her suspicions.

"Holy fuck..." she heard Jonna whisper behind her.

Veronica took her hand off the tree and faced her. "Don't freak out."

"Where the hell are we?"

Veronica still thought better of revealing too much, too soon. "We are elsewhere."

"Oh thanks, Professor Obvious. I feel so much better now."

Veronica pulled her favorite Australian Kakadu drover's coat tighter around herself. It was chilly. Like autumn. But if it was October, it would be spring. A chilly spring to be sure, but the

weather could change abruptly here. So they would have night and day for now. Lucky they didn't land in the perpetual darkness of winter. But if they didn't find a way out of here, in a few months, that's exactly what they'd be dealing with. And their chances of survival would be almost nil. Predators ruled during the dark months.

"Doc?" came the almost trembling query.

She turned. "New Zealand. We're in New Zealand."

Jonna blinked at her. "I've never even been out of my home state..."

"We should...we should go back in the cave for now. I need to think..."

"You can only think in caves?" Jonna frowned, looked around for what must be bothering the professor, but seemed unable to discern it. "Okay...it's your turf. Whatever you think."

She knew that a layperson always looked at things but never really saw the details. The brain made assumptions based on past experiences. And while Veronica Hill had never had this particular experience, she knew enough about prehistory to recognize the signs that would identify *when* they were.

Releasing a pent-up breath, she headed back to the mouth of the cave and ducked inside. Leaning against an inner wall, she studied the floor of the cave, the ceiling, rubbing her fingers together like they were worry-stones, her thoughts beginning to bottle-neck in her brain. She had to remain calm.

Jonna was standing next to her, now. "What's got you spooked, Doc? You look a little pasty."

Still struggling to accept the truth about what had happened to them, Veronica's rational mind quibbled with it. There really was no other way to explain where they had found themselves, and how they had gotten here. There were only a few possibilities that she could discern.

(A) The artifact was a time travel device, left there by intelligent life forms with advanced technology, disguised to fit in by making it out of stone. *That would mean the ancient aliens theories were true.*

Or (B) the artifact was a time travel device left there by...well, a time traveler.

If at some point in the future, time travel had been mastered, then that meant someone could travel back to any time in history, theoretically, and plant the artifact. It might seem like science fiction now, but it wouldn't if time travel had actually become a reality in the future.

Just like no one in the 1950's ever imagined that we would be communicating through text messages on tiny handheld devices that were also telephones, reading books on glowing electronic screens, and linking to and interacting with each other in myriad ways on something called the Internet. This time-traveler-planting-the-artifact-theory would not only make more sense, but it was hypothesis bolstered by science and not by superstition and wild speculation. Even if it was hard to imagine.

Either way, the artifact was a time-travel device.

There were bones on top of the cave floor because the animals had fallen in recently. But if the skeletons were any indication, she could make an educated guess about the time period. The first set of bones she'd had analyzed at the dig site had been from circa 150 million years ago. If the animals these bones belonged to were prehistoric, and the bones weren't buried here now, it meant that she and Jonna were trapped in that time period.

The Late Jurassic. One hundred fifty million years ago.

Now.

Glancing over at Jonna, she could see the pallor of her face in the dim cavern. The professor's fear was now influencing Jonna's. She wouldn't mention her ideas just yet. The woman probably needed more time to absorb the mere fact of their transport to another location halfway around the world. Veronica didn't need her freaking out about possibly being sent to another time in history.

Beyond them, from the pitfall chamber, came a crackling sound, a thud, and then the bleating

and clicking of a stunned animal.

—Veronica went through the possibilities in her head; what sort of animal that sound could originate from; and all the answers were the sort that advised against any close-up investigation. "We'd better go back outside for a bit..."

"Why? What was that?"

"Some animal just fell through that hole in the ceiling. We should put some distance between it and us."

"Why? What do you think it is?"

"Nothing either of us wants to deal with, I assure you." Her scientific curiosity niggled at her to go peek in the chamber, just to get a glimpse, but they were in close quarters, and could be easily trapped if that creature entered the second chamber where they stood. It wouldn't be wise.

