

RED LAGOON I

HAL AMES



It was a clear and beautiful night when I arrived at the resort on the edge of the sea. This was to be the trip of a lifetime for me. I had been looking forward to coming here for a long time. The island was beautiful, and there were many things to see and do here. The one thing I had not expected was the storm that was approaching from the east.

The hotel employee carried my bag to my hut and showed me the room. There was a bed, a dresser, and night stand. In the bathroom a shower, sink and toilet; next to it a bucket full of water and a small scoop. I found a Gideon's Bible next to the bed on the small night stand. The room was what I had expected; nothing special, everything simple.

During the night the wind grew stronger as the storm approached. My hut was made of bamboo, so I was not sure that it could survive the onslaught of a direct hit from a storm.

I didn't sleep well that night.

When daylight finally came I left my hut and walked to the hotel to have my breakfast. The owner approached me and advised me that I should bring my things to the main building before the storm came on shore. I returned to my room, and just as I did my cellphone began to ring. I found my phone and answered, "Hello".

The voice on the phone was not familiar. The accent was strange, but the caller asked for me by my name, "Is this Mike Robinson?"

"I said, "Yes, this Mike. Who's calling me?"

The voice just said, "Beware the mystery of the Red Lagoon. You'll find many things there, but only the strong can survive." Then the call ended.

I did not know what to think about this.

I left my hut with my things and returned to the hotel. I told the manager that I had received a call on my cellphone just a few minutes before. I told him what the caller said, and then he turned white as a ghost.

“The caller told you about the Red Lagoon? Perhaps you read some of our materials last night in your room.” The manager seemed confused as he told me this.

“No, the only thing in my room was the Gideon Bible, and it didn’t say anything about a Red Lagoon,” I responded to him.

“I don’t know about any of this then.” the manager explained, looking at me like I was crazy, or something.

I placed my bags behind the counter to keep them safe and then went to eat breakfast. I took out my phone to look at the call register again to see who had called me. The call register was empty. That had never happened before.

I ate my breakfast and went out onto the veranda to see look at the sea. The waves were tall and breaking hard against the beach. The wind was stronger, but we were in a concrete building where we should be safe. I found out that there were only two of us checked into the hotel. Most of the guests who had registered had left when they found out about the storm.

I wandered over to the table where the other guest was having her breakfast.

“Mind if I sit down?” I asked.

“No, not at all,” she replied.

“Hi, my name is Mike Robinson, what’s yours?” I asked her.

“Marie Thomas, I am from Olympia, Washington. Where are you from?”

“I’m from Rockford, Illinois. So, what brings you to this place, may I ask,” I asked in a confident tone.

“I got a call a few weeks ago from a stranger who said something that intrigued me. The caller told me to beware the Red Lagoon.” She told me.

“I looked it up on the internet and I found this place. I have never been out of my hometown before. I thought that coming here would be an adventure. With this storm coming, I think I will get my wish,” she laughed.

“That’s amazing; I just got a similar call a little while ago myself!” I responded. “What’s the Red Lagoon?”

Marie leaned forward and explained to me, “The Red Lagoon is a somewhere on this island. It’s mysterious and thought to be the hiding place for the treasures of the pirates who attacked ships in this area during the early 1800’s. I had to follow my curiosity and find out why I got that call,” She explained. “So, why are you here?”

“I saw a special on TV about exotic islands. Then I received a flyer in the mail advertising this place. I became interested in exploring this place after seeing that documentary. I was surprised when I talked to my travel agent. She had never heard of this hotel or this island. I had to make most of the arrangements myself,” I answered her. “I’m not really sure why I’m here, actually.”

“If we survive this storm, tomorrow should be a better day,” Marie said laughing.

The rest of the morning we got to know each other. The storm was getting stronger, but the hotel building seemed to be holding together. The owner stopped by our table and offered us free refreshments. I ordered the mango smoothie and Marie ordered a coconut drink. The owner told us he was preparing rooms in the hotel at no extra charge since the hotel was empty. We thanked him and continued to talk.

