

Coffee Addict

Chapter 15 – Heading Home

“I’ll pay you a month on the room.” Said Yoon. “I should be back before then and somewhere to stay in the village may be useful.”

The barista, who she was now certain was the owner of Café Loco, was giving her a bemused look. Not that Yoon cared, she was used to it. She tended to step over lines with people. Lines that made them uncomfortable.’

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Julie Yago had been so angry; she’d reached the stage of quiet rage. Gustavo knew her best out of everyone in the camp; they had been married for quite some time. He was giving her worried looks and everyone else was taking their cues from him. David Sullivan had taken a Canadian invasion to her temple, the place Julie thought of as precious to her and the Church of Muisca. Not only that, they’d returned with several Raiments, the holy clothing of the angels.

“Why did no one stop them ?” Asked Julie.

She wanted to hurt someone, though not physically. Ideally she’d have fired David Sullivan and all of his team from Calgary. Ideally, they’d be on the next plane home, but that couldn’t happen. Not only did the plantation need David and his experts, but they were a long way from the international airport at Manizales.

“They were just going to be tourists.” Said Gustavo. “I get the impression that David was amazed when they found the sets of armour. They could have been found by anyone.”

“But they weren’t found by anyone, they were found by David’s people.” Said Julie. “How did he react when you asked him to come and see me ?”

“Fine, he seems embarrassed by the whole thing.” Said Gustavo. “He’ll be here, Julie. I have no doubt about it.”

They were in their tent, with the Raiments Julie had been given, on the spare camp bed. As long as David Sullivan turned up and had the right attitude, the matter could be closed then and there. If he tried to be aggressive or arrived with a bad attitude, she’d call his ultimate boss in Canada. Julie knew and liked Jacob P Wilson, CEO of Tessera Coffee Holdings. There had been a lot of contact when she’d sold Tessera the plantation. She was certain that one phone call would mean the end of David Sullivan’s career with Tessera. If it came to it, Julie would make it a ‘he goes, or I go,’ situation. Julie heard the voice of Jess Fisher, before she heard the lower tones of David.

“Here.....This is their tent.” Said Jess.

“I know, I helped put it up.” Said David.

They’d borrowed a small trolley from someone, the kind they’d all used to move their gear around; when setting up the camp. Chad Hudson was pushing the trolley, with Kate Doyle helping. On the trolley were the Raiments. If you believed all the hype, they were the armour used by angels.

Whatever they were, the Raiments had been beautifully made.

“Hey, mind my ankles.” Said Kate.

It seemed Chad had bumped Kate with the trolley a few times, though he was blaming the wheels.

“Like a supermarket trolley.” Chad said. “The damned thing refuses to go in a straight line.”

Julie didn't dislike the Canadians, at least not until they'd sneaked off to raid the temple. They could be a bit garrulous and generally annoying, but sometimes that could be quite charming. On the whole, Julie preferred a peaceful solution to the current problem. That would mean not throwing Michelle Thorpe out of Hacienda Yago. Michelle was useful to have around and she'd become a good friend to her daughter.

"The armour sort of found us." Said Luke Walsh. "We definitely hadn't gone looking for it."

"Good grief.....Have you all come?" Asked Gustavo. "Every Canadian in Colombia seems to be in our tent."

"Yes, we're all here." Said David. "We want a friendly solution to the problem of the Raiments. The simplest thing would be to give them to you; with a huge and sincere apology."

"Yeah.....We didn't mean to cause you any annoyance." Said Jess.

Julie had attended enough AGMS, Annual General Meetings; to be pretty good at reading faces in a room. Michelle was nodding and meant it. She had a lot to lose after all, including a well-stocked kitchen and the use of two full length swimming pools. On the other hand, Chad was nodding but didn't mean it. There was something in his eyes; he'd have fought her all the way for the Raiments. "We made a few nibbles and there's coffee." Said Gustavo. "I hope you're not all running off? I feel part of the problem is that we rarely socialise."

"Yes, thank for the Raiments." Said Julie. "I too, hope you stay for late breakfast, or whatever you want to call it."

"We'll stay.....Thank you." Said David.

Luke was being quieter than Julie had imagined, but there were rumours of his wife having to care for a disabled child. That had to be affecting them both. Looking around her far from palatial tent, Julie realised she genuinely liked the people from Calgary.

"I did actually make the nibbles." Said Julie. "I'm not totally useless in a kitchen."

"I'm sure the nibbles will be delicious." Said Luke.

Julie made a mental note to ask her lawyers to arrange for a little detective work. Nothing too intrusive, with luck Luke and his wife would be unaware of her interest. If there was a simple way to make their life a little easier? Money often worked wonders and Julie had more cash than she knew what to do with.

"I've been wanting to do it, but David said I had to ask." Said Michelle. "I think I'm about the right size for the Raiments. If you're alright with it, Julie? Can I try on a set of armour?"

"Please say yes, my dear." Said Gustavo. "I'd love to see them worn by someone. We'll get a much better feel for them."

"Yes.....Put on the Raiments if you wish." Said Julie.

Julie watched with some jealousy, as Michelle took off her trousers and shirt, to be replaced with the silver armour of an angel. Michelle was prepared of course, with knickers that covered everything down there. She was also wearing a sports bra, which kept everything up there, tucked tidily away. Michelle had the body shape for the armour and there were a lot of appreciative mutterings.

"Well.....What do you think?" Asked Michelle.

"Perfect.....If we ever battle the creatures.....Wear that armour." Said Julie.

"Can I take some pictures on my phone?" Asked Kate.

"I don't mind.....I'll even give you a twirl." Said Michelle.

