

## Coffee Addict

### Chapter 17 – The Sword

**‘Howard was busy because Café Loco was busy. The tables were almost full and one of his waiters was having a minor hissy fit. He was calling Howard by his name and getting a little angry. Nothing nasty happened, but Yoon had heard Howard called by his name.’**

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Kate Doyle knew that Yoon could no longer be her friend. Yet, the helicopters were the only way to get to the village from the high plateau and they could hardly leave her behind. She obviously didn't realise that Chad was a two timing piece of trash. As for Chad ? Kate was going to leave their row for when she cleared her things out of his apartment. They'd be alone then and she could really let rip. Kate had hoped to be on a different helicopter to the pairs of them, but there was Yoon, just the other side of the seating area from her. Luckily, Chad was on the other helicopter with Julie Yago and her husband.

"I heard about Chad and that woman." Said Maria. "For what it's worth, I thought you made a great couple. I hope you two can sort it out."

It wasn't what Kate was thinking, she was imagining using her nails on Chad's face. Truthfully though, a large part of her didn't want what they had to end. At twenty eight, she didn't like to take relationship advice from a teenager, but it made sense.

"Thanks, Maria." Said Kate. "At the moment I hate him, but by tomorrow.....Who knows ?"

"I really hope you two can work it out." Said Maria.

Maria touched her arm briefly, before going to join Greta. Her gang of Muisca brats had been through their own rows. Their problem too, had been started by jealousy and a guy who couldn't keep his dick in his pants.

"They're young.....Maria will sort it out." Muttered Kate.

No one likes to get drawn into a row that isn't theirs. Most of those Kate thought of as friends, smiled at her, but few of them asked if she was alright. They were probably also friends with Chad and didn't want to choose a side. It was Olie of all people, who made her feel better about herself. He sat himself next to her and used a stage whisper as he spoke.

"What a bastard huh ? You're well shot of him." Said Olie.

Wonderful and it caused a lot of head to nod in agreement. The only problem was that Kate was thinking over ways to stay with Chad, without looking like a total doormat. She kissed Olie on the cheek.

"Thanks, Olie.....I needed that." She said.

"We're circling without landing." Said Sánchez.

"The other helicopter is circling too." Someone said.

"Maybe the village is being attacked." Said Olie.

Everyone had heard about the huge wolf like creature, which had been seen heading towards the Yago Plantation and the village. For some reason no one had really thought the village would be attacked. There were so many people there, including a small army of special ops fighters. Of course, the creature wouldn't know about who might fight back. A head appeared around the curtain that separated the pilot area from the main body of the helicopter.

“They saw it, the other helicopter saw it.”

Probably one of the pilots, Julie Yago had insisted on two per helicopter, just in case one fell foul to food poisoning, or became creature food.

“The creature swung away from the village, heading north.”

North meant the general direction of the now derelict Wilkins Farm. It seemed as though that area was cursed in some way, to be infested by huge mega fauna. There couldn't be much left for them to destroy.

“Great.....We should be able to land now.” Said Sánchez.

It seemed helicopters were like holiday jets; once delayed they seemed nervous about actually landing. It was about forty five minutes until their helicopter lowered its wheels and landed in the field behind Hacienda Yago. A lot of the population of the village appeared to be waiting for their friends and loved ones to arrive. There was a lot of cheering going on, as the helicopters doors were opened.

“Do they know that we've brought back two in body bags ?” Asked Olie.

“Julie will have called them on her satellite phone.” Said Sánchez.

Kate hoped she had, but even satellite phones didn't work well on the high plateau. She could imagine happy relatives turning up; to find their dead family member inside a body bag. Those leaving the helicopter seemed in no hurry, looking around them; as if searching for a ravenous creature.

“Come on, get moving.....I need a burger and fries at Café Loco.” Said Olie.

“Maybe two burgers.” Added Julian.

The locals had family and friends to greet them, but the Kate and her fellow Canadians only had each other. As her feet touched grass, Kate saw David's smiling face looking at her.

“I'm very proud of you Kate.” Said David. “I'll be letting Calgary know that you're overdue for a promotion of some kind. I don't want you leaving once your PhD is finished.”

“Thank you David, that's really appreciated.” She said.

