

Coffee Addict

Chapter 25 – The Conclusion

“General Mateo Rodriguez was being sent more troops, lots more troops. Pictures of the dead humanoid creatures had made it onto the mainstream TV news; they were bound to eventually. The defence perimeter was being extended to surround the entire village and most of the plantation.”

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Jess had asked Mateo Rodriguez for help in getting David Sullivan's body back home, to be buried somewhere in Calgary where he could be visited by his wife and kids. The army had found and recovered his remains, though his body had been damaged in the bombing. Jess had wondered how a few hot days in the hot ground must have affected what was left of David. She called his wife and gently shifted the conversation to needing a closed coffin funeral. Or of course, he could have been buried in the Village, where he was well respected.

“I just want him home Jess.” David's wife had told her. “Just get him here so that the kids and I can give him a decent burial.”

“I can make sure that happens.” Jess had said.

Mateo and the Colombian army were doing the work of sealing the coffin and getting it onto a jet at La Nubia Airport in Manizales. David had given his life attacking their enemies and Mateo was doing it all as a thank you from a grateful nation. The soldiers carrying his coffin onto the plane looked lost in their own thoughts about the occasion. Mateo wasn't there, but he'd sent Captain Sánchez.

“Julie Yago is getting a monument erected to him in Main Street.” Said Sánchez. “Right outside where the new V-Boom building will be. He will never be forgotten.”

Jess couldn't help thinking that maybe, just maybe.....David should have said yes to the reassignment to Vietnam. He'd have been out there instead of dying in a creature infested bunker, or at least on a plane heading for Noi Bai International Airport. He'd done the right thing and had died from it; that was something Jess didn't want to ponder on for too long.

“He loved being here in Colombia, especially the plantation.” Said Jess.

Jess wasn't sure of the etiquette of such things, or if she was even allowed in the plane's main hold. When Sánchez followed the coffin onto the plane, she followed him. There was space in there, far more than Jess had expected. The soldiers placed the coffin on a kind of trestle table, which was attached to bolts in the floor. The coffin was strapped down hard to the table. Whatever indignities David might have suffered in life, he'd be safe and secure in death.

“If you want to say a few words.....There is time.” Said Sánchez. “It can be something personal, rather than anything religious.”

“May I have a moment on my own with him ?” Asked Jess.

“Yes, but not too long.....Or you might end up going to Canada today.” Said Sánchez.

Left on her own to say her goodbyes to David, through the top of a sealed coffin. It had to be sealed for health reasons; there were all sorts of certificates to that effect. A very personal moment, spoken through a coffin lid made of Ash. She couldn't even kiss him on the cheek.

“You should have said fuck it and gone to Vietnam.” She said. “Sometimes it's alright to take the easy option. Now you're gone, I think.....I might have loved you a little.”

That was it, though she was crying as she left the aircraft's baggage hold. She felt uncomfortable at Sánchez seeing her cry. He looked uncomfortable at seeing her cry. No hugging her, but he did hold her hand for a second or two.

"Come on, we both need a drink." Said Sánchez. "I know somewhere that's open at this time of day." "Oh, yes please.....Several drinks." Said Jess.

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General Mateo Rodriguez was being sent more troops, lots more troops. Pictures of the dead humanoid creatures had made it onto the mainstream TV news; they were bound to eventually. The defence perimeter was being extended to surround the entire village and most of the plantation. Nothing compulsory, but those who'd been evacuated were being invited to return. Some would and some wouldn't, but their homes would be protected until they decided. The official position from Bogotá was that it was over, the enemy base had been destroyed, their creatures killed. Mateo wasn't quite as confident about that, but he was being sent a lot of experienced troops. Everywhere Mateo looked; there was a lot of construction work going on. Howard Beqiri had brought a team in from Manizales to repair Café Loco.

"I'm getting them to give the place a refurbishment." Said Howard. "The kitchen has needed it for years and the rooms needed to look less like student accommodation."

Mateo was accompanied by a fully armed group of guards, but his command vehicle had been left near where the V-Boom building was being demolished, prior to reconstruction. He could now walk the entire length of Main Street, without worrying about being attacked. Mateo liked to feel that his presence was reassuring to the population. Despite the refurbishment, Howard had managed to find him a cup of Café Loco coffee.

"Oh, there is nothing quite like Café Loco coffee." Said Mateo.

