

The Ruins

By Chris Eck

My journey was long and fraught with perils I may never reveal, but I shall tell you of one mess I found myself in. Having boasted that I could discover the purpose of a strange settlement discovered deep in the jungle, I found myself wishing I hadn't.

Having traveled to the location, I found myself in a large clearing amongst a series of strange square-shaped ruined buildings. My guide, one Ron McKernan, repeatedly told me he felt at ease in the midst of the crumbling structures. He also told me not to worry about drawing a map as the buildings were easily visible from the air – simple sketches would do. Not wanting to question his experience, I gathered my strength and directed him to lead us on.

Traveling due west, the first ruin we encountered was in fairly good shape, considering its age. The right wall had collapsed, leaving but a single support pillar in the center and three other walls in good condition. Ron pointed out that this style was the standard of building for the ancient people who once lived here.

A turn to the north and a short hike found us at an intact building! Strangely enough, it seemed to have no doors, just four sturdy walls. The roof was even intact! Ron assured me that many of these buildings were connected by underground tunnels, the better to protect their people during times of war. Vowing to return to perform a deeper investigation, we continued.

Heady from our last discovery, we turned around and moved south. There, we encountered another ruin. This building seemed to have been built at a 45 degree angle. Though the two walls on the left side of the structure had collapsed, the remaining two walls and support pillar showed us nothing of the original intent of its builders.

Frustrated, we moved to the east and immediately stumbled upon another ruin. Its right wall and support pillar had collapsed. Finding nothing else of interest, we again turned to the south.

A short march had us at yet another crumbling building. This one's left wall had collapsed, showing us the intact support pillar and interior of the ruin. Finally, a building whose purpose I could understand! It had obviously been used as a kitchen of some sort as we could see the remains of a brick-like oven. After making a quick sketch of the building and its layout, we moved on.

Facing west, we continued our exploration by investigating a ruin with only two walls. Nothing remained of the wall closest to us, and the wall to the right had crumbled away leaving only a few bricks as evidence of its past presence. The support pillar seemed to be in good shape, and even had a few markings scrawled upon it. I took a picture so I could study them later, then decided to rest for the evening.

We returned to the intact building and set up camp. I had to solve the mystery of these buildings or never show my face to my colleagues again. While Ron was busy preparing dinner, I gathered my notes and sketches around me and sat deep in thought.