

The Box

By A. C. Zito

I felt the wind blowing on my face as I rode right alongside Earl. He had the biggest smile on his face. And I did too! We had the best two jobs in the whole wide world. Not only did we get to hang out with our best friend day after day but we got to ride around on the back of a truck and pick stuff up for people. We were treasure hunters and all our friends were jealous of us when we went out every night and told the local women how we were modern-day Mel Fishers. The real deal, no lies intended. And I wouldn't give the job up for the whole wide world. At times, yes, it felt tough. But that's one thing that I WAS. I was tough. I had arms of steel and an alert mind that wouldn't let anything pass me. Any ploy, any trick, any scam, I sailed through it like I was *Captain America* himself! And my buddy, Earl, he was a true friend. I wouldn't pick anyone else to do it with. I'd give him the shirt off my back if he needed it for a hot date with his wife or to help him in getting the rent paid. He was the best! I couldn't believe we were treasure hunters together. We even had names for each other: *the Indiana Jones brothers gone dirty!*

"Pick up this load, Marv, and I'll get that one." I nodded as I picked up the huge heavy bags of garbage and chucked them in.

Oh, did I not say that my job has another title? Yeah, well if you want to be all technical and everything I guess you can say I'm a garbage man or a trash man or whatever. But Earl and I just say that if you want to call us that, you can. But that's just what we call each other when we have to lose the title of treasure hunters and have to go undercover. But that rarely happens. Usually that happens when a wildebeest comes at us because the *jewels of Carinthia* had to be taken from its lair or something like that. You just call the famous wildebeests we sometimes see on a day to day basis, dogs, but you have to know that they're so much more than that. I have a buddy who lost a hand from a wildebeest when trying to recover the amethyst from the lost temple of *farriers de voie*.

"Look, Marv, *the Underground City of the Lost Titans!*" I looked at the measly, old house, wiped some sweat off my forehead as I really couldn't help but believe that the lost titans had such a good invisibility cloak covering their underground city. It was amazing that the hologram really made the entrance look like some regular old house that an old lady supposedly died in last summer.

"Do you think they've got any booby traps placed out to keep us from getting inside?" Earl shrugged and picked up the first bag of trash.

"We'll have to go undercover and act like we're trash collectors for this one!" I nodded and picked up a bag of trash as well following his orders since he was picked to head today's mission.

"Earl, look!" I said as a box from my bag fell loose onto the pavement. I picked it up and stared at in amazement.

"Marv; it contains the key to *the Underground City of the Lost Titans!* Hurry, stick it in your drawers before one of the lost titans see we have it!" He stuck it in my pants and I quickly looked at the house carefully making sure none of the guards of the underground city were on to us.

"Tonight," I said "we'll meet at 11:21 at the old lot where the emperor's kingdom used to be. There, we'll crack open the box and retrieve the key." He nodded approvingly; proud of me for thinking of hiding the key to the underground city away from all the other treasure hunters that were already back at headquarters. They'd probably give anything for it. But they didn't have it; Earl and I did! I was proud of myself too for knowing that fighting the lost titans into extinction was only a job suitable for *the Indiana Jones brothers gone dirty!*

That night we met up in the old lot. I took a whiff of Earl who smelled minty fresh. He took a whiff of me too and gave me a slap on the knee saying:

"You could've possibly taken another one. *The Graveyard of the Lost Souls* did a hamper on your inner aura." I laughed at this knowing he was just yanking my chain. The old lady back home told me before I left the house that I smelled like cinnamon buns and ice cream sprinkled with a little bit of heaven.

"Are you ready? This is no game, Marv. When we open this, there could be a thousand demons hiding within it that could very possibly torment us and our families and the generations to come if we aren't careful." I nodded knowing nothing could stop *the Indiana Jones brothers gone dirty*. We were the meanest, leanest fighting machines ever to hit this side of Kentucky.

Earl took a sledgehammer and knocked the lock clean off. It was so simple it was almost like we were taking candy from a baby.

"Marv; this is just a pile of notepad paper!" I nodded to him as we both started looking through them. I began reading one after the other taking short breaks from time to time as we looked up at each other in an incredulous amazement.

"This is fake, right?" I asked. Earl shook his head pointing to the golden plaque that had her name written on it in the fanciest cursive you've ever seen.

"I'd recognize Maya Angelou's handwriting from a mile away. Marv, we just stumbled on one of the world's greatest poets that have ever existed, *ever!* And some of the many poems scattered across the universe that she's never even published!" I looked at Earl in amazement. I didn't understand how such a wondrous thing could possibly happen to us.

"What do we do with them?" I asked. In response, he shuffled them around on the floor, counted them out and said,

"There are twelve. So you get six, and I get six." I looked at my six never published before Maya Angelou poems and felt a tear sliding down my cheek.

"I'm going to give them to my daughter." I said, "She loves poetry." Earl nodded in approval.

"I'm going to do the same. I bet Maya Angelou didn't write these poems for anyone else but our two daughters." I nodded, agreeing, letting it sink in that I never thought being a treasure hunter would be such an emotional job in all my life.