

Coffee Addict

Chapter 10 – The Expedition

“It was Lidia, one of the new cops, who’d seen a copy of La Patria on a rack in one of the village stores. She’d bought two copies and given one to Jorge.

“Nice picture of you pointing at a dented truck.” Lidia had said.

It was a decent picture of him and yes, there had been sarcasm in her voice when Lidia had mentioned it. By the time he’d gone home and placed La Patria on the coffee table, Gabi had already heard mutterings in the village.”

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Gustavo Correa wasn’t just Julie Yago’s husband. He had a few official positions in the Yago Plantation, but his real job was taking care of the day to day problems of a busy coffee plantation. His daughter Teresa seemed to cause more problems than the entire plantation, but he was used to that. Once he’d pulled faces and become angry with her. Now he was reconciled to her weird way of looking at life and her addiction to married men. Often married men much older than herself. Gustavo might huff and puff at her exploits, but really; he loved his daughter very much. His latest chore for the good of the plantation was visiting Cesar while he was in hospital.

“I’m here to visit Cesar De León.”

The woman on the reception desk smiled; there’d be a lot of that. Cesar was a genuine hero and was probably getting treated as such by the hospital staff. He was given directions and another smile.

“We’re all pleased he’s recovering so well.” Said the woman.

Gustavo had visited the main hospital in Manizales quite a few times. Personally, he’d always thought Doc Perez was a good local doctor. But when there was something the Doc couldn’t handle, people tended to get sent to the hospital in Manizales. It was a fairly modern building and from his experience, it was well run. Clean, tidy and, generally, friendly staff. Going to a hospital is never going to be fun, but Gustavo didn’t hate going there. He took the lift to the floor he’d been told and got lost. Getting lost in hospitals seemed almost obligatory. A young nurse pointed him in the right direction. Of course she smiled at the mention of Cesar De León.

“A wonderful man.....We’re proud to have him here.” Said the nurse.

Cesar had been given the VIP treatment, though Julie had probably agreed to pay for it. A private room for the hero of the plantation, with several bowls of fruit and a few current paperback novels. Gustavo doubted if the president himself, could have been treated better.

“Cesar.....Good to see you’re being well looked after.” Said Gustavo.

“They’re treating me like royalty.” Said Cesar. “I could get used to this.”

Gustavo had brought fruit, a large basket full of it. He placed it on the bedside cupboard and dragged a chair closer to the bed. Cesar looked alright, but there were still a lot of dressings where he’d been bitten. According to Julie, the hero of the red river was likely to be in hospital for at least another two weeks. After that a convalescence home was likely to be his next stop. All paid for by the plantation of course, which meant Julie picking up the bills. Not that Gustavo or his wife resented the cost. Cesar had managed to keep a lot of kids alive that night. A lot less mums had cried over their dead children, thanks to Cesar. After a few weeks convalescing, it seemed Cesar had decided not to be a piece of walking and talking PR for the National Police of Colombia.

"I heard that you've decided to resign from the police." Said Gustavo.

"There will be a settlement." Said Cesar. "Not a fortune, but it will do for me. I'm going to do what my family have been doing for a very long time. I'm going back into the tailoring business. I can do that alright with a weak arm and a limp. The hero label will help of course."

"Well.....I'll definitely be buying suits from you." Said Gustavo.

"See.....I can't fail." Said Cesar.

He was smiling, but Gustavo felt the need to show the other side of the coin. Not out of some kind of need to be condescending, but to make sure the would-be tailor knew all this options.

"Julie said your mind is made up." Said Gustavo.

"Oh, yes.....Being a tailor is my future."

"My wife knows people, Cesar." Said Gustavo. "You can keep the settlement and still stay in the police force. No active duty, unless you want it. Mainly you'll be going around schools and colleges; telling them how much the police are looking for good recruits. There will be a promotion and an increase in pay. Mainly though, Julie and I are hoping you'd like to be part of recruiting better people into the police. For fuck sake, Cesar.....You're a hero and heroes don't quit."