Yoon was now barely visible; the car she was quickly walking towards was a good hundred yards away. Kate recognised her though, the bitch. It was obvious that she'd led Chad astray, or at least that was how Kate was viewing it. That made it far easier to forgive him, without looking like a.....Her new favourite word doormat. Kate had let a previous boyfriend treat her like a doormat, just the once.

“And he carried on walking all over me.” She muttered.

Never again and definitely not with Chad. She wanted to see some genuine contrition, or he could walk. Someone was giving Yoon a lift to the Café Loco, to pick up her things. She was getting into a car Kate didn't recognise.

“Olie, you know every car in the district.” Said Kate. “Who is giving Yoon a lift ?”

“I couldn't swear to it, not at this distance.” Said Olie. “It looks like the car Michelle has been driving recently.”

Kate didn't mind Michelle giving Yoon a lift; anything to get her out of the village and on the first plane out of La Nubia Airport in Manizales.

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There were definite perks to dating a cop; on top of Teresa liking women in uniforms, and the availability of handcuffs. The links to the main networks from her mum's satellite phone were crap. There was probably a technical reason why, with a long technical name, but to Teresa; the links were crap. Not so with the links used by the police and the military, which were often the same thing in

Colombia. Julie Yago, her long suffering mother; at least according to her. Had linked into the security services network, who'd connected her with Lidia Fernandez. Obviously her mum knew that given the opportunity, her daughter would be spending a lot of time with Lidia, while she was away at the high plateau. Lidia had duly passed on the long and detailed message to Teresa.

The consequence of the phone call and the long message, was Teresa knowing when her mum and the others would be home, almost to the minute. Lidia had even gone with her; the attentive girlfriend there to join in with the waving and cheering, as the expedition arrive home.

"They're circling.....Why are they circling ?" Asked Teresa.

Lidia was muttering into her cop radio and looking very serious. Her girlfriend actually leant in towards her and whispered.

"One of the huge wolves was in the area." Said Lidia. "They'll only land when the Bogotá cops tell them it's safe.....Or they get low on fuel."

"I know my mum, she'll moan at them non-stop until they land." Said Teresa.

The helicopters were due to land where they'd taken off from. The field was used for hospitality by the Yago Plantation. It was so close to Hacienda Yago, that Julie often referred to it as their back garden. The local schools held sports days there and the local horticultural society gave out prizes there; for who had the biggest marrow. Teresa had even been to a jumble sale there; which was raising money for stray cats, or something like that.

"They're landing, Teresa." Yelled Lidia. "One is.....No, they're both landing."

Teresa wasn't a total cynic; she did join in with the cheering when the helicopters opened their doors. In many ways the expedition had come home early; some might say they'd come home in disgrace. Little had been achieved, according to anyone with a link to the cop comms network. Yet there they were in their thousands, the people of the village; cheering like crazy.

"They're cheering your mum." Said Lidia.

"She does have her good days." Said Teresa.

Her father was there too, looking as if he believed many of the cheers were for him. Michelle was with her mum, but rushed away in the direction of the parked cars. Most would start, but the hot and humid atmosphere of the plantation, could turn a reliable car into a lifeless wreck. A few in the expedition would need a lift home. Not her parents of course, they were home.

"Mum..... Dad.....Good to have you back home." Shouted Teresa.

Her dad waved first and then her mum. They were heading towards her, but had no cases. Typical of her mum, she must have found someone to carry their luggage into the family hacienda. It seemed ages until her mum was close to enough to talk to, without yelling.

"You're back early.....Really early." Said Teresa. "What happened ?"

"We'll tell you everything." Said her dad. "But.....After a proper meal and at least two glasses of a decent red."

"Oh, it ended up being hell, dear." Said her mum. "Pure hell."

Lidia had obviously decided to see which way the Yago family vibe was headed, before she said that much. She was smiling at her parents, as if her life depended on it. People joined their group, people carrying her parent's bags. Teresa recognised one as a friend of Maria's. Her mother was shameless, hiring the village kids as luggage carriers. When it came, it was a shock.

"Fuck.....It's one of those creatures." Yelled her dad.

