The Pendant of Gula

“Jack, pass me Excalibur please!” Truman said, his hand outstretched to take his small black notebook. He called it that because he claimed it would bring justice and equality back to the world. Jack believed him. He had seen what Truman was capable of.

“This artifact is amazing,” Truman exclaimed, furiously writing notes in Excalibur, probably drawing what sat on the pedestal. It was a necklace made of white ivory and the pendant was a small wolverine. Truman claimed that this pendant would be pivotal to his end goal.

“How is this going to help us steal the sword of shadows?” Jack questioned.

“Not steal, destroy! We don’t want anyone using it ever again.”

Jack understood that, the government was a corrupt organization that’s end goal was world domination. The sword of shadows had been used for years to make others do what Ardentia wanted. But Truman says that it’s not the same Ardentia that we had. The Sword changed everything and should never have been created.

Jack was Truman’s slave and had been for the last fifteen years. Since he was ten, he had gone with Truman on hundreds of excursions, helping the treasure hunter in his quests. He had learned a lot, but as a slave, he was bonded to Truman and could not leave.

As far as slave owners go, Truman was the best out there. He had a reputation for being kind, yet stern. He was stubborn to get what he wanted, but would put himself in harm’s way for the benefit of others. That’s why they were in a pit in the ground on the other side of the world.

The traps they had set off to come in were now sprung, Truman artfully deactivating them so they wouldn’t have to worry about them on the way out. But there was always another trap once the treasure was taken.

“The decoy, Jack?” Truman said once again extending his hand. A replica of the pendant sat in Jack’s satchel. He pulled it out and handed it to Truman.

“How do we know the mass is the same?” Jack asked.

“I guess we take that risk, we have made it out of worse predicaments.”

“True, and judging by the cracks spreading from each corner it would appear the final trap is the ceiling slowly coming down to crush us? So most likely the doorway in will be blocked off as well.”

“That’s observant, Jack, but did you notice the segments of the ceiling itself? It would seem that the center will travel slower than the outer edge. The ceiling will create a pyramid with no way out.”

“Air going stale as we suffocate with the pendant in our grasp. I see.”

“Jack, will you get the jack placed under the door?” Truman said, chuckling to himself at his play on words. “We don’t want to be trapped down here. We should have enough time to make it to the door before the ceiling becomes our tomb.”

Jack worked his way back to the entrance where they had left an additional bag which could hold much more than it seemed. He searched for the machine and pulled it out, winching it to keep the door two feet from closing entirely.

“Not there, Jack,” Truman said over his shoulder. “My suspicion is that the ceiling will act as the door lock.”

“So, we have to move it farther in?” Jack asked.

“Yep, it will attempt to keep the ceiling aloft longer than needed, just in case. Hurry now, I want to be rid of this place as soon as we can.”

Truman took the lift, handing Excalibur to Jack, and placed it just inside the entrance. They then made their way back to the central pedestal with anxiety levels rising. Truman stood with the fake pendant in his hand, ready to make the swap. They didn’t know how long it would take for the ceiling trap to start, so this had to be as perfect as could be.

“Ah, if it isn’t the famous Truman and his pet dog, Jack.” A sudden voice said over by the door. The man’s voice was oily and spoke with an accent.

Without turning around Truman spoke, mocking the man with his own accent, “Ah if it isn’t the infamous Oscar with his toy gun set at my back.” Knowing Truman, he had purposely rhymed that last word for effect.

Oscar had been working against Truman for years now and they had gone back and forth with different successes. Jack had a suspicion that he worked for the government of Ardentia, but it wasn’t confirmed.

“I see that you have finally tracked down the pendant of Gula, Truman.” Oscar said with hunger in his voice. “It has been lost for years and you led me right to it. Just think, to have the power that it yields around your neck. The wearer never having to do what is being enforced. I can’t let you have it.”

Jack and Truman finally turned around slowly, finding Oscar alone. He never worked with anyone in public, always by himself. As suspected, he had a gun pointed at Truman’s chest now and awaited a response.

“You can’t have it, Oscar,” Jack spoke up, “We need it, so keep your slimy hands out of it.”

“Ah, Truman you taught your pet to speak, strong words for someone so lost,” Oscar taunted, “Sad young Jack, who doesn’t even remember his family name.”

“Oscar, Jack is right, but we need to leave now, let’s discuss this outside,” Truman then stated, “I have already made the switch and it doesn’t appear to have triggered anything.”

Jack tried to keep a straight face as he knew that Truman had done no such thing. His anger at Oscar’s words made it easy, but he hated that his name was incomplete. Good thing Truman would try to bluff his way out of this. What a genius. Truman had already started to make his way back to the door, but Oscar still had the gun trained on his chest.