She started around Jonna, glancing back to make sure she was behind her and not heading to the other chamber out of some misplaced curiosity. Another bleating from the chamber behind them, and in a sudden burst of motivation, Jonna caught up to her.

Veronica ducked through the opening to stand outside again, moving off to one side.

Jonna followed, saying, "Why not just hike until we figure out where we are? We can get to where civilization is, and then call a cab or something."

A humorless laugh erupted from Veronica's lips.

Jonna lowered her brows. "And you're laughing at me because--?"

Veronica shook her head, unwilling to engage in this conversation, either, just yet. Nothing was clear to her, even though a voice somewhere in her mind was certain of the situation. And that voice was doing little to assuage the primal - if not *primeval* - fear flopping in her chest.



She had laughed at her. Even though Jonna felt the suggestion was a solid one. *Hike. Find transportation out of here.* New Zealand might have lots of jungles and trees and nature and stuff like that, but people lived there, ferfucksake. Someone would have to have a phone.

Phone.

Jonna pulled her pack around and took out her cell phone, turning it on and looking at the Wi-Fi symbol. *Dead space here. No bars.* She grinned. None of the other kind of bars either, she'd bet. *The kind that held sexy professors who drank too much and decided to kiss her.* She'd have to keep checking for the other kind of bars.

A few feet away, the professor was watching her hold her phone up in the air and wave it around seeking a signal. Dr. Hill sort of shook her head, then went back to her Sherlock Holmes routine with some green plants. Jonna kept an eye on the mouth of the cave for whatever that critter was that fell through the ceiling hole.

There sure was something strange going on, and she was afraid to ask what it was. Watching Dr. Veronica Hill for a long moment, she noticed how the woman was staring around at the forest, with an expression that didn't seem like comfort. It was a mixture of joy and fear, if that was even possible. The doctor had been here before, so why was she acting like this place was so strange to her? Even though the professor seemed to know more about it than Jonna did, it raised her hackles to have her laugh when she suggested they find a way to get a cab or something.

In the back of Jonna's mind, she knew enough about what had happened, to appreciate how bizarre it was; too scary to even think about, maybe. That triangle radio-thing was more than just an ancient hunk of stone. It was a device. A weird Star-Trekkie transport device. And she had accidentally turned that sucker on when she adjusted the knobs, and then leaned on the slider. There was no other explanation. They were zapped by some light from the artifact and woke up in a cave. A cave in New Zealand, no less. And one that Dr. Hill obviously recognized. And even more weirdly, the same one she'd found the artifact in to begin with.

It would explain why the professor had laughed at her. She said something stupid, ignoring the obvious. They were probably miles and miles away from civilization. Didn't paleontologists dig remote areas? *Of course they dig remote areas.* Jonna smiled at her own joke. She should have gone into the T-shirt making business. *I dig remote areas.* Obviously, dig sites were remote, though. *You never hear about a fossil discovery in front of Starbucks.*

But the professor laughing at her; and the fact that the stone artifact was a transport device, might mean, as much as Jonna did not want to admit it, that they could be in another time. No telling how long ago. Any minute now, there might be some covered wagon pulled by horses, and a pioneer family perched inside it. *Did New Zealand have pioneers?*

Maybe it would be more like abor...aborigines...carrying spears, with painted faces and a nice boiling pot of water back at their camp, just waiting for two young women to sweeten the stew. Jonna shivered.

Or maybe they were in the future, even. She'd heard the audiobook version of H.G Wells' *The*

Time Machine. She'd also seen the movies based on it. At any moment, she imagined a group of troglodyte Morlocks emerging from the ground, with bits of Eloi still clinging to their chins. —

Jonna shoved her shaking hands into her coat pockets, her finger locating a tear in the bottom seam that she kept meaning to repair. She wanted off this carnival ride. Enough was enough. She wanted to go home. Now. Home, to her boring living room with her television and a plate full of nachos.