The village was coming back to life and despite a lot of worrying, the creatures did seem to have gone. Some had been seen heading towards the wetlands, but satellite imaging and aerial reconnaissance had found nothing, not a sign of them.

"I hope the army aren't in too much of a hurry to leave." Said Howard.

"No, once the defence perimeter is extended, we'll remain in a sort of peace keeping role. Even

though there is no one to keep the peace with. If the creatures do return.....We'll be ready."

South Korea were now officially the suppliers of superguns, or as some called them, pocket howitzers. They were selling them to any nation who wanted them. Yoon was going home soon to administer the stepped up production. She was also talking about heavy weapons with the same type of ammunition. If the beasts did return, the world would be ready for them. Howard refused to let him pay for the coffee, he always did.

"We need a town meeting." Said Howard. "Just so that everyone is in the loop."

"Good idea.....I'll get someone arranging it." Sad Mateo.

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Three months after the enemy base was bombed

Yoon Choi had been putting off and putting off leaving the village, because that might mean her never being able to return again. Once back in Korea, she'd be designing bigger and better superguns; she'd already thought of ways to improve the ammunition. There'd be testing and putting in appearances at international arms fairs. She might never get back to the village. That was sad, because the people there mattered to her. Of course they'd all promise to keep in touch; they might actually do it for a while. Eventually she'd never hear from any of them, including Kate. Two years she gave it, until all those promises to write or call, evaporated.

"Wow, a goodbye party at Café Loco." Said Valeria. "Howard rarely does those."

"We're good friends, I promised to leave him a book in my old room." Said Yoon.

Despite the refurbishments, her old room didn't look that much different. That was actually quite pleasing; not all change was for the better. She'd left a gift wrapped copy of Howards End on the bed she'd used for what now seemed an age. The book had a label on it, with 'Goodbye Howard' on it in black marker. She'd left a few other items hidden away in the room, mostly books; it was her thing.

Yoon was currently hosting her own goodbye party in the main eating area.

"What book did you leave him ?" Asked Valeria.

"Sorry, it's a bit of a secret." Said Yoon.

Kate was there and despite him not being banned, Chad had been left at home. Yoon couldn't be certain, but thought Kate considered the leaving do as a bit too tempting. She probably imagined Chad and her finding a quiet place to have a goodbye snog. Snog, another wonderful word she'd learned while in the village.

"Yoon, I am going to miss you so much." Said Kate. "We have to keep in touch."

"Definitely.....We must send each other Christmas and Birthday cards." Said Yoon.

They hugged; Yoon couldn't remember hugging so many people on one night. It was wonderful, but just made her realise how much she'd miss them all.

"We couldn't have fought off the creatures without your guns." Said Michelle.

"Wait until you see the assault rifle version." Said Yoon.

"I'm already salivating." Said Michelle.

Another hug and Yoon realised that just about everyone she'd asked, had actually turned up. For someone who was never a popular kid at school, that was huge. Even Julie Yago and her husband were somewhere in the building. Teresa and Lidia were elsewhere, but they'd had the good manners to say they wouldn't be attending.

"So, what book have you hidden for me ?" Asked Howard.

"Not hidden that well.....I'm sure you'll easily find it." Said Yoon. "I'm not telling you what it is."

"I'm still holding a credit on your account." Said Howard. "Tonight is being paid for by the Yago Plantation."

"Leave the credit where it is.....It'll tempt me to return for a holiday." Said Yoon.

"So you think the monsters have gone for good ?" Asked Howard.

"From Colombia.....Yes I do, though I'm not sure about the rest of the globe." Said Yoon.

The almost obligatory hug with Howard and Yoon almost walked straight into Jorge Alvarez, the local chief of police. Jorge had been injured when one of the brutes had turned over his command vehicle. He'd been badly injured and his wife Gabi, had been killed. On top of that, Jorge had received a couple of wounds while attacking the fake farm. Yoon wasn't avoiding him, but knew that any conversation was never going to be light and fun.

"Jorge, I'm so pleased you could come." Said Yoon.

"Yoon, I know you know people." Said Jorge. "I've heard rumours that the CIA sends you ammunition for your guns by helicopter out of Bogotá."

"There are always rumours, Jorge." Said Yoon. "I really couldn't comment on that rumour."