"How much of an increase in pay?" Asked Cesar.

Gustavo told him and saw the look on Cesar's face. It was a sort of bribe, and he'd be allowed to keep every dollar of the settlement. He had earned it. There was even a fancy title to go with the promotion. There was a look on Cesar's face, the look of a man who was going to change his mind.

"I hadn't considered all the alternatives." Said Cesar. "My family will be upset.....To confirm though. If I tell you I want to remain in the police, everything will be as you told me?"

"Yes, Cesar.....You have my word on that." Said Gustavo.

"I guess.....I'm not leaving the police after all." Said Cesar.

"Don't change your mind, Cesar." Said Gustavo. "I'm the easy going one in the family. Let Julie down and she'll come looking for you with a baseball bat in her hands."

Cesar held out his hand and Gustavo shook it. Julie would be pleased, but Gustavo might have bribed him out of being a damned good tailor.

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Jorge Alvarez knew the pictures of his exploits with Elena Alvarez and Wires, would end up in quite a few publications. It seemed his wife Gabi had expected it too. Much to his surprise, she'd reacted to potential publicity for her husband, far better than he'd expected.

"Don't let them quote Olie, when he's in one of his daft moods." Gabi had said. "Other than that.....I think you deserve to get your face in the Sunday papers."

Jorge had known he wasn't off the hook though. If there was a weird spin on the story, or anything was critical of the plantation.....Gabi would give him hell, for a while. It was Lidia, one of the new cops, who'd seen a copy of La Patria on a rack in one of the village stores. She'd bought two copies and given one to Jorge.

"Nice picture of you pointing at a dented truck." Lidia had said.

It was a decent picture of him and yes, there had been sarcasm in her voice when Lidia had mentioned it. By the time he'd gone home and placed La Patria on the coffee table, Gabi had already heard mutterings in the village. After they'd eaten, his wife had read the article in full. Not that it was exactly a huge piece, but some of the pictures were good.

"The ones of you and Elena Alvarez are great." Said Gabi. "The others though.....The pictures of the creature are all fuzzy. It looks like a fake story."

"Wires took the pictures.....He was really scared." Said Jorge.

"It looks like a scam, just when there are two more dead kids to bury." Said Gabi. "There's trouble brewing in the village. People who are usually quiet, are beginning to get angry. Something needs to be done about these creatures."

"I have talked to the liaison person with the military." Said Jorge. "I've asked for them to visit the old Wilkins place with me. You'd think they'd be keen, but they aren't. My guess is that after Colonel Hernandez, we're seen as a bit of a career killer. I think the military are hoping these things just eventually go away."

"Do you think that?" Asked Gabi.

"No, I definitely don't."

"We've another funeral coming up for the two kids." Said Gabi. "We have to go.....But Olie and Julian don't deserve to get crap from half the village."

"I know.....I'll tell them to take a personal day." Said Jorge.

They didn't really do personal days in the district police force, but Gabi would know what he meant. Jorge picked up La Patria (Homeland), and looked at the pictures again. The creature looked like bad effects from a low budget Sci-Fi movie. He looked good though, as he pointed at the ancient and very dented truck.

"Don't run off with that.....I need to show everyone we know." Said Gabi.

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There'd be lots of small meetings, but this was the last major meeting about the expedition to the temple on the high plateau. Julie Yago had committed to spending a lot of money; the helicopters had already been paid for. Part of it she considered to be therapy. The last time there, she'd seen something in the temple, something that couldn't be easily explained. She was hoping that this time, she'd either see nothing at all, or something truly amazing. Everyone had come to Hacienda Yago, or at least everyone who was in the area. Julie had taken Jess Fisher into her private study, to give her a few papers and her diary which covered the period when she'd experienced something weird in the temple.....

"Eventually I will want these back." Said Julie. "Everything is private, especially the diary. Read it all though, just in case you have similar experiences."