We went inside the building when the storm was at its strongest. The rain came down so hard we could no longer see the beach. The skies turned dark and the wind blew so hard the windows shook. It was both scary and fascinating at the same time.

The wind died down by dinner time. The storm had gone directly over us. The calm was strange. Then after about an hour the wind picked up again. The winds became even stronger than before. We had been in the eye of the storm.

After dinner I decided to go to up to my room and rest. Just as I was about to lay on my bed my cellphone rang again. I didn’t see a number on my screen, but I answered it anyway. The caller asked if I was Mike. I said, “Yes, this is Mike”

Then the caller said in a strange accent, “Beware the mystery of the Red Lagoon. You will find many things there, but only the strong can survive.” Then the call ended.

I sat up in surprise. What was this all about?

I checked my call register again, but it didn't show a call.

There was not much to do in the room. Since the TV did not work and the lights would come and go, I decided to go to sleep and figure all of this out in the morning.

I met Marie for breakfast and I told her about the call. She was surprised and told me she had received a similar call. She was wondering what it all meant as well.

I told her of my plans after breakfast I wanted to explore the shore line and view the damage done by the storm. She asked if she could join me. I agreed.

After breakfast we changed into our hiking clothes and headed down the beach toward a cove of rocks. The damage was intense. My hut was gone and hers was in shambles. Good thing we hadn't stayed there.

The palm trees that used to line the edge of the beach were stripped of their leaves. The banana trees were gone. There was seaweed all over the beach and dead or dying fish everywhere. The sea was calm and the wind was gentle.

We walked on the beach discovering odd things in the sand. A bottle of beer, a can of tuna, an umbrella, a broken dingy, vegetation spread across the beach and a lot of driftwood washed ashore. We rounded a bend on the beach, and there we saw a beautiful waterfall. In the water fall was a rainbow. It was then that I realized that I had forgotten my camera. Marie took out hers and took many wonderful shots of the surrounding area.

We decided to walk toward the waterfall. The shore was full of debris from the storm so it made walking difficult. We walked and walked until we came to the base of the waterfall. I wished I had brought my swimming suit. The water in the lagoon looked warm and inviting.

The waves from the storm had broken apart many rocks. As we got closer to the waterfall we noticed that we could go behind it.

"Let's take a look back here. This looks like fun," Marie suggested.

We went behind the falling water and found what appeared to be an opening to a cave. We decided to explore the opening. We ducked inside.

I had a flashlight inside my pack so I turned it on. The opening was deeper than I thought. The walls were wet and slimy. The ground was rocky and uneven, but we both

decided to take the adventure and go inside.

A few meters inside we began to find a lot of unusual items. There were shovels, and axes and other tools. There were old lanterns and torches on the ground. Someone had been here before, but it was a long time ago. I took out my lighter and lit one of the torches. Amazingly, it worked!

We went deeper and deeper. The walls were damp and the smell was bad, but our curiosity was stronger.

We went further into the cave until we came upon a large room that opened in front of us. There were several wooden boxes stacked on each other on the floor.

Marie wanted to open one of the boxes to see what might be inside. I found another axe laying on the ground and I gave it to her. She smashed open one of the boxes. I flashed my light into the box and inside we found a large number of very old golden coins.

Marie shrieked, "I think we've found the treasure of the Red Lagoon!"

I didn't know what to say or do. I then remembered the phone call. "Beware the mystery of the Red Lagoon. You will find many things there, but only the strong can survive." The voice had said. What did that mean? I was frightened to even think about it.

"Do you remember the calls we got?" I asked her.

"Yeah, what about them?" she asked me.

"What do you think it meant. Here is the treasure, but what does it mean, 'Only the strong will survive'?" I asked.

"I don't care. Look at all of this gold!" she exclaimed.