“Not so fast, Truman. It’s not likely that you have made the switch, seeing the ceiling joints. You two would be dead if you had already switched it.” Oscar had started to walk toward the pedestal to inspect it himself, the gun now an inch from Truman.

Jack stepped aside and let Oscar by, then started moving toward the door as Truman had instructed beforehand if this should happen. Truman usually had a plan. Jack made it over to the bag on the floor placing Excalibur inside, and started to gather up the things that had spilled out; an additional notebook, along with an old waterskin.

Oscar was still admiring the pendant and Truman had begun to walk up behind him careful in his movements. The gun was still fixed on him, but he was close enough to it to grasp it, why didn’t he?

Then he moved like a snake. With one hand he grasped hold of the gun and snapped it out of Oscars hand while pushing him away from pedestal. The other hand grabbed hold of the pendant and then threw it and its replica at Jack standing over by the door, “Go!” Truman yelled.

The crack that split the air shook the whole room as the ceiling came down at a quicker pace than expected. Truman’s throw had come right at Jack as the shaking started, but somehow, he caught it in the bag and turned to run. He was out the doorway before he looked back and saw Truman in a wrestling grip with Oscar, the door already half closed off. He started running back hoping to get there in time to help Truman, but the door had already reached the lift on the floor, promptly blowing it to pieces in Jack’s face, knocking him to the ground.

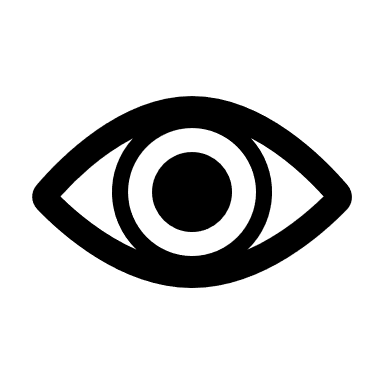
As Jack got back to his feet, the door was but inches from being closed off. He heard Truman yell at him, “Use Excalibur and save Ardentia!” Then a sudden bang escaped that small space as the door was closed off, all hope seeming to be crushed.

His adrenaline spurred him to movement as he turned and ran, thoughts racing as he considered what would happen now that Truman was gone. Truman was gone! The realization struck him causing him to lose track of his feet and trip, falling to the ground.

Jack laid there, not sure how much time was passing, numb, and unable to stabilize himself to get out of cave. He would have the guides waiting and would need to show up eventually if he didn’t want them to leave without him. The Guides wouldn’t wait forever, so he had to get up.

He finally got his feet underneath him, walking back towards the entrance. There was light filtering into this narrow walkway, acting as a narrow crevice under the forest floor. But eventually he made it out in the late afternoon. One of the suns had already set, leaving the other one to light his way.

He stumbled into camp, not wanting to speak to anyone, heading straight for his tent. The guide instantly bothered him with questions, seeking to know what happened. “Truman is gone, and we didn’t get the pendant, Surick,” Jack finally said quietly not trusting his voice. Then he walked into his tent and went to bed.



Jack awoke, alert in the middle of the night from a gunshot in his dreams, just as he had heard out of that small opening in the doorway. The small opening that was now gone, how was he to do what Truman had wanted. He wasn’t Truman. He was still a slave. All he had was what Truman had taught him, and Excalibur.

Excalibur! That was it. There would be notes and plans by Truman within that small black notebook. Jack hastily pulled it out of his bag and turned a flashlight on to search through the book.

He pulled it open, rushing through each page. It was chock full of the artifacts needed to save Ardentia and ultimately destroy the sword of shadows. It had every little detail outlined, up until the end where Jack found Truman’s last drawing of the Pendant of Gula, and some papers that were slipped into the back.

At a closer look they were his slavery papers, along with what looked like apprenticeship papers. But Truman had no apprentice. Except Jack’s name was on there. Truman had claimed him as an apprentice; not a slave.

Jack’s world began to turn upside. Even after death Truman was changing lives. He had given him his freedom, and the price was Truman’s life, but also his ambition. Jack would finish what Truman had started.

The final sheet that was slipped into Excalibur was a handwritten note entitled to him.

“Jack, if you are reading this then I am dead, and you have a work to accomplish. I have entrusted you with my life’s work which is detailed out in Excalibur. Only you know how to decipher what is in this book. Follow the steps, and discover the secrets. There is still much to do.

“I always did love you Jack. You were much like a son to me. I have given you your freedom, with everything that I have taught you. You have much to do, and a lifetime to accomplish it, though let’s work quick.” Jack laughed with tears in his eyes at Truman’s wit. Then he continued to read.

“I have left a trust fund of twenty-thousand dollars for you to start on your journey. There will be more to come, but this will help you start. Its time Jack. Time to live, time to grow, time to do more, and time to create your legacy. It’s time for you to become Jack Truman.”