"I just wanted to.....Look, come over here, so we can talk in private." Said Jorge.

He took her over to the back door, which was now tougher and better alarmed than it used to be. Kate was looking over at her, with a kind of 'are you alright ?' look on her face. Yoon waved at her and smiled. Jorge didn't need any grief; he had just lost his wife.

"What do you want to know, Jorge ?" Asked Yoon.

"Are these things gone ? If anyone knows I'm betting it's you. I don't want Gabi to have died for nothing. Have the creatures gone forever ?"

Everyone had asked her that question, or a variation on it. Some of the people from Canada had asked her more than once. Yoon thought the world was certain to see the creatures again, but Jorge didn't need to hear that.

"Someone spent a lot on developing the creatures." Said Yoon. "They may decide to write that expense off and we'll never see giant wolf like creatures again. Or, they may return in another place, maybe years from now.....We have no way of knowing."

"But you.....What do you think, Yoon ? Will they be back ?" Asked Jorge.

Why the hell did he have to insist on a definite answer ? People were beginning to look at them.

"Between you and me, you never tell a living soul.....Agreed ?" Said Yoon.

"Fine.....Give me an answer ?"

"There is a consensus in the intelligence community." Said Yoon. "One day these things will return, but not in Colombia. Those controlling them will ask for money to make them go away, a lot of money."

Jorge hugged her, a tight hug which left her struggling for a breath.

"Thank you." Said Jorge. "Thank you.....I just needed to know."

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Six months after the enemy base was bombed

The sword had been incredibly useful; the rats had been around for a good month after the army had announced the attacks seemed to be over. Julie Yago had gone out every evening, just before dusk. Going clockwise around Hacienda Yago one night and anticlockwise the next. She'd often been accompanied by Gustavo and a few times by Teresa. One evening there were no rats for the Angel's sword to kill. Maybe they'd just all died ? There were no furry bodies though, which was a mystery. The team from Tessera Coffee Holdings were heading back to Canada. With no creatures to investigate, their task was over, finished as best they could. Luke had offered her his opinion on the rats, though he admitted it might be wrong.

"I think all the creatures had an inbuilt timer, something in their DNA." Luke had said. "At a certain time they all headed for the wetlands, even the huge rats. Once there they died, their remains rapidly decomposed."

It sounded a good theory and no one had mentioned a better one to her. Julie had the sword properly cleaned by a local jeweller; who'd been in awe of the weapon. Then Gustavo had hung it on a chain across the fireplace in the lounge. Julie was currently looking up at the sword, with Gustavo by her side. Teresa was there for the weekend, as it was her birthday; Lidia would be joining them later. Julie's daughter was a year older, but showed no signs of ever being more sensible.

"An angel's sword." Said Teresa. "I always feel the need to curtsy or something when I'm in this room."

"Really.....Do you believe ?" Asked Gustavo. "I had the impression Muisca was just a joke to you."

"Maybe once, but so much has happened." Said Teresa. ""We've all seen so many weird things."

"Once the local cultural museum is open, everyone can see the raiments." Said Julie. "One thing I'm certain of though, that sword is staying on our wall.....Just in case those things come back."

"Well, it was given to you, mum." Said Teresa.

Memory can play tricks, especially vague memories involving seeing angels and deities. Julie would have once sworn that the sword was given to her, but now she was less certain. It might have been

left on the ground for Chad. Even the angel seemed to talk in riddles a lot of the time. Officially though, Julie had been given the blade and no one was ever going to get it away from her.

"Did you hear about Maria and her mum ?" Asked Julie.

"No, is she alright ?" Asked Teresa.

It was sad and it might go away one day, but for the moment; any unknown news tended to be assumed to be bad news. It was part of the reason that for a while, every time Teresa went out of the door; Julie wondered if she'd see her again.

"They're fine, but her mum has decided enough is enough." Said Julie. "They have a plantation house, which will be given up fairly soon. I've told her mum there's no hurry. Their things can stay in the house until they've found long term housing in Manizales."

"Wow, is Maria happy with that ?" Asked Teresa.

"As far as I can tell.....It was Maria's idea." Said Julie.

"There's a lot more going on in Manizales, if you're a teenager." Said Gustavo.

Julie looked up at the sword and she was either hallucinating, or it glowed bright yellow for a second or two. It gave her an idea, a final family moment to celebrate the end of the dreadful creature attacks. Of course, some in the village believed the megafauna would return one day.