Marie was so excited about her discovery that she was jumping from box to box opening the treasures and running her hands through the coins like it was cold water. She was laughing and giggling. I was watching her trying to think of how we would get all of this gold out of the cave without anyone seeing us. We needed to keep this a secret. If word got out that we had found the cave and the treasure, there would be a thousand treasure hunters on the island the next day.

I stopped Marie, grabbed her shoulders and looked her in the eye.

"We have to be careful. The omen we got on the phone said only the strong will

survive. I think what that meant that they knew that we would find this treasure. The voice warned us to be careful,” I was thinking out loud to her.

“Here is my plan. Let’s take out just enough gold to be able to say we found it on the beach near the café. They’ll think the storm had something to do with it. They might hunt on the beach, but they won’t come here.” I tried to explain to her the plan I had created in my mind.

“We can come back a later when we can take out more of this treasure. If we aren’t strong and disciplined we will lose it all.” I continued.

Marie at first didn’t agree. She wanted it all. She kept running her hands through the gold. She finally calmed down enough for me to talk some sense into her. I explained again about the plan.

She finally agreed. We filled our pockets. We put the covers back onto the boxes.

We covered our tracks as best as we could as we left the cave. When we came out of the cave it was getting dark. We moved some rocks in front of the opening to try and hide it.

RED LAGOON 2



On the way back we dropped a few coins along the way into the sand. With one of the shovels we had taken from the cave we chose a spot not too far from the hotel and buried a few of the coins. If we were asked later where we found the coins, we could show them. We dropped a few coins into the hole and covered it up with sand. We still had enough gold in our pockets to pay for this trip, make a return trip in the future and still have money left over.

We discussed our story down so we would not make any mistakes if we were asked about the gold. We wanted to make sure we told the same story.

When we got back to the hotel many new guests had arrived. The storm had passed so the hotel was beginning to fill up with patrons.

We saw the hotel manager, and he asked us where we had been all day.

We told him we went for a leisurely walk down the beach and got lost because of all of the debris from the storm. We found our way back when we saw the lights of the hotel.

“Dinner will be ready at 8:00,” he said, and then he went back to his other guests.

We went to our rooms and got ready for dinner. When I met Marie for dinner she could not stop smiling. She was so excited about what we had found. She even wanted to go back to get more of the gold. I reminded her that it would be too dangerous to do that now. We needed to wait until we could get the gold off the island easily. We had dinner and tried to avoid the other guests. We must have seemed rude to them because we did not speak to anyone at all.

I was exhausted from the day's events so I told Marie that I was going to go to bed. I

lay on my bed and watched the fan on the ceiling turn round and round. I imagined what that gold would do for me. I had always wanted to travel around the world and now was my chance. I drifted off to sleep with a big smile on my face.

The next morning I got up and showered. It was a beautiful sunny day with a gentle breeze coming off of the ocean. It was a great day to be alive.

I knocked on Marie's door, but there was no answer. I went down to the lobby of the hotel to have breakfast. I didn't see Marie anywhere.

I asked the hotel manager, "Have you seen Ms. Thomas this morning?"

He said, "Yes, she went out very early in the morning. I believe she said she was going for a run on the beach."

"Oh my God!" I thought to myself.

She has gone after the rest of the treasure. I began to panic. I took off running down the beach toward the lagoon even though I was not dressed to go out. I ran down the beach with many thoughts going through my mind. What if she got all of the gold? What if others discovered our secret? What if she was trying to steal my portion? I began to get angry with her.

It was hard running in the sand, and I got tired very quickly. I stopped to catch my breath. My hands were on my knees as I tried to catch my breath.

When I looked up I saw Marie. She was jogging along the shore of the beach. Her hair was blowing in the wind. She looked very relaxed.

Marie spotted me and ran toward me.

"What are you doing out here? I thought you were still sleeping." She asked.