The only adventures she'd ever had were inside the earbuds as she listened to audio books. Or in the movies. Or documentaries. All very well and good, and nothing dangerous about that. But if she was in some other primitive area, and didn't even know where or when or how they got there, the adventure shifted into nightmare territory and she had no desire to be part of that. Easy to be entertained from your La-Z-Boy, but not when it was actually happening to you.

Right now, the professor was making goo-goo eyes at plants like she was an overgrown kid in a toy store or something, and Jonna could still hear that animal-sound every so often, coming from the cave, though farther away. That critter was probably looking for the door out. *Or maybe being stalked by a Morlock*. Jonna could almost see the white hair, sunken pink eyes, and chalky skin of the creatures.

She shook the image away, and focused instead on Veronica, surprised at the professor being so comfortable. Now, the doc moved through the brush and trees like it was a make-up counter at Macy's. But then, the woman did dig in the dirt for a living. And she did say she was in a cave like that only a few days ago. There was probably quite a bit about her that Jonna couldn't begin to guess. Which made her all the more intriguing. If she wasn't so exasperating. Jonna was sure that the doc saw her as some modern Neanderthal. Probably because Jonna was only a janitor at the museum; and because she obviously hadn't attended any fancy universities. Jonna was now determined to show her that intelligence came in different packages.

But for now, she should just follow the professor's lead. Jonna was not accustomed to caves and forests. Seeing them on television and being in them yourself were two different things, even if she'd watched all those videos and documentaries and programs about wilderness survival. But she'd never tried any of that stuff. She'd never had a vehicle of her own that would take her anywhere that didn't have a paved road. Put her on any city street, and she could find anything she needed to find. But in this place, she might as well be a toddler. She was smart enough, after all, to know what she didn't know.

As she followed Dr. Hill through the oddly monstrous trees, she thought about the artifact and what had happened to them. It was spooky. It made no sense that they could be in the basement of a museum and then seconds later, in a cave. The bright light, the crushing sensation. All of those things made the hair stand up on the back of Jonna's neck, just as much as the thought of a Morlock tearing the flesh of an Eloi.

She looked over at the professor, who was bent over a leaf, looking at it like she was trying to read some tiny writing on it. "I hate to interrupt, but...what are we doing?"

Veronica Hill stood up straight again. The question seemed to be difficult. *Let's play stump-the-professor*.

"I mean," she continued. "Are we just going to wander around and look at plants?"

The professor sighed and put her hands on her hips, still obviously unable to respond. All her professor-circuits were engaged in something else and speaking to another human being was probably overload. And not very interesting.

After a few seconds, Jonna said, "Ferfucksake." She lifted her backpack straps onto her shoulders, and began walking into the forest.

"Where are you going?" the professor asked.

She turned and gave Veronica a sarcastic look. "If we are so *elsewhere* that there are no taxi

cabs, no Burger Kings, and no maps, then I think we'd better find food and water and shelter, and build a fire, too, before it gets dark. Do you have any scholarly objections to that?"

"No. I think that's a good idea."

Jonna was surprised by her response. "Well...good." She turned and headed back into the forest. A forest hopefully free of stalking troglodytes.



Chapter
Jurass

Ten minutes of trudging got them little else but a collected symphony of strange noises and a nice view of trees and bushes and rocks, though Veronica was bombarded by the data only a paleobotanist would notice. The plant life was decidedly not from the modern era. She'd seen fossilized examples of most of it.

Up ahead, Veronica spied a dark green log, and pointed. "Hang on. I have something poking me in my boot."

They sat on the log and Veronica removed her boot, and wiggled the pebble free, putting the boot back on and lacing it up.

Pulling a water bottle from her pack, Jonna had a drink, then handed it to Veronica.

She took it and drank. "You wouldn't also have a ham sandwich in there would you?"

"I did, but I had it for lunch. Whenever that was." She punched the retractable nipple back down on the bottle and shoved it in her pack again. Glancing at Veronica she said, "Are we seriously in New Zealand?"

