

RUIN HUNTERS

River Ruins
And The
CALYPSO TWIST



SIDE QUEST
ROB BEARE

River Ruins and the Calypso Twist

1 year before Book One

*T*oday's a perfect day to catch some waves, River Ruins thought as he sat on his surfboard, bobbing up and down with the swells. His lips tasted of salt and sunscreen. His skin tingled under the hot sun. And the waves were smooth and glassy.

For as long as River could remember, he had wanted to surf the waves of Jamaica, and he had just turned eleven, so that was quite some time. As luck would have it, River and his family had just arrived here for a vacation... a *real* vacation for a change. After their last family outing turned into a wild adventure across Easter Island, one that saw River and his sisters nearly die several times on their path to making a huge discovery, River's parents figured that they could use some downtime.

River peered into the horizon, trying to spot the next set of waves. A few other surfers awaited the rides as well. Despite being a gentleman, River caught himself staring at one of them. She had curly black hair, flawless dark skin, and looked to be at least three years older than him. She glanced River's way, and he quickly turned, embarrassed that he got busted. He looked back, though, to see her smiling at him. Despite wanting to hide his head in the water until the humiliation passed, River still managed to smile his dimpled smile.

Trying to play it cool, River turned his attention back to the horizon, pretending to look for a wave, and it just so happened that a nice set was on its way.

River flopped onto his board and pointed it to the shore. He looked over his shoulder to gauge the distance of the waves. As they neared, he began to paddle.

The first wave lifted him, and River paddled even harder, trying to gain enough momentum for it to catch him, but it passed by, lowering him back down. He paddled again, though, this time kicking his legs, as well, as he tried to catch the second wave in the set. Water splashed up all around River, and he found himself beginning to pant. The wave picked him up, five feet above the surrounding ocean.

Just when it felt like it was going to pass by, the wave caught him as its energy surged him forward.

Wasting no time, River pushed himself up and leaped to his feet in one fluid motion. The wave crested and began to break. River steadied himself in preparation for the “drop-in.” When it came, he shot down the wave to its base so fast that his belly felt like it got left behind with the same sensation of being dropped in a rollercoaster.

River looked back to check if the girl was watching, and sure enough, she was. The distraction caused River to wobble and nearly fall. He shook his head and thought, *Focus River, focus. Enjoy the ride.*

Surfing like a pro, River angled his board to remain at the base of the curling barrel. Every summer, he surfed from dawn till dusk. Living just a ten-minute bike ride from one of San Fran’s top surf spots was a blessing that he never took for granted. His mom often joked that River learned to swim before he could even walk. The funny thing was that as far as he could remember, that was entirely true.

Feeling pretty good about his ride, River looked back and smiled at the pretty girl. When he turned back around, though, he found himself fast approaching a large orange buoy. He tried to avoid it, but he couldn’t spin fast enough. Strapped for

options, River threw himself off his board, away from the buoy, and into the churning ocean.

Water thrashed all around River, tumbling him in every direction. Within seconds he couldn't tell which way was up. Opening his eyes did him no good either, as the water was a blizzard of bubbles and suspended grains of sand.

He knew this sensation all too well and had even given it a name... "the washing machine effect." And to be honest, part of him liked the adrenaline rush it gave him. Running low on air, though, River had to find his way back to the surface fast, and he relied on an old trick to do so: he grabbed hold of the leash that attached his surfboard to his ankle and followed it up.

After regaining his breath, River, with his usual *never say die* attitude, paddled right back out to the lineup. Fortunately, the pretty girl was no longer there. He was way too embarrassed to face her again.

River sat on his board, straddling it like a horse, and awaited the next set.

His heart skipped a beat when the head of black curly hair popped up from below a passing wave. It was the local girl, and she had just performed a "duck dive," pressing down on her board to duck underneath an oncoming wave.

The girl parked in the lineup right beside River. He felt his cheeks turn flush.

“That was a great ride, mon,” the girl said. River loved the way she said ‘man’ with her Caribbean accent — “*mon*.”

“Um, thank you.”

“Well, it was great until you took that nasty speel.”

By ‘speel,’ he knew she meant ‘spill,’ and his cheeks turned even redder.

The girl broke out into laughter and slapped her thigh. “I’m just teasing! Every-ting cool, mon.”

River chuckled. “Yeah, that buoy came out of nowhere.”

The girl cocked her head and smiled. “Actually, it was there all along.”

“Uh, yeah, yeah, of course. I guess to the buoy, I was the one that came out of nowhere.”