"I ... was about... to ask you... the same thing." I replied panting from being out of breath.

"What do you mean?" She asked.

"Nothing, I just got worried when I didn't see you at the hotel this morning." I continued while trying to get some air.

Marie laughed at me. "You thought I was going to get the treasure, didn't you?"

"Well the thought crossed my mind." I said apologetically.

We walked back to the hotel. We had breakfast together, but we didn't say a word. Just as we were finishing our breakfast both of our cell phones rang. I looked at the caller ID but it was blank. I answered the phone.

"Is this Mike?" the now familiar voice asked.

"Yes, this is Mike." I replied.

Once again the voice with the strange accent spoke to me, "Beware the mystery of the Red Lagoon. You will find many things there, but only the strong can survive." Then the call ended.

Marie ended her call and told me she had gotten the same call as me. "What does this warning mean?" She asked me.

"I don't know. I think we need to be very careful. We can't let anyone know what we found in the cave or there'll be a rush of people to find the money." I reasoned with her.

After breakfast we decided to go to town. It was a short ride in a taxi, but we decided to walk instead. It was such a warm sunny day.

When we got to the town, there were many people gathered in the market. They were yelling and arguing about something. I asked one of the local people what was going on.

She told us, "One of the boys found some gold coins on the beach this morning. They appeared to be very old. The other people are trying to force them to tell where the boys found the coins. They don't want to tell."

Marie and I just looked at each other. What had we done? These boys were being beaten to make them tell where they had found the coins on the beach. Now the beach was going to be full of treasure hunters seeking to find more gold. What if they made it to the lagoon and found the cave in the waterfall? We hadn't expected anyone to find the coins so fast.

"I think we need to leave, NOW!" I said to Marie. "We need to get back to the hotel and make a plan."

We found a taxi to take us back to the hotel. When we arrived we discovered that

the story of the found coins had already reached the hotel and the workers were preparing to go out to search for gold themselves. Even the guests were excited about this news and they were making plans to go on a treasure hunt. There was a lot of activity and excitement in and around the hotel.

We watched as the group ran down the beach in excitement. They had shovels and buckets. Soon there were more people arriving from the town. We just sat on the porch and watched. I realized that we looked a bit out of place.

“Maybe we should join the search for the gold so we won’t be noticed. I think we look odd sitting here and not looking for the gold,” I said to Marie.

She agreed so we walked down the beach to where the others had gone. We didn’t run. We just took our time.

When we came around the bend past the big rock we couldn’t believe our eyes. People were running back and forth. A couple of them were holding coins they had found and it made the others even more excited.

Marie and I walked slowly past the people down the beach toward the lagoon. We didn’t want people to follow us, but they did. They thought we might know something.

As we got closer to the lagoon we noticed some boys playing in the water. It was obvious that the lagoon was a popular place for the locals to come and swim. The day after the storm we were lucky to be the only ones on the beach, but now we realized it was going to be very difficult to retrieve the gold from the cave unnoticed in the future.

The day went by and the people began to lose their excitement, because they only found a few coins. By night time everyone had left. We were relieved. As of now, our secret was safe.

Back at the hotel the conversation over dinner was about the gold coins. Everyone was excited, but no one talked about going back.

However, the local people seemed more intent on continuing the search for the treasure. They had heard stories that long ago pirates had left treasure on this island. They were making plans to go inland the next day to try and find where the coins had come from. They surmised that if there were a few coins on the beach, there had to be more

somewhere else.

Marie and I each had about fifty of the coins in our rooms hidden in our baggage. I knew that if anyone saw one of these coins we would be in big trouble. We might end up like the boys back at the market place.

I began to realize that we had made a big mistake putting the coins on the beach. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

“Maybe we should go back at night and try to get some more of the gold before it is discovered.” Marie suggested.

I agreed. I knew that the local people were superstitious about being out of their villages at night so it should be safe.

We returned to the hotel and rested before our night journey.

