

Beautiful archeologist lured into dark, turbulent underbelly of Ancient Peru.

Rainforest: A Tale of Discovery, Intrigue & Passion

By Donna Sherry Boggins & Robert S. Catan

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A woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a backpack is shown in profile, looking into a dense, misty rainforest. The scene is filled with tall trees and thick foliage, creating a sense of mystery and adventure.

Rainforest

A TALE OF DISCOVERY, INTRIGUE AND PASSION

An Original Novel by

**Donna Sherry Boggins
& Robert S. Catan**

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The Encounter

The tide was moving in and with it, the cool chill of a coastal eddy. Kate and Bill walked shoulder to shoulder and dodged the incoming surf, laughing when an occasional rogue wave struck their bare legs and undermined the sand beneath their feet. He had easily pulled her back from the eager grasp of a rip current. She had laughed, impervious to its danger.

As they rounded the cove, the red cliffs above their heads closed all around them. As though by design, their soaring walls provided an intimate, secluded oasis for two. The beach was empty, except for a few sandpipers and seagulls racing in and out with the surf, snatching little sand crabs and water bugs and squabbling over their catch.

The giant sphere of the sun was moments away from dropping into the sea and with a final burst of energy, its departure would miraculously create a green explosive “poof.” The sun would disappear into the deep blue Pacific, leaving a sheen of burnished crimson and gold.

Bill reached for Kate’s hand and led her down a sandy trail, through a narrow opening that gradually ended up enclosed by the towering cliffs. Around a severe bend in the path, the powerful ocean sounds vanished, replaced

by a deep and penetrating silence. She imagined she could hear her heartbeat, like a hammer striking a metronome. Kate could hear Bill's, or so she thought. More likely, it was her heart doing double time! A fly whizzed past noisily. She felt a little dizzy, yet acutely sensitive.

Before she had time to understand the change in her equilibrium, she was wrapped in his arms, and he was planting a delightfully cool, salty kiss on her lips. Feeling her own passion build, she let her lips part and his kiss deepen. Dropping onto the cool sand, the first-time lovers responded to an urgency of time and place. He was leaving in the morning and at any moment, the park rangers, on evening patrol, could disturb their secluded paradise.

Risking exposure accelerated their need, so they slipped out of their bathing suits and quickly merged into one eager unit. Though brief, the feeling of physical fulfillment came in a huge wave. If only they had more time to explore and pleasure each other in foreplay, the occasion might have been truly memorable. This was much more than a one-night stand but sadly, with the same result. He would be out of her life soon and she would move on.

Their urgency sated, the blissful pair scampered into the cool surf, washing away the invasive, gritty sand and

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clearing their foggy heads. It was over for now. He'd be gone by sunup and Kate would go back to work. She had planned on Peru, an exciting new dig in the Fall. Bill had warned her not to go. She wondered why and questioned his concerns. He said, "Just trust me."

She would not listen.

Intruders

Kate's fulfillment was complete. Her body was beautifully satisfied, and her intellectual journey had reached a pinnacle. All she could do now, was lie back on her soft pillows and revel in the delights of her new life. Such moments were rare. Her rocky past was an indicator, and she knew it was unwise to take anything for granted. The climate could change quickly and dramatically.

She handled the small Venus fertility figure delivered to her with little fanfare from Raymond. She thought it prophetic that she was gifted a fertility figure since her own fertility was being tested. The smoothly carved object came with no providence, perhaps found in the field, or more likely, chosen from artifacts collected by Raymond's fence. Its age was questionable, likely not very old. Without submitting it to scientific testing, in a well-equipped lab, she could only label it a forgery. No matter, her little Venus of Willendorf would remain in her possession. Maybe, it would fulfill its purpose one day.

For now, Agent Shepherd had left her comfortably alone with her thoughts, internally warm, externally flushed and physically spent. In addition, at this exact moment, she was overflowing with rich and seductive imaginings.