It was a long way from being fully grown, but the wolf creatures was far larger than any wolf Teresa had ever seen on late night TV. National Geographic sometimes had unexpected large wild fauna, but nothing to compete with the enormous wolf. There was something about the creature's large

yellow eyes. They hinted at savagery, mixed with preternatural strength and.....Intellect. Teresa had made a pet of Rocky; she knew the creatures were clever varmints.

"Stand behind us, Julie." Yelled one of the baggage carriers.

Obviously one of the brave teens, none of his fellow bag carriers offered to be part of a human wall. Tension increased quite a bit when her father began firing at the wolf. Gustavo had one of the new generation of superguns, which he'd strung from a holster under his jacket. He'd just fired twice at the wolf creature and it had made a yelping sound.

"No more bullets, Gustavo." Shouted her mum. "Let me use the sword.....I think it was intended for situations like this."

Teresa hadn't heard of her mum having a sword. Julie took a pack from one of the young pack carriers and pulled something out of it. Long and covered in a cloth sheath, it was obvious that it was the sword her mother wanted to use. Julie took a few swings with the sword and the wolf backed away from her.

"It knows.....The brute knows the sword will hurt it." Said Lidia.

The sword looked long, silver and heavy, but her mum was swinging it about with ease. The wolf made a half-hearted charge and Julie jabbed it in the face with the point of the sword. The beast did more than yelp, it screamed as her mum drew blood with the sword.

"Again, mum.....Kill it." Yelled Teresa.

"I will if the damned thing will stand still." Said Julie.

"Careful.....Don't let it get behind you." Said Gustavo.

The sword was beautiful, like a functional piece of art. It looked a little light to use as a weapon and the blade was quite thin. The reaction of the creature spoke volumes about the lethality of the sword. Teresa had no idea how it knew, but it knew the blade her mother wielded, could kill it. The huge wolf looked scared and kept trying to avoid facing her mum.

"Let me finish it off with the supergun." Yelled Gustavo.

"No !" Shouted Julie. "Shoot it again and you'll be sleeping in the summerhouse for weeks."

Rare for her parents to have a public row, but Teresa was enjoying it. Had they forgotten a dangerous creature was there ? It kept snapping at her mum and it only had to get lucky once. They were all quite close to the house now. There was a baseball bat on the grass, which was genuinely used for softball and occasionally, a family game of baseball. Many kept baseball bats for home defence, based on a simple logic. They'd rather explain a bludgeoned burglar to the cops, than explain how a loved one was hurt and killed. Not this bat though, it was genuinely only used for genuine games of baseball. It was an antique made of a heavy hardwood and someone had fitted a really good hand grip. Teresa picked up the bat and ran at the monster wolf.

"Hey.....Let's see how you like this." Yelled Teresa.

Julie screeched something at her, but it was too late to change anything. Teresa had the bat up and ready. Her dad called her his pinch hitter, if they needed saving from a bad score and a better team. She knew how to hold a bat and she knew how to hit with it. She swung the bat and caught the wolf on the side of its jaw. There was the sound of her dad firing his pocket howitzer and after that, things got a little confusing.

"Stop shooting it !" Yelled her mum.

Teresa brought the bat back for another swing and the wolf leapt at her. There was the deafening roar of her dad's gun and what looked like the silver arc of her mum's sword, as she slashed at the beast's throat. The wolf hit Teresa and it was heavy, far heavier than she'd expected. Her head hit

the ground and Teresa was unconscious. The last sound Teresa heard was Lidia screaming and screaming, over and over again.

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David Sullivan had agreed for Julie Yago to have all the sets of Raiments. She had the original armour she'd discovered and was calling it the armour of a Muisca angel. The Canadian invasion of the ancient temple, the resting place; had found another three full sets of armour. David still had that armour, mainly because Julie couldn't decide what to do with it all.

"Keep it for now, David." She'd told him. "Keep it safe until we decide what to do with it. The Museo Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá will want it all, but I'd prefer a local museum. We could create something in the village, perhaps close to the library ? Have a good think about it."

David assumed Julie would finance a local museum, but he was quite prepared to ask for Tessera Coffee Holdings to contribute towards the setup costs. A decent museum dealing with the Muisca religion and the plantation in general, would be a good PR move for the large food conglomerate. They weren't exactly that popular at the moment.