After dinner, Marie and I excused ourselves and went to our rooms stating that we were tired from all of the excitement of the last two days. Instead of going to our rooms we snuck out the back way through the jungle and down toward the beach. We stayed off of the beach because we did not want people to see us. We had to climb over fallen trees and other debris from the storm.

The moon was full that night which gave us good light by which to walk. Actually in other circumstances it might have been very romantic, walking down the beach at night with a beautiful young lady, but my mind was on something completely different.

We found the rock that marked where the lagoon was and climbed down to the beach. As we turned the corner into the lagoon, the light of the moon shimmered off the water.

As we approached the back of the lagoon, the only noise was the water falling from above into the water below. The moonlight glistened on the mist of water falling from the rocks above us. It was really quite an amazing sight.

We made our way around the side of the lagoon and went up the rocks leading behind the falling water. We moved the rocks we had placed in front of the entrance and slipped inside. Nothing had been disturbed since we left.

Once inside we turned on our flashlights and moved slowly into the depths of the

cave. The smell was still bad, but the rewards were going to be great.

We entered the big room. Nothing had changed. No one had been there since we found this place the day before.

RED LAGOON 3



We went to the back of the room and found the boxes exactly where we had left them. Everything was OK. Now what were we going to do? We sat on the boxes and tried to make a plan.

A dim light came from above. There was a small opening at the top and small droplets of water dripped slowly to pool of water in the middle of the room. Each drop echoed in the cave.

Just then we heard noises. Someone was in the cave. How did they get here? I suddenly realized. Someone had followed us!

I motioned to Marie to hide. We ducked down behind the boxes and turned off our flashlights.

Just as we hid ourselves, the light from several torches appeared. There were voices coming from the narrow entrance to the cave. I couldn't understand the language. There were at least twenty people entering the cave. They started to search the room. They were coming closer and closer. And then they discovered us.

They grabbed us, and dragged us to the middle of the room. They forced us to kneel. The glow of the torches was in front of us. While we were kneeling some of the people went to the boxes and opened them. There was a lot of conversation going on, but I didn't understand. The men were dressed in strange clothes. They were from a time long ago.

Then someone spoke to us. It was a strangely familiar voice. "Beware the mystery of the Red Lagoon. You will find many things there, but only the strong can survive.

“Do you remember me telling you that?” He asked me looking straight into my eyes.

I looked up at the man who spoke to us. He was standing directly in front of us. He was an ugly man. He looked like he had not taken a bath in a very long time. His hair was dirty and tangled. He had an ugly black beard. Most of his teeth were missing and his breath was bad.

He repeated what he had said. “Beware the mystery of the Red Lagoon. You will find many things there, but only the strong can survive.”

He turned to the other men and laughed a haunting laugh. Then he turned back.

He went on to say, “I tried to warn you, but you didn’t listen. You were greedy. Now you’ll pay for your stupidity. The villagers will not stop looking for this treasure. They’ll spend many weeks looking, but in the wrong places. They will not find this place.

“It is because of your foolishness that you have caused this to happen. If you had not been so greedy all of this would have been yours.

“Now when you leave this island, if you try to take the gold, the police will find the coins you took and they’ll arrest you. They’ll pressure you to tell them where you found this treasure. They’ll threaten you and they’ll torture you, but even if you tell them where the treasure is, they will never find it.

“You can choose to leave the coins behind and go home safe, or you can try and take the money. If you choose the later, it’ll be very difficult for you.

“No matter what you choose, you’ll never be allowed to return to this island. You have sacrificed this treasure because of your foolishness, and now you’ll pay an even bigger price,” the ugly man warned us

I was terrified. I didn’t know what to say. Marie was in tears. We were sure that we were going to die at the hands of these men.

Then the man who was talking to us said, “Leave and never come back. In the future there’ll be another who’ll be guided to this place and if they’re not as stupid as you, then they’ll inherit the treasure.”