Julie watched as Jess quickly scanned her diary. That diary had everything in it, including a few doubts she'd once had about Gustavo. It was staggeringly personal, but Jess would need it, if the deities of Muisca decided she was worthy of their attention.

"You are a believer.....I knew it." Said Jess.

"Belief implies faith and faith isn't necessary if you've actually seen them." Said Julie. "I saw them, at least two deities and what I think was an angel. Read my diary, it will explain everything."

"What did the angel look like?" Asked Jess.

"Read my diary.....I wrote the description in there, quite soon after seeing her.....I definitely think the angel was female. I've never seen one since, but I'm hoping for great things when we reach the temple."

Jess had the look of a woman who was likely to be reading the diary well into the night, for quite a few nights. Jess's question wasn't really a surprise, Julie had been wondering about it too.

"Do you think the creatures are linked to the temple?" Asked Jess.

"There is power there, everyone who visits the temple, feels the power." Said Julie. "The power may be affecting the local plant and animal life, the flora and fauna. Maybe something unintended has occurred, a weird spiritual effect. I don't know for sure, no one does. Be careful though, the question will anger some. Be very careful who you ask."

"I will.....I'm well aware that I'm very much the new girl." Said Jess.

As Jess went through an envelope full of printed pictures, Julie realised how ancient the temple had looked. Old and some of it was in ruins.....Yet there was such power there. Maybe leaving the power had been unintentional ? Julie worried that one day; the deities of Muisca would take the power away.

"Come.....We should join the others." Said Julie

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Chad had seen Julie take Jess into her private study and he'd seen them return. Jess had a box file she hadn't been carrying when she'd entered the study. It was a mystery and Chad was beginning to hate not being told everything.

"You know Jess quite well." He said to Kate. "Find out what Julie gave her in the box file.....It seems to be quite heavy."

"Ask her yourself.....You know her as well as I do." Said Kate.

Which wasn't true. Kate and Jess had formed one of those things that women were so good at. A seemingly instant friendship, which would probably last for years, maybe forever.

"Go on; ask when you see her tomorrow." Said Chad. "I'll owe you a favour in return."

"Fine, but she might tell me to get lost." Muttered Kate.

She wouldn't and if Jess refused to talk about it with Kate, it had to be something huge. The meeting had convened and everyone had been asking a huge variety of generally unimportant questions. They weren't a democracy though; the major points had to wait until Julie Yago was in the room. Julie actually picked up an empty wineglass and tapped it with her pen. The room was instantly silent. Chad had to give it to Julie Yago; she had it.....Charisma in huge heaps.

"Now I know why you're all here." Said Julie. "You're all after one of Chad's superguns, or pocket howitzers, if you prefer that name. We will get to that, I promise. First though, we have other matters to deal with."

Chad was sure he heard everyone give a mental sigh. They all wanted one of the Korean guns; though only he knew they were Korean. Actually, he suspected Kate had realised. It was very hard to keep secrets when you shared a nice, but fairly small flat. Even Maria had asked if she could apply to get one of them.

"I did ask for a full list of who is going." Said David Sullivan. "It seems that information is considered to be private. We need to know everyone who went is with us, is still with us on the return trip."

"I see no reason to give anyone a list." Said Ana. "Many of us are going for purely religious reasons. We have a right to keep our religion private, if we wish to."

Chad could see Julie giving her granite eyed look. The head of the Yago plantation had charisma in bucket loads, but she was also a source of fear. Everyone knew, you didn't upset Julie Yago.

"No.....No.....We will not start these kinds of arguments." Said Julie. "Not when we're this close to leaving for the high plateau. I have a full list of everyone going. If anything happens to me, Ana also has a list. Now.....Can we call that matter closed ?"

"Fine." Said David.

There were a lot more minor points, which Julie was expected to decide on. Chad might have fallen asleep, but it would have been noticed. Simón, another of Jorge's new cops, had even asked about whether a vegan diet was being catered for on the expedition. Expedition was a fairly new description; just about everyone else was referring to it as a trip.