The girl laughed. “You know you could’ve dodged it, though, right? You just had to use your hips, like calypso dancing,” she said while doing a little wiggle dance.

River chuckled. “What’s calypso?”

“What’s calypso?” she was appalled. “Calypso music, mon! You know, like in the carnival.”

“Oh, okay, cool. I got it,” River said while trying to emulate her dance.

The girl cringed and giggled as River's dance moves were painful to watch.

"No mon, I don't think you do got it, but I will show you," she looked back to see a set of waves coming their way. She then extended her hand for a shake, "I'm Tisha."

"I'm River." As they shook hands, River became lost in her big beautiful eyes accentuated by long lashes that curled upwards like upside-down waves.

Tisha laughed and shoved River's shoulder, snapping him out of it. "Follow me."

She paddled to catch the upcoming set. River followed, struggling to keep up.

Tisha caught the first wave with no problem and sprung to her feet. River paddled as hard as he could and just barely caught it. He had never been so relieved to catch a wave before. Well, except for maybe that time he spotted a great white lurking below him.

They surfed side-by-side, so close that their hands almost touched.

"In calypso music, you move your whole body, but the magic is in the hips," Tisha said while dancing on her board and keeping a watchful eye for the buoy ahead. "When your hips lead, your body will follow." The side-to-side motion of Tisha's hips transferred down her legs, curving the board

back and forth below her feet. Just as she was about to run into the buoy, she said, “When your hips lead, your board will also follow.” She twisted her hips with a smooth but powerful maneuver and cut an extremely sharp corner, dodging the buoy.

“Whoa! I thought you were gonna hit it for sure!” River said.

“You’ve just got to trust yourself. Now, it’s your turn.”

River nodded and embraced the challenge. “All right, let’s do it!”

After three more failed attempts, River sped once more towards the buoy, but again...

CLUNK! The back end of River’s board nicked the buoy, causing him to do a full summersault and land with a smacking back flop. The water muffled River’s moan as his back felt like it’d been stung by a hundred bees. He stayed underwater for a few extra seconds until the pain washed away enough for him to resurface without showing it.

“So close, River boy! So close! Let’s try again!” Tisha said as she paddled back towards the lineup of surfers.

Wasting no time, River joined her in the lineup. He wiped the sweat from his brow.

“River! It’s time to head in!” his mom called from the beach.

“You bet!” River gave her a thumbs up.

“This is it, River boy,” Tisha said. “One last try. You got it this time.”

“Definitely,” River said, putting on a brave face when in truth, he was full of doubt after four failed attempts.

A fresh set of waves approached. River’s arms burned from paddling so much. He didn’t have enough speed to catch the first wave or even the second. Fortunately, this set had a third one. River dug deep and caught the wave. Right next to him, Tisha caught it as well.

“All right, I’ll use my hips,” River said.

Tisha cut in. “Like a calypso dancer.”

River agreed. “Like a calypso dancer.”

Tisha continued, “When your hips lead—”

This time it was River’s turn to interject, “My board will follow.”

The buoy was 20 feet away.

“But not until the last second,” Tisha warned with a raised finger.

The buoy was now 15 feet away.

River took a deep breath and agreed. “Not until the last second.”

“And one last thing...” Tisha said as she locked eyes with River. She held in deep suspense as the buoy was only

5 feet away. And then 4. Tisha continued, "...believe in yourself, River boy."

Something about Tisha's reassuring look filled River with confidence. With the buoy inches away, River twisted his hips, which pivoted his feet and caused him to cut through the water on such a sharp angle that his face nearly touched the wave. Before he knew it, the menacing buoy was behind him.

"I made it," River said in disbelief. "I made it!"

Tisha cheered. "Way to go, River!"

The wave kept rolling all the way to the shore, and River and Tisha rode it the entire way until it dissolved to whitewash in the shallows. They stepped off their boards into the ankle-deep water.

"You're ready to dance in the carnival, River boy," Tisha joked.

"I just need one of those feathery costumes now," River kidded back. "Hey, thank you for the lesson. You're an awesome teacher."

"My pleasure. And now you're armed with another move to add to your arsenal. This one's called the 'Calypso Twist'."

"Nice! I'll remember it!"

After bidding farewell, Tisha made her way back out to the ocean, and River made his way to his mom. She put her arm around his shoulder and asked, "How was your day, bud?"

River smiled. “Today was...” only one word came to mind, “...perfect.”

To read Book 1 in the Ruin Hunters series and embark on a wild adventure across the Caribbean in search of the Glowing Idol of the Mixtec, please visit:

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