"I'm glad we bought the professional camera." Said Jess. "It takes wonderful pictures of the Raiments to send to Calgary."

The day after arriving back and the head office in Calgary were already pestering for pictures of the finds they'd brought back from the high plateau. Finds seemed to include pictures of plant life from the plateau. Jess had been carrying out her usual duties and phoning around to get copies of people's pictures from the expedition. From what he'd heard, there were a lot of pictures being sent via email, or prints dropped in the post. The camera Jess loved, had been purchased to take autopsy photographs of the creatures and any specimens collected. She was right; it did take wonderful pictures of the Raiments. Leaving aside religious implications, they were an incredible historical find. "We will resist those trying to get hold of the Raiments." Said David. "The museums, even our own head office; they'll all try to get them. They'd put them in a locked vault, where no one will ever see them. Julie is right; they need to go to a local museum."

"Oh, our CEO; Jacob P Wilson." Jess said with a sigh. "He'll either lock them in a company vault, or give them to the Canadian Museum of History in Quebec. These garments belong to this area; they should be in a Plantation Museum of some kind."

"We have them, Jess." Said David. "I'm not letting them go without a fight. I'm definitely not packing them up to go on a plane to Quebec."

"God help anyone who tries to take the armour Julie found." Said Jess. "Which reminds me; have you heard how Teresa is doing ? I heard she might be sent to the main hospital in Manizales."

David had been included in several conversations about Teresa Correa and in theory; most of it was confidential medical information. He'd been concerned about the girl; she'd been unconscious for quite some time. In the end it was Julie who'd made him sure Teresa would be fine.

"Perhaps this will knock some sense into my daughter." Julie had said. "She needed something to give her a jolt of common sense. Taking on that creature.....With just a baseball bat. I'm proud of her of course, so is her father; but going after that brute. Crazy, David.....She's just plain crazy."

David knew that Julie and her daughter had disagreements on the acceptable lifestyle for a girl her age. There was a lot of love there though, despite the frequent arguments. If Julie Yago was talking about her daughter having sense knocked into her, it meant she was alright; she'd live. There was no way she'd talk like that unless Teresa was going to be fine. There had been no plane to the hospital in Manizales, Teresa was resting up and healing at home in Hacienda Yago. There were even

rumours that Lidia was seen there quite a bit. As for the wolf which had attacked them ? Julie Yago had finished it off with two thrusts from her sword. Not that anyone was reading too much into that. Gustavo had already shot it three times with a supergun and the creature was a very, very long way from being fully grown.

"This is between us, agreed ?" Asked David.

"Yes, of course." Said Jess.

"I've had several conversations about Teresa with her parents." Said David. "Despite what you might hear, I'm confident she'll soon be fully healed. No secret chats with her doctor or anything like that. It was Julie Yago whose words and actions have made me certain that Teresa will be fine."

"That's great news.....I was really worried." Said Jess. "And don't worry. I won't tell a soul."

"Good.....Now we need just a few more pictures of the Raiments." Said David. "If we had Michelle with us, I'd get her to model the armour again. She has the right shape for it.....Amazonian Julie calls her."

"I could model it for the pictures." Said Jess. "I know I'm too short and the wrong shape, but head office won't mind. All they want are pictures of the armour. I'll just be the clothes hanger."

"Yes, that sounds great." Said David. "I'll take a ten minute walk, so you can change into the first set of Raiments."

David walked along several streets, before crossing the road and walking back. It was now strangely quiet in the village. A huge wolf had been seen on the edge of town; almost in Julie Yago's back yard. That was bound to make people nervous. The effect might not last long, but for now, he just about had the streets to himself. Jess was dressed in the armour when he returned. She was examining herself in the mirror David used to adjust his clothes before meetings.

"Well, what do you think ?" Asked Jess.

"Perfect, Jess.....Perfect." Said David. "I'll take the pictures while you pose."

She had the wrong shape, but she had a glow.....A very literal glow. Head office would put it down to them using some kind of fancy lighting, but it wasn't. Jess wore the armour of an angel and she glowed. She must have noticed, but never said a word about it. David took a lot of pictures and was ready for another walk, while Jess changed into the next set of Raiments.