"No, Simón." Said Julie. "If you have special dietary requirements, you need to bring your own food. This has been dealt with at earlier meetings."

Then they were there, the moment everyone had been waiting for. Who was going to get one of the special guns. It was as if Julie had been teasing them all, hiding it away as the only item in the any other business section of the meeting.

"I'm going to ask Chad to deal with this matter." Said Julie. "His decision is final, as to who will get one of his superguns."

Chad stood up; it seemed the right thing to do. On the desk in front of him was a metal crate, containing seven handguns, which could kill the creatures. Even the extra prototype could get them to run away if a round hit somewhere sensitive. As for ammunition ? That was somewhere else and would only be given to the approved users of the superguns. No selling your gun for a small fortune, or transferring it to another member of the expedition. Without the correct ammunition, the pocket howitzers were useless and the ammunition provided, would be almost impossible to copy.

"I have one of the original superguns." Said Chad. "Jorge has one too and we shall be keeping them. This leaves six of the new weapons and one extra prototype."

"We all knew the number to be given out." Said Luke Walsh. "What we don't know is who will get one of the seven to be allocated. Come on, Chad.....Who gets them ?"

"Mention their experience with firearms." Said Jess.

People had lied, just about all of them. So many experienced crack shots, it was obviously nonsense. A little verification and some of the crack shots, rarely seemed to have picked up a gun. One or two never seemed to have fired a weapon in their entire life. Was Chad going to name the worst liars ? They were going to a temple in a jungle, where they'd need to rely on one another. So no, he had no intention of making a huge thing about it.

"It has to be said.....A few have over stated their firearms experience." Said Chad.

"Who ?.....We have a right to know." Said Ana Moura.

They were getting agitated, with several people demanding to know who'd lied in their attempt to get a supergun. Chad waved his hands in the fashion he'd seen politicians on TV, wave theirs. It seemed to be the universal hand waving gesture for calm down.

"No names, we all need to concentrate on getting on." Said Chad. "If you need a villain, choose me. I'm giving the remaining prototype to Kate Doyle. Yes, my girlfriend is getting one of the guns. I make no apology for that."

"That makes sense." Said David. "From what I've heard, she could outshoot Annie Oakley."

"She probably could.....Kate is definitely a better shot than I am." Said Chad.

"Just give us the names, Chad ? They're your decisions, no justification is required." Said Julie Yago.

"I bet he gives you one of the new guns."

Said one of the Muisca people, who Chad hadn't been introduced to. A brave woman to go after Julie in a public meeting. Chad had heard that Julie could hold a grudge just about forever.

"Be quiet.....Let Chad tell us the names, or we'll be here all night." Said Julie.

To say that it was all his decision was a bit of an exaggeration. David Sullivan wanted Julie to be kept happy; she was paying for everything needed for the expedition. Chad also realised that no one with half a brain, would risk upsetting Julie. Chad had a conversation with Julie and she had suggested a few people worthy of being given a pocket howitzer.

"Only a tiny number of suggestions, Chad." Julie had told him. "Please ignore them if you wish."

Chad had faced some of the most notorious sicarios in South America, but he wasn't about to ignore Julie's suggestions. The list of who got the guns, had been a bit of a joint decision. Julie had actually asked him not to give her one of the new superguns. She thought it might create too much bad feeling among the group.

“Come and collect your gun after the meeting.” Said Chad. “Don’t worry if someone isn’t here, I’ll make sure they get their weapon and ammunition. The names are.....”

“Get on with it.” Someone muttered.

Another Muisca church member, who Chad had never been introduced to. He could see the local religious types become a pain in the arse once they were on the high plateau.

“The names are..... Luke Walsh, David Sullivan.” Said Chad.

“Both Canadians.....There’s a surprise.” Said Jaimie Gosse.