"I know the rats have gone." Said Julie. "How about one last circuit of Hacienda Yago, for old times' sake ?"

"All the rats are dead, or vanished." Said Gustavo.

"I know what mum means, she can swing the sword one last time." Said Teresa. "Let's do it."

Julie liked to think she was above the urge to swing a sword about, like some reboot version of Xena. There was an urge there though, to slice up a few of those dreadful rats. Julie lifted the sword from its hangers on the wall.

"Come on, it's a lovely day." Said Julie. "Clockwise I think, I always found more going clockwise."

"Nonsense, you're imagining it." Said Gustavo.

Imagining it or not, it didn't stop her husband following them out of the door. Teresa pretended to see a rat, but she put no feeling into it.

"You should have sounded horrified.....We might have believed you." Said Julie.

There were marks in the woodwork, where rats had tried to use their claws to gain access to the house. Luckily all outside woodwork was hardwood. Hacienda Yago had been built in an era when everything used in the construction was of the best quality obtainable.

"Look.....One tried to eat this grating, or at least it looks that way." Said Teresa.

"That's cast iron.....Crap, they must have had good teeth." Said Gustavo.

"Lidia told me she discovered one eating bones, human bones." Said Teresa. "I'm just pleased they've now gone.....Hopefully forever."

When it happened it was sudden, like a flash of lightning. One moment it was a little beyond dusk, the next it was like midday on a sunny day. Julie closed her eyelids to give her eyes a chance to adapt to the brightness of the light. When she opened her eyes, it was there.

"It's so bright." Said Gustavo.

"It's an angel isn't it mum ?" Asked Teresa. "An angel of Muisca."

"I do believe it is.....Though the brightness is new." Said Julie.

It became easier to see the female face, yes; it did seem to be the angel Julie had spoken to in the temple on the high plateau.

"Do you recognise me Julie ?" Asked the angel.

"I do, we've spoken before."

"It is over, Julie." Said the angel. "Finished for you and this part of the world. Others may be bothered by these creatures, but never here, not again. You can go about your business without fear or worry."

"Thank you, it's nice to know that." Said Julie.

"Did you kill all the creatures ?" Asked Teresa. "Was it the angels."

"Come to the temple one day and I will tell you." Said the angel.

The angel vanished, leaving them once more in the semidarkness of dusk.

"I may have had my doubts, but now I believe." Said Gustavo.

"It's not belief or faith if you've seen what we've seen." Said Julie. "Let's get back inside.....It must be Teresa's turn to make a pot of tea."

"Oh, mum !"

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Seven months after the enemy base was bombed

Ideally they'd have kept Rocky and Adrian in the huge old poultry shed for a year, maybe longer. Rocky was large though, well past puberty; and Adrian was even larger. As far as the village and the military were concerned, the threat from the creatures was over. Letting their much loved pet free to do her own thing was something everyone in team Rocky knew would happen one day. It was as inevitable as death and taxes. One big reason for making the date sooner rather than later was Michelle. She wanted to be there for the big goodbye, but the Canadians were about to return home.

"There's no one out there, not a soul." Said Lidia. "I walked right into the woods and didn't even hear vehicles on the main road. The time is perfect, we won't be seen if we use door E."

Lidia knew that door E was just about large enough for Rocky and her friend to get through; there had been a lot of practising for the big day. Once through the door it was a quick walk into the woods. After that ? That was up to the two strange looking creatures to decide. Only one restriction had been placed on them.

"Never, ever eat people." Teresa had told them.

"Oh, of course not." Rocky had replied.

Adrian had just made a grumbling noise in his throat and nodded a few times. He wasn't as clever as rocky, but she'd keep him in line. He did know a few words in English, but didn't seem comfortable using them.

"Do they have to go today ?" Asked Michelle. "I know the date is largely because I'll be on a jet home on Monday, but.....Keep them here if you think it's safer."

"It should be their decision." Said Teresa. "Do you two want to stay here for a few more months, Rocky ? The choice is yours."

The two flying lizard type creatures talked in their own language of warbles and squeaks for a while. Once they sounded birdlike to Lidia, now they sounded like something completely alien. They were changing, growing up; not that Lidia loved them any less.