"Stay put and look at the wall or something." Said Jess. "Like Michelle, I'll be decent; I have no intention of removing my underwear."

There had been a definite yellow glow when Jess had worn the first set of armour. With the second set it was a red(ish) glow. It was still as if she couldn't see it, as though it was an hallucination only he could see. As Jess posed in the Raiments, the red(ish) glow began to sparkle. It was no good, David had to say something.

"The glow from the armour, Jess.....You must see it ?" Asked David.

"I see it; I noticed it with the first set of armour." Said Jess. "I wasn't sure you could see it. I like the glow; it gives me a warm feeling. I believe something happened to me in the temple, David. Something good and truly wonderful."

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Yoon was dropped off at her hired car; she'd been determined to make sure it was alright. Of course it was, there didn't even seem to be a layer of dust on it. Then again, she hadn't been away that long.

"Are you going to be alright ?" Asked Michelle. "Don't judge us all by Chad, he can have a bit of a dark side, or so I'm told."

"I hold no grudges against the village." Said Yoon. "If I could earn a living here, I'd be tempted to move in, permanently. Chad isn't the first man to mess me around and he probably won't be the last. I'm not a teenager, I'll survive."

Michelle gave her a hug before driving away, which was unexpected but nice. As the developer of the superguns, Yoon would know what the Canadians were doing until they left Colombia. It was going to feel a bit like stalking, but it'd be nice to know what they were up to. She'd only known them a few days, but some of them had become friends.

"I wonder if Howard will admit to owning Café Loco ?" She muttered.

Howard, the famous village eccentric, at least according to Kate. Yoon liked the Café Loco and its owner; she liked just about everything in the village, apart from Chad. Strangely, she hoped that he and Kate managed to repair their relationship.

"But Kate could do so much better." She mumbled.

Yoon sat in her car for a while, checking that everything was still there. Not that she'd left much in it, apart from a flashlight in the glove compartment. Just about anything worth taking was either in her bags, or in the room she was renting at Café Loco.

"Do I leave, or do I stay ?" She muttered.

Not for a long stay, though Yoon was tempted to use the room she'd rented, until the month was up on her rent. Everyone at her office was expecting her to return then. It might feel a bit odd, if she ran into Kate, or Chad. On the other hand, she loved the village and liked most of the Canadian team from Tessera Coffee. It was a conundrum. The solution was easy, once she thought about it.

"Howard.....If Howard tells me who he is, I'll stay for the rest of the month." She muttered.

Yoon was stronger than she looked; her mother had once referred to her as a pack horse. She easily carried her bags inside the café. There was Howard, doing his barista bit behind the counter. He grinned at her, as she headed for the stairs to the rooms.

"You're popular Yoon." Said Howard. "There were a few calls looking for you, including one from Kate Doyle at the plantation. I took lots of notes, when you're ready for them."

"When did Kate leave the message ?" She asked.

"Just now.....You only just missed her call." Said Howard.

That changed things, Yoon was at about fifty-fifty on whether she'd stay or not. It just needed Howard to admit to being the owner manager of Café Loco.

"I'll put my bags in my room." Said Yoon. "Then I'll be back down for coffee and lots of nibbles.....I'm really hungry."

"Are you back for the month ?" Asked Howard.

"Hmmmmmm I'm not quite sure yet; maybe."

Her room had been cleaned of course, but none of her things looked to have been fiddled with. Yoon changed, into jeans and a simple plain white T shirt. She wanted clothes on her back that didn't remind her of the high plateau and Chad Hudson.

"All this fuss over one kiss in a hotel room." She muttered.

Downstairs and Yoon decided to eat at the counter, rather than a table. At the counter would make it easier to talk to Howard, who still hadn't told her his name. Yoon ordered a large coffee and three large pastries; she really was feeling very hungry.

"And with the coffee.....My notes about people calling you." Said Howard.

Others had taken calls; a woman called Marie was mentioned as taking a call from Yoon's boss in Bogotá. Most of it could be ignored and it wasn't as if she'd had hundreds of calls. Five messages in

total and two of them were from her office. The one call that mattered, was from Kate. She was hoping they could meet for a drink, before Yoon got on a plane to pastures new.