There was still some doubt about whether Jaimie was going on the expedition. Chad had excluded him, because only confirmed travellers to the temple, were being considered for a supergun. According to several of his paid hands on the avocado farm, Jaimie was far too busy to leave his property at the moment.

“Your anger is duly noted, Jaimie.....Now shut up.” Said Julie.

“The third gun will go to Ana Moura, our group leader.” Said Chad. “Number four will go to Michelle Thorpe, who has years of military training and experience.”

Another Canadian and there were still two more names to be revealed. The crowd turned.....Not so much nasty as noisy and determined to be heard. Jaimie was yelling ‘Fix,’ incredibly loudly. Chad looked at Julie, hoping she’d restore some semblance of order.

“Quiet !” Yelled Julie. “You’re only wasting your own time.....Let Chad finish.”

Personally, Chad was a little nervous about the last two names. Quite sensible choices, but the crowd had smelled blood in the air. At least the allocation of superguns was the last item on the agenda. When he’d finished, Chad had decided to make a hasty exit. The caustic comments didn’t stop, but they decreased enough for him to finish.

“The last two weapons will go to Gustavo Correa and Captain Sánchez.” Said Chad.

The husband of Julie Yago and the so called Butcher of Medellin. Chad would have defended those choices as both of them being good with a gun, simple as that. Sánchez had been packed up and ready to go home, but his boss in Bogotá had volunteered him for the expedition. He was there to support and protect the team, the good folk of the village. It was obviously seen as good PR and Sánchez had won prizes for his skill with a gun. Not that Jaimie would have listened to any of that, he was screeching ‘Fix,’ yet again.

“I declare the meeting closed.” Yelled Julie. “There will be some order, or the guns will not be given out today.”

Many of those who’d won the privilege of taking a supergun to the temple, weren’t there anyway. Gustavo was still in Manizales for a day or two. Captain Sánchez still had nearly a dozen cops from Bogotá to keep busy. Michelle too, had been given duties which took her away from the plantation. After things quietened down, Chad gave out the weapons to those who were there to receive them. Before he left, Julie sort of ambushed him as he went to his car.

“Are you going to the funeral tomorrow ?” Asked Julie.

Of course, the Carvalho’s oldest girl and one of the Alves boys, as everyone was referring to them. The funeral was the next day and the villagers were already fairly wound up. Maybe not pitchfork and burning torch wound up, but Chad wasn’t looking forward to attending the funeral.

“Iris Carvalho and Carlos Alves.” Said Chad. “Jess has given everyone all the information we should know. David thinks everyone from Tessera Coffee should attend, or at least those who are in the village tomorrow. We’ve all had trouble finding dark clothing, but we’ll be there.”

“Good, that kind of thing is important.” Said Julie. “The local population need to know you’re on their side. Maybe not like close family, but well-meaning out of town cousins.”

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Jorge Alvarez was the chief of police, so he was expected to attend every funeral where the cause of death wasn't accidental, old age, or something that wasn't criminal. The two kids had been killed by one of the creatures, a really huge one. Cesar De León had killed the brute, armed only with a standard cop handgun. For all sorts of reasons, Jorge had to be there. He'd even written down a few lines the night before, just in case he was expected to say something over the kid's graves. Gabi had to be there too. As the wife of the chief of police, she was also obligated to turn up and say all the right things. Not that Jorge could remember any of that being in her marriage vows. But, if she felt a little put upon, she never mentioned it.

"I thought Olie and Julian were taking personal days?" Asked Gabi.

"As far as I knew.....They were both having a lazy day at the nearest bar." Said Jorge.

"Yet.....There they are." Said Gabi, while pointing.

There was a lot of space in the village cemetery. Mainly because it was a way to use the area of wasteland to the north east of the plantation. Jorge didn't like the term wasteland. It wasn't bad land, it was just better suited to burying people, than growing coffee or avocados. There were wooded areas and his trainee cops were, kind of, hiding in one of those. They could see the funeral, without being the target of a lot of misplaced animosity.