She had dreamed of the young Incan couple and was certain the ancient Shaman had influenced the content of her dreams. As her research progressed, her thoughts had ventured not too far from the truth. She believed she knew their names and bits and pieces surrounding their tragic plight. Her heart ached as she imagined their forbidden love, plus their need to flee both families, in order to consummate their desire to remain together.

She fingered Raymond's fertility figure. There was no pregnancy, at least her research spoke of no 'ripe belly'. They were so young and according to all the translated symbols, they were deeply in love. Her 'flower' was given willingly, but there was no mention of producing an offspring.

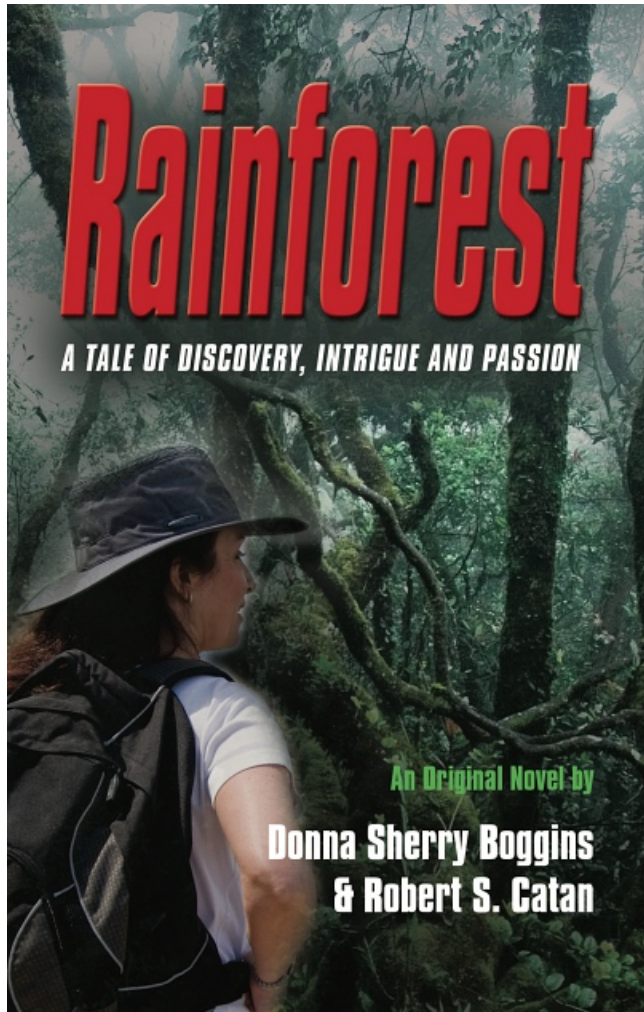
Childhood was a luxury, a documented fact, in most primitive cultures and it still plagues many third world societies. Simply said, strong young backs and nimble fingers were needed to keep fragile communities productive, growing and safe from invaders. Mortality was high among children, perishing from disease, starvation, accidents and war. The pain experienced at the loss of a child must have been devastating. In modern times, that pain has not ceased. Children still die from many of these same afflictions and mothers everywhere, still mourn their losses.

Snuggling deeper into her bed, Kate closed her eyes and drifted into a light, yet worry free sleep. Her eyes were heavy, and the pillow was so comforting. She had planned to doze for a few minutes, no more.

She was not sure how long she had slept. It was nearly dark and perfectly still outdoors. Her nap had turned long and languorous. No one had awakened her. Of course, Bill was away and there was no one home to awaken her.

From deep within the folds of her blankets, she detected an unwelcomed rustling sound, then a glass vase fell to the floor, shattering noisily. She froze as she heard footsteps cross the main room, only thirty feet from where she lay. Like a ghost, Kate slid out of bed, grabbed her emergency duffle bag and silently slipped through the open, double doors. She was barefoot but had no time to find her shoes. The sweatshirt and black tights were at least black and unobtrusive.

First, she took cover behind the patio wall. She saw two distinct shadows move across the bedroom's interior wall. She caught her breath, then she ran for all she was worth.



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