"We can't part as enemies." Was how Kate had ended her message.

Howard was busy because Café Loco was busy. The tables were almost full and one of his waiters was having a minor hissy fit. He was calling Howard by his name and getting a little angry. Nothing nasty happened, but Yoon had heard Howard called by his name. She didn't want to leave the village now, not until she'd talked things over with Kate. Yoon decided to push the Howard thing along a little.

"You're Howard aren't you?" Asked Yoon. "Kate mentioned you and that you owned Café Loco."

"Ahhhh, my humble barista persona has been sunk." Said Howard. "I do indeed own and run this establishment."

"Why not tell your customers you're the owner?" Asked Yoon.

"People react differently to the boss." Said Howard. "I prefer to be just the guy behind the counter."

"I'll be staying for the month, maybe longer." Said Yoon. "Is that alright?"

"Of course it is." Said Howard. "I get the feeling I'll need to put a sign on your door, saying 'Yoon's Room.'"

He'd had her credit cards to put through the system and he'd seen her passport, though that was in Korean. Despite the fact that Howard knew her name, she still felt a need to tell him.

"By the way.....My name is Yoon Choi."

"And I am Howard S Beqiri. The Beqiri is a long story, my forebears came from Albania. When we know each other better and there's time; I promise to explain."

Kate was right, Howards was pretty eccentric. There was a return number for Kate written as part of the message from her. Yoon needed time to get herself calm and ready. As soon as she'd finished her pastries, she'd call Kate Doyle. What she said to her, would depend on how the call seemed to be going.

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Maria had expected to be away for longer, quite a bit longer. As with most young people, extreme anger had a pretty short shelf life. The sad thing was that love could come and go just as quickly. Love someone in the morning, only to hate them by the evening; and sometimes loving them all over again by the next day. For once the phone service was clear, absolutely flawless.

"I know.....I know, Maria." Had said Greta. "It's crazy, but everyone is at a loose end. I'm not sitting in all night, watching reruns of Columbo with my parents."

Greta had a thing about her parents being hooked on the old cop show; everyone in their school knew that. Maria had noticed that the spell checker on her laptop didn't recognise Columbo as a word. How quickly the mighty can fall.

"Will Alfonso be coming?" Maria had asked.

It was another reply starting with two 'I knows.' Maria could see there being a lot of that before the night was over.

"I know.....I know, Maria." Had said Greta. "It sounds nut....We all hate him. Can I tell you something secret that you'd never guess in a million years?"

"Yeah.....Ok, tell me." Maria had muttered.

It really was crazy; Alfonso was the demon of their group, a general figure of well-deserved hatred.

Yet Greta was suggesting that they went out together for a few beers. Not in a bar either, the bartenders knew they were all under age. Greta had mentioned them going out to the wetlands for their beer and packets of brightly coloured junk food.



"They're here and hoping you agree to come out with us." Greta had said. "Geena has her sister's car.....We'll come over and get you, if you want us to?"

"You're saying you have Alfonso in your house, right now?" Maria had asked.

Strangely Maria wasn't totally appalled, just appalled enough to think it was weird. Maria had thought of asking her dad to beat the shit out of Alfonso. Now Greta was suggesting they all went out for a beer, in the wetlands where the creatures might be.

"Yes, both of them are here.....Teasing my mum about liking Columbo."

Maria should have been telling them to take a long walk off a short jetty. It was difficult though, they were her best friends, even Alfonso. Telling them to get lost might mean a lot more nights at home, with her overly religious mother. As the words came out of her mouth, Maria didn't quite believe she'd said them.

"Alright, fine.....Come and get me."

"Geena just asked if you fancy a burger at Café Loco before we head for the wetlands? She's feeling a bit hungry."

"Yeah, why not.....It'll be fun." Maria had said.

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Kate Doyle pulled up just across the road from Café Loco. Yoon had returned her call and suggested a meal at Howard's famous coffee place. Get Howard in the right mood and he'd even bring drinks to your table, from the bar. Kate had accepted because being truthful, the mess was all Chad's fault. It wasn't her fault, it wasn't Yoon's fault; Chad Hudson was to blame for everything. And, as Kate was still hoping to make things up with Chad, she could hardly refuse to see Yoon.