"Ahhh.....The good old ploy of watching from a safe distance." Said Jorge. "I'll admit there have been a few times, when I've attended funerals the same way."

"They had the decency to turn up.....That's important." Said Gabi.

Turning up, even if the families never knew they were there. It was the kind of madness that seemed so normal in and around the plantation. Jorge waved at his two trainees and both of them waved back.

"They've been trainee grade for far too long." Said Jorge. "I'll talk to the people in Bogotá about getting them upgraded to full time cops.....Proper cops."

Jorge knew the Carvalho family and the Alves boys, who always seemed to be in trouble. Nothing too heavy, but they'd need watching as they got older. It was uncertain if the two kids had even really known one another that well, yet they were going to be buried at the same time, on the same day. Two separate plots, side by side. All those family members, but Jorge couldn't see one smiling face.

"They don't look in a good mood." Jorge muttered.

"Don't expect smiles.....They're here to bury their kids." Gabi muttered back at him.

There was a catholic priest in the village, who was officially going to say the right words over their graves. There had already been a service in the chapel attached to the cemetery. The priest was well liked and respected, but even he knew that the kids wouldn't be considered buried properly, until the priest of Muisca had said their piece and scattered flowers around the graves. Ana Moura was going to be the priest of Muisca, which had been requested by the families. Ana approached them, which Jorge hadn't expected.

"There is ill feeling, but no one will cause trouble today." Said Ana. "I give you my word; you'll both be treated with respect."

"We're not outsiders, Ana." Said Gabi. "The village is our home too."

"I know, just give the families time to grieve.....Things will be alright." Said Ana.

David Sullivan was there, with most of his people from Tessera Coffee Holdings. In an effort to wear dark clothing, they were all wearing black trousers and a grey shirt, even the women. It all looked like some kind of uniform. They were all stood together at the far side of the two open graves. Jorge

knew why Gabi had mentioned them not being outsiders. An outsider would have thought the funeral to be a bit surreal. To the Jorge and his wife, it was just part of life in the village. Ana was waving at someone near the chapel.

"They're bringing out their coffins." Muttered Gabi. "They were both.....So young."

Ana said what needed to be said for a Muisca burial. Most of it was in Spanish, but some was in a language Jorge had never heard before. Probably something ancient, from before the days when the Spanish conquistadors had arrived. The coffins were gently lowered into the graves.

"I'm going to scatter my petals." Said Gabi.

Flowers mattered to most religions, but they were a major part of any Muisca ceremony. Jorge hated to admit it to himself, but Gabi understood the local people and their religion, far better than he did. She knew the people better than him too and was invited into their homes. Being chief of police, made them treat him with a little caution. Gabi was accepted everywhere. Bag of flower petals in her hand, his wife walked up to the girl's grave, seventeen years old Iris Carvalho. Gabi looked at the girl's mother, who nodded at her.

"You are welcome here." Said Señora Carvalho.

Gabi scattered petals into the girl's grave and then moved onto the boy, Carlos Alves. His mother too, nodded at his wife as she held up her bag of petals. The remainder of his wife's bag of flower petals, went on top of the boy's coffin. Gabi came back to him and held his hand.

"I needed to do that." Said Gabi.

Others threw flowers into the graves, including the mothers of those who'd passed on. The ceremony was almost over, when there was the sound of shouting from somewhere quite close. When the shouting became terrified screaming, Jorge decided it was time to do something.

"Go back to the car." He said. "Lock yourself in.....I'll be there as soon as I can."

"It'll just be someone being an idiot." Said Gabi.

"Maybe, but I'll be happier with you somewhere safe."

"Fine.....But be careful."

A quick kiss and Jorge was heading in the direction of where someone had been screaming. There were more voices now, some of them sounded urgent, but more in control than they had been.

"Tentacles.....I see more tentacles." Someone yelled.