The professor sighed. "I'm sure we are, yes." Lifting her eyes to the hill rising beyond the cave, she saw the gigantic bottle tree perched like a lighthouse against the vivid blue sky, its swollen trunk resembling a wine bottle. *Brachychiton rupestris*. Also native to Australia; and the regions that had been included in the super-continent. "We're in Gondwanaland. Or, as they call it now, Gondwana."

"Wanna-what?"

"It was a super-continent that included, among others, Australia and New Zealand. I'm afraid your theory might be right."

"I didn't have a theory about being in the land down-under."

"No, I mean, your theory about time-travel. I think the stone artifact is some kind of device. And we've been transported through time." She watched Jonna's eyebrows dance high onto her forehead. "Back in time."

After a dry swallow, Jonna murmured, "How far back?"

"Way back."

"How far?" she persisted.

"Around 150 million years. Give or take a few million."

Jonna stared at her like someone had hit her pause button. Then she blinked. Then she looked around them. Then she smiled. "I get it. You're pulling my leg. You're playing a little professor-joke on me, right?"

Veronica closed her eyes on a sigh. "I wish I was kidding. I'm not."

Jonna rushed to solutions, desperate. "How do we get back?"

"I have no idea."

"Well I turned the knobs on the artifact. Maybe if I turn them back, it'll take us home."

Veronica rubbed her cold hands together to generate some warmth. "We don't know that for sure."

"Well we have to get out of here."

~~—Indeed. But not without some serious contemplation. "I need to give this more thought. We can make snap decisions about this. We could end up dead in the process. We can only assume the knobs on the artifact here mean the same thing as the knobs on the artifact in the museum. So I wouldn't know where to turn them to get us back where we came from. It isn't that simple."~~

Her tone accusing, Jonna said, "You're supposed to be a scientist, why can't you figure out how to get us back?"

"I'm not that kind of scientist."

Jonna shoved her hands in her coat pockets. "Well I'm not that kind of okay about it. And I can't just sit here feeling helpless."

A thrashing sound, and a leafy limb landed next to them on the ground.

They both looked down at it, and then up into the tree, watching the trunk of it move, a massive sinewy undulation. A round head the size of a refrigerator sat atop a long neck; bulbous eyes gave them only a cursory glance, the beast's wide mouth still crunching on limbs and leaves.

The log they had been sitting on was not a log at all. But the tail of this behemoth.

"Holy Mother of Fuck!" Jonna breathed, standing up slowly as if moving through molasses.

Veronica could excuse the colorful language, considering the situation. While she wasn't surprised to see the *brachiosaurus*, the view still stunned her. Paleontologists often fantasized about seeing the animals whose remains they find. Hollywood and documentary filmmakers often did a convincing job of depicting them, but it was another thing entirely to actually see with your own eyes up close and personal, a creature like this. Especially so close, she was actually sitting on its tail. She imagined the massive beast didn't even notice them perched there, anymore than a horse would notice a fly. Veronica stood up and looked down at the log-that-was-not-a-log. The rough hide that looked reptilian, now, rather than like a fallen tree, stripped of its bark.

The great beast turned back to its munching, the two women given only the consideration a bear would give insects. Rodents. Easily ignored. Certainly, these creatures had never seen another human being, if they were the only humans to have been jettisoned into the prehistoric past; and Dr. Veronica Hill also knew their brains were so simple that they probably didn't wonder what sort of new creature she and Jonna were.

Jonna made a squeaking noise, stumbled backward and fell as she tried to take in the massive dimensions of the creature that was now looking down at them while still munching leaves.

Suddenly, Jonna was running back toward the cave.

Not a good idea, Veronica thought. No telling what sort of creature had recently landed in it through that hole. Brachiosaurs were herbivores and presented little threat, unless you just got under one of those giant feet or got swiped by that massive tail. Veronica was torn between spending more time with the creature and going after Jonna. She laid a hand on the tail again, once, almost petting it with appreciation, and noticed it was warm to the touch. *Endothermic, just as the newest research suggested.*

Sighing, she looked up in awe one last time and then turned to run after Jonna.

sample content of Pitfall (A Jurassic Romantic Adventure): Lesbians. Dinosaurs. Time-Travel. Fun.

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