Anyway, Kate was hoping Yoon might still become a long term friend. Kate still had the supergun prototype Chad had given her. It was hers now, even if he ended up being very much an ex-boyfriend. She had the gun on straps under her jacket. There was something about the village now, quite a bad vibe. Kate had decided to take the gun everywhere with her. She crossed the road, squeezing past a group of kids outside Café Loco.

"Wow, Maria.....You guys made up pretty quickly." Said Kate.

They were all there, swigging from bottles of beer. It was as if all the anger towards Alfonso, had never existed. He had a very livid mark on his cheek, but it didn't seem to be spoiling his night.

"Life is too short to hold grudges." Said Greta.

"We're all at school together." Said Maria. "It makes sense for us to all get on."

Alfonso had an arm around Geena's shoulders and she was looking at him as though he was the love of her life. Kate wondered if she'd ever been like Maria and her school buddies? She had of course, probably worse than them. There had been one boy who'd messed her around so much, yet she honestly thought he'd loved her. What was his name?

"Kate.....I'm over here." Yelled Yoon.

Even if business was really good, Café Loco was big enough to never look over crowded. Yoon was waving at her from the other side of a large glass window. Getting through the door required a bit of attitude and sharp elbows, but Kate was soon hugging Yoon.

"I'm so glad you called me back." Said Kate. "I had this awful feeling that you'd be on the first plane home to Korea. Chad is an arse....No argument, but we can still be friends."

"I'd like that." Said Yoon. "I'd like that very much."

The army arrived, with the kind of impact that was rarely seen in the village. Mateo Rodriguez's men, reputed to be the best of the best. Not in just one expensive black SUV, but three of them came to a halt outside Howard's famous coffee place. The cops who dressed the same as the army

were putting off a feeling, or at least Kate was picking it up. Kate was known at work to be someone who was good at finding solutions for very difficult problems. She knew she wasn't imagining the vibe coming of Mateo's heavily armed law enforcement team. They looked ready for war.

"Wow, they seem to mean business." Said Kate.

"Do they often patrol the village ?" Asked Yoon.

"No, I can't remember them doing it before." Said Kate. "If you like we can go back to my apartment for coffee ? I can promise you that Chad won't be there. I'm sure Howard will sell us a box of his famous homemade pastries."

If Mateo's cops were looking edgy and ready for anything, then Kate needed to be ready too. Not that she was going to say that to Yoon. The poor woman had been through enough angst for one day.

"Oh, I love the Café Loco pastries." Said Yoon. "I can eat three of them for breakfast."

"Then we'll get two boxes of them." Said Kate.

If Howard hadn't been so busy ? If they'd decided to buy their nibbles at one of the late opening general stores ? If Kate had decided to microwave something out of her freezer ? So many ifs that would have put them faraway from Café Loco, when the massive wolf attacked the cops outside. Was it the one they'd seen from the helicopters ? It was definitely large enough, the biggest creature Kate had seen, or heard about. Kate looked at the cops firing their heavy weapons and came up with a solution to the problem of keeping Yoon and her, safe.

"My car is over the road, right in the centre of the battle." Said Kate.

"What are we going to do ?" Asked Yoon.

She looked terrified, which wasn't surprising. She was involved with Chad being given the superguns, that was obvious; though Kate wasn't sure how. Project Dinosaur implied that Yoon would know just how dangerous the creatures could be. No wonder she looked scared.

"I have my gun on me, a pocket howitzer." Said Kate. "No arguments.....We go out of the back door and head through the streets on foot. My apartment isn't that far away. Please say you agree ?"

"Yes, yes.....We'll do that." Said Yoon.

It was brightly lit outside on the street, but Howard's back door opened up onto the darkness of a long garden and small streets with no lighting. Yoon was looking back towards the well-lit street, as though she wouldn't take much persuasion to go that way and run for it. There was a chance they'd survive going that way, but the odds weren't good. As if on cue, there was a huge explosion, which blew in two of Café Loco's plate glass windows.

"Fuck.....What's happening out there ?" Asked Yoon.

"Some of the cops are armed with grenade launchers." Said Kate. "Come on, follow me and make sure you keep up. We're leaving here running."

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