"It's got inside the Mendoza mausoleum." From another voice.

Jorge had his standard handgun on his hip, he rarely went anywhere without it. The funeral was an official visit on official business, so his gun was with him. His supergun had seemed wrong for the occasion, though he wasn't sure why. That was in the glove box of the car and Gabi knew it was there. Jorge pulled his gun out of its holster, when he saw the twisted door of the Mendoza mausoleum.

"It seems to have dug up from below." Said Olie. "It might have a burrow down there."

It was good finding Olie there, gun in hand. It meant Jorge wasn't the only armed cop in the cemetery. No sign of Julian but he was bound to be somewhere close.

"What does it look like?" Asked Jorge.

"Tentacles, lot of them." Said Olie. "It went back into the ground before I could take a shot at it."

By ground he probably meant back into the ruined floor of the Mendoza family's mausoleum. It looked as though it had been ploughed up. No sign of blood, but the question had to be asked.

"Has it hurt anyone, Olie?" Jorge asked.

"Behind you.....I covered him with one of the gravedigger's sacks." Said Olie.

Jorge pulled the sack to one side and understood why there'd been terrified screaming. He should have known the man dressed in a mourning suit, but didn't. He'd been pulled apart by something, probably the creature's tentacles. There was no sign of bites, but the poor guy was dead. Jorge replaced the sack where it had been.

"Crap !" Said Jorge. "Looks like we have a new monster."

"Do you have your supergun with you ?" Asked Olie.

"No, it's in the car."

It chose that moment to return, coming up through the mausoleum floor. It looked like a huge squid, as its tentacle shoved aside the ground, the bricks and ceramic tiles. Everything was being broken and pushed up and away. When a tentacle made a reach for him, Jorge used his standard police issue 9mm SIG Sauer P226. He fired three times and the tentacles withdrew back into the ground.

"Yeah.....I get the feeling it isn't running away." Said Olie.

"What does the rest of it look like ?" Asked Jorge. "Does this thing have a face ?"

"Not that I've seen, though I suppose it must have one." Said Olie.

As Jorge looked around, he finally saw Julian. There he was, holding the arm of a very upset looking woman. They were sat in another old Mausoleum, from the days when they were a status symbol in the village. The mausoleum had hidden them from view and being honest, Jorge wasn't focusing that well. Strange squid like creatures weren't easy to adjust to. Was the woman with Julian the wife of the dead man ? The door of the mausoleum they were using, had come off its hinges, but otherwise, the building hadn't been damaged.

"We need to get to the bottom of this crap." Said Julian.

"Come to the high plateau with us, Julian." Said Jorge. "If the answer is anywhere, I get the feeling we'll find it there."

"I just might go, if you convince Olie to go." Said Julian.

"No, I'm not into weird temples hidden in dangerous jungles." Said Olie.

Jorge was just about to ask Olie what he knew of a temple hidden in a dangerous jungle. The tentacles returned though and the creature had a good hold on poor Olie. It was trying to pull the trainee cop down, as though solid ground had suddenly become quicksand.

"It's pulling me.....Help me, it wants to take me down."

Maybe it did have a burrow, where it took those it fed on.

"Help him.....I've seen enough death today." Yelled the woman being comforted by Julian.

Jorge forgot about his own safety and ran to help Olie. It was strange, the way once solid ground, was being churned and agitated, until it tried to suck him down. The creature was doing something to the ground, though how it was doing it was a mystery. Jorge aimed his gun at one of its tentacles and fired. With no better target, he fired nine bullets into that tentacle.

"I don't think that gun will stop it." Said Olie.

The tentacles writhed about and the feeling of being sucked down into the ground, became worse. It had a solid hold on Olie and his head was only a foot from being pulled under. Jorge would be able to breathe for a little longer, but both their fates seemed sealed. Whatever the beast was, it seemed certain to soon be tasting their flesh.

"Out of the way.....Why did no one come and get me ?" Asked Chad.