We got up and ran toward the narrow exit from the cave. The men left us alone.

When we got out of the cave we didn't slow down. I was afraid the men would come, get us once we were out of the cave, and kill us.

It was late when we arrived back at the hotel. I was exhausted, so I went to my room and took a long hot shower. The next day was my day of departure. All of the dreams I had of the treasure now turned to survival. How could I get off of the island with the money? The man had said if we took the money they would discover it and then we would be put into jail.

The next morning I left very early. I had the coins in my pocket as I walked along the beach alone trying to figure out what to do, I decided the best thing to do would be to put my coins back into the cave. That way I would make the man happy and I would be free from suspicion when it came time to leave.

There were still people searching on the beach. There were fewer people because no new coins had been found. Two men were searching the beach with metal detectors. I overheard a story that some famous treasure hunters were coming to the island to search as well. The legend of the Red Lagoon was spreading.

I went to the lagoon. There were several children playing in the water. The waterfall glistened in the morning sun.

I climbed up the rocks to the waterfall. As I went behind the water I was surprised. The entrance we had found was gone. It was solid rock. There was no way in. I hit the rocks to see if they were hollow. They were solid rock. I laid my coins on the ground and left.

When I returned to the hotel I ate alone and then went to my room to prepare my things for the journey home.

What an adventure this had been. I proved to myself that I needed to change my life. The warning had been clear, but I hadn't listened to it. I had put many people in danger by leaving the coins on the beach. We had made a big mistake.

I took a taxi to the airport. I looked for Marie to say goodbye, but I was unable to find her. I was a little concerned about her. I hadn't had a chance to say good-bye. She wasn't in her room and the hotel clerk said she had left very early for the airport.

I got a taxi to the airport. I looked out of the window as we drove along the coast. This was a beautiful place. I was hoping that I could return some day and just enjoy the scenery.

When I got to the airport, I unloaded my bags and paid the driver. Just then two men came up to me. They told me I had to go with them.

They took me to a small office on the third floor of the police station. I waited patiently and looked around. It was a simple office, one desk, two chairs, a picture of the president of the country on the wall and a calendar.

Soon a man in an important looking uniform came into the room.

“Hello Mr. Robinson, I hope you enjoyed your time in our country,” He greeted me.

“Yes, I have enjoyed being here. The hurricane was unexpected, but the rest of the trip has been enjoyable,” replied.

“We are going to search you and your bags. We have reason to believe that you have something we hold very important to us in this country,” the officer ordered me.

I agreed, seeing as I really didn't have a choice. I let them search me and my things. I was glad I didn't have any of the coins.

After they searched me another very important looking man, who looked like a government official sat down behind the desk. He had a very serious look on his face as he began to question me.

“We have detained a young lady named Marie Thomas. We found some important treasures that belong to our country in her things. We were that you know this lady and that you spent a lot of time with her. Is this true?” The officer questioned me.

“Yes, I know Marie. What does this have to do with me?” I asked.

“She says that she found the coins on the beach, but she has so many of them we think that she is not telling the truth. We want to know what you know about this situation.” The official continued.

“I don't know much. I saw all of the villagers looking for the coins and I heard the stories, but I didn't find any for myself. Maybe she found some and didn't tell me.” I tried to explain without getting myself involved.

“We have searched your bags and we have found nothing. We are going to let you go. We’re not sure about your story so we are going to make it impossible for you to return to our country. You may go now.” The officer then pointed to the door.

They led me out of the building and ordered me to go directly to the airport.

I felt a bit guilty about not helping Marie, but the man in the cave had warned us that if we tried to leave the country with the coins that we would be caught. She took the chance and they found many coins in her baggage.

If you should ever get the call from the strange man saying, “Beware the mystery of the Red Lagoon. You will find many things there, but only the strong can survive.” Remember my story and try not to make the same mistakes I did. Being greedy and foolish may cost you a fortune.