"We shall leave now, today." Said Rocky. "It is time for us to start a life of our own; somewhere we can fly out in the open. We will never cause trouble and definitely.....We'll never feed on humans."

It was the longest Lidia had heard Rocky talk for, though Teresa said she'd had a few long conversations with Rocky. Adrian was nodding his head like crazy. He even spoke, though his voice was harder to understand.

"I know somewhere good.....A good home for us." Said Adrian.

Teresa opened door E and started to cry as she did so. Lidia later admitted to shedding a tear, as did Michelle. Luke had been invited, but he was trying to catch up on a backlog of samples that needed analysing. They all went through the open door and into the wooded area beyond. Even the weather seemed intent on giving Rocky and her boyfriend a good send off. It was sunny and dry, but a clear sky was stopping it getting too hot.

"We need to arrange something." Said Michelle. "A way of meeting again in a year from now. Are you good at knowing the seasons, Rocky ?"

"No, just that summer is warm and winter is cool." Said Rocky. "When I get the chance I'll leave something by door E, something that lets you know we're alive and well."

"What will you leave ?" Asked Teresa.

"I'm not sure yet, but you will know I left it." Said Rocky. "We may meet again one day, but it will be awkward."

"Yes, whatever you do.....Stay safe." Said Michelle.

There was a lot of the cheek rubbing, which Adrian seemed keen on too. His facial skin was quite rough, but there seemed to be genuine affection involved. Given a few more months and Lidia could see herself caring as much for Adrian, as she did for Rocky.

"Go on, fly away." Said Teresa. "Stay any longer and I'll begin to really cry."

"I don't understand crying." Said Rocky.

"Then you're very lucky." Said Lidia. "It means we're feeling hurt and unhappy."

It took a few flaps of their wings to get into the air, they were both getting bigger. Once they were up and above the treeline, Rocky and Adrian headed north. The three on the ground who'd looked after Rocky since she'd been a hatchling; cried.....They cried a lot.

"Do you think we'll ever see her again ?" Asked Teresa.

"I doubt it, but a little something left by the door will do." Said Michelle. "Just something to tell us they're alive and well."

"What do you think she'll leave ?" Asked Lidia.

"I have no idea.....I bet it's something typically Rocky." Said Teresa.

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Two years after the enemy base was bombed

Gopalpur was a small coastal town in India. A population of just over seven thousand, most of whom were employed by the port facility. A quiet town on the Bay of Bengal, some would have called it picturesque. There'd been no hint of the trouble to come, no warning signs at all.

It was a hot day of about 32 degrees when the landing craft had been seen heading towards the beach. Gopalpur was a harmless town with an annual beach festival. Definitely not the kind of place to expect a sudden and brutal attack by heavily armed soldiers. The hundred or so fighters leaving the landing craft didn't all return to wherever they'd come from. Two had died, killed by local police. They turned out to be Humanoid creatures, very similar to the ones seen in Colombia. Those hundred or so fighters had managed to wipe out most of the population of Gopalpur in less than an afternoon.

The worldwide intelligence community considered it to be another test. A test with what end ? That was considered impossible to tell, until they struck again.

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Two and a half years, give or take; after the enemy base was bombed

Teresa and Lidia were in the small wood behind Jaimie's disused chicken sheds, they went there most Sundays. Lidia now worked for her mother, Julie Yago; which was a very long story. Teresa was

about five months pregnant, an even longer story. A tale involving a sperm donor and a hell of a lot of patience. She and Lidia had actually tossed a coin, to see who got the job of having their first child. A proper medical procedure in Manizales, not some DIY job with a turkey baster. To say that things had changed in the last two and a half years, was putting it mildly. Still no message from Rocky though, which was worrying. Lidia was digging about in the general junk near Door E of the shed, while Teresa sat on a folding chair that went just about everywhere with her.

"Hey, I've found something." Yelled Lidia. "Not exactly a message in a bottle, but definitely from Rocky."

Teresa refused to admit she sometimes waddled about; she was only five months gone. It was a warm day; it took her a while to join Lidia. She was holding an empty hot dog tin, one that hadn't been there the previous Sunday.

"Does it have a use by date on it ?" Asked Teresa.

"It sure does.....June next year."

"Great.....It means our favourite creatures are alive and well." Said Teresa.

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~ The End ~

'Unless otherwise indicated, all the names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents in this book are either the product of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.'

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