Jorge had assumed a few tentacles under the ground, weren't that much of a threat. The dead guy with the grieving woman, hadn't known there was a creature under the mausoleum. Jorge was alert and he'd faced preternatural creatures before. Yet there he was, captured and on his way to being buried alive; before being eaten.

“Kill it, Chad.” Jorge yelled. “It sucks you down in some way.....Be careful.”

Olie was yelling about his vision going, that the vibrations in the ground were making him close to blind. It was either a weird side effect, or the tentacle beast was far more advanced than the huge wolves, or the giant lizards. Everything changed when Chad used his supergun.

“That’s it.....The pulling down is weaker.” Yelled Jorge. “Keep firing.”

Chad must have emptied the gun and it was hurting the brute. Every shot at a tentacle, caused it to bleed. By the time Jorge felt he was no longer being pulled down into the ground, he was surrounded by bloody tentacles. He helped Olie out of the mausoleum. All of them were stood on what should have been solid ground, but they were still looking around, as if expecting another creature to emerge from its burrow.

“We need to get a look at it.” Said Julian. “Let’s pull it out of the ground.”

“Yeah, let’s see what we’ve got here.” Said Chad.

The gunfire had attracted others, including David Sullivan and a few of his people from Canada. By the time Gabi arrived, there were a good dozen of them, all pulling like crazy on the dead tentacles.

“I guessed it was a creature, when I heard the gunfire.” Said Gabi. “Here, you might need this.”

As his wife handed him the pocket howitzer, Jorge did feel better. The tentacle beast was obviously not as tough as the other brutes, Chad had proved that. Fire a supergun at it and it died straight away. No waiting a day for it to bleed out somewhere.

“We’re not budging it much.” Said David. “Like icebergs, most of it is probably below the surface.”

“The grounds people have a digger somewhere.” Said Olie.

The digger was found and the man who usually used it. The digger dug down around the dead beast, while a great many people pulled at bloody tentacles. There was quite a crowd by now, including some of the family of the dead kids.

“Still barely shifting it.” Said David. “Anyone got a tow bar on their truck ? We need a big truck, with plenty of horsepower.”

“Mine will get the job done.” Someone yelled.

An uncle of Iris Carvalho, who had a truck that looked like it belonged at a monster truck event. They put chains around the part of a beast’s torso they could see and attached the chains to the truck’s tow bar. The digger widened the trench it had dug around the dead beast, and.....Close to fifty citizens of the village, grabbed hold of a tentacle and pulled.

“It’s coming.....I can see it moving.” Yelled Gabi.

“Pull everyone.....I saw it move.” Shouted Jess.

Slowly but surely the dead creature was brought out of the darkness underground and into the light. The tentacles looked very squid like, but its huge body had hardly any shape to it. It was all shapeless torso, with a head attached. Its tough, leathery skin was grey, like that of an elephant. Three eyes, each of them behind very tough looking eyelids. A mouth of course, complete with a lot of very sharp looking teeth. It might not have used its teeth, but they were there. One thing was obvious; it was something designed to live underground for most of the time.

“Crap.....It’s bigger than the wolf creatures.” Said Chad.

“It must have a burrow.....We need to keep digging down.” Said David.

Jorge noticed Olie give him a look, which meant he wasn’t keen on digging down to anywhere, at least not in the clothes he kept for weddings, christenings and funerals. Julian too, looked none too happy at the idea of digging further underground.

“It’s dead and someone will want to examine it.” Said Jorge. “That’s my job done for today.”

“Yeah.....Thinking about it, we have no idea what we might find down there.” Said David. “I’ll talk to the authorities in Bogotá and see what they think.”

That was it really; everyone made a few comments on the size of the dead creature; before most began to drift away. Very few took pictures, but who does take pictures at a funeral ? Jorge still had no idea who the woman was, who Julian had been comforting. Looking after her was his job and he was determined to make sure she was going to be safe. After that.....He was going home with Gabi.

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