Julie had her own memories of earlier visits to the plateau and the temple, some from when she'd been quite young. There were also memories lurking in her mind; which didn't seem to be hers. One was of a tall, Amazonian looking angel, wearing the armour Michelle was twirling about in.

"You have to wear that in Café Loco." Said Luke.

"Or at Jaimie's on a party night." Said Kate. "You'll be fighting the guys off."

There was a lot of laughter, though Julie just smiled and watched the memory, which definitely wasn't hers. An angel was telling her, in a language she didn't know; that the creatures were nothing to do with the deities of Muisca. For some reason, Julie understood every word.

"These things are made by mankind, as a weapon." Said the angel.

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Yoon's annoyance over being given bad information, had largely faded away. She liked problems and getting to the high plateau had become a logistical problem. Actually more of a logistical nightmare, but Yoon found those a challenge.

"I'll pay you a month on the room." Said Yoon. "I should be back before then and somewhere to stay in the village may be useful."

The barista, who she was now certain was the owner of Café Loco, was giving her a bemused look. Not that Yoon cared, she was used to it. She tended to step over lines with people. Lines that made them uncomfortable.

"No problem." Said the barista. "We're rarely full.....But if you want to pay for the room in advance, I'm hardly going to stop you."

"I will be leaving a few personal things in the room." Said Yoon.

"They will be safe and there when you return."

Yoon used a personal card to pay for the room, it kept things tidier. If her employers didn't agree to the charge, they didn't have to pay it. She said goodbye to the barista and went out to the car she'd hired for her trip to the plantation village. Of course the car was there, safe and unmolested. Once again, Yoon could see the appeal of living somewhere like the village.

"Let's hope Caldas Aviation keep their promises." Yoon muttered.

They'd wanted money up front, never usually a good sign. A phone call to Yoon's office in Bogotá had made her trust Caldas Aviation with a fair amount of money. They were a solid company, with no bad debts and just a few fines for late filing of company returns. As far as Yoon knew, that was normal for aviation based companies. Her hired car started first time and Yoon was heading out of the village. Someone actually waved at her, as she drove past Café Loco. One day and two nights in the place and someone was already waving at her in the street.

"This would really be a great place to live." She muttered. "If it wasn't for the creatures, of course."

The creatures, the mega fauna that were causing so much trouble. Yoon tended to agree with what Chad had said during the celebratory meal. Many of the beasts could fly, which meant they could get anywhere. That gave a serious problem, the extra boost to become a global catastrophe.

The rural roads weren't good, but it wasn't that far to the small private airstrip. By eleven in the morning, Yoon was looking at a fairly well used plane, but it looked solid and probably well looked after.

"I've given you my best pilot." Said the manager. "Liam had a decade with the American air force operating out of Panama. Sounds fiddly, but the experience he gained.....You've got my top guy."

Liam was doing visual checks on the plane she'd hired. He looked close to retirement age, but that didn't worry her. When it came to pilots, she preferred a little maturity. The young gung-ho guys could get you killed.

"Is the plane ready to go?" Asked Yoon.

"Yes.....Get on board and she's ready to take off."

Probably a bit over optimistic, Liam still had a few things to check and he never left things unchecked. Of Irish ancestry, with most of his family living in Panama. It seemed Liam was hoping to start his own aviation business.

"Never work for a boss, always work for yourself.....If you can." Liam had said.

His accent could be unintelligible at times, but Yoon liked the Irish guy from Panama. By the time they took off and headed west, she was looking forward to hearing a few of his, probably, tall stories.

"Do you love this man ?" Liam asked her. "You know.....The one I'm taking you to see."

Did she love Chad ? If she didn't, it seemed as though she did. Who puts so much time and energy into finding someone they didn't love ? As she'd probably never see Liam again, once the plane was returned; Yoon decided to be honest.

"I suppose I must love him." Said Yoon. "Though I hadn't thought about it like that."

Food had come as part of the hire fee. A large box of dried and tinned food for when they arrived at the high plateau. There was also a picnic basket full of food for during the flight. Nothing special, just a basket with nibbles in it and some warm bottles of soft drinks. Very ordinary food and drink, but the circumstances made it special.

"This food.....Perfect, just perfect, Liam." Said Yoon.

"By the time we've finished eating, we'll be almost there." Said Liam.

It was cloudy over the high plateau, which Liam insisted on calling the mountain. It seemed that thick cloud tended to be the normal in that area. Liam went in low and spotted the two large and shiny helicopters. There would be a field full of tents somewhere, but with the cloud; they might not see that from the air.

"Wow, two very large helicopters." Said Liam. "They must have brought a lot of people."

"Half the village from what I heard." Said Yoon.

Liam was a good pilot; he landed them not far from the helicopters in pretty hellish visibility. Yoon was pulling her bags out of the plane, when a woman was with them. All smiles and eager to please, with a name Chad had mentioned quite a few times.

"Hi, I'm Kate, let me help you. Have you come to see Julie Yago ?"

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Michelle Thorpe hadn't expected the attack, but that was no excuse. They were in a dangerous place and she was armed with one of the few precious next generation superguns. That brought a certain amount of responsibility with it. Her focus had been affected by the feel of the place, the almost holiday atmosphere. She'd seen the camera trap pictures of the wolf like creature, but that seemed to enjoy eating the huge rabbits. It wasn't a threat to them, was it ? The security cameras hadn't been monitored properly and the huge wolf had attacked their camp. To make matters worse, several of the Tessera Coffee team had wandered off to see who'd just landed in a small plane.

"I don't care who this Yoon came to see." Said Michelle. "Get her somewhere safe. Inside one of the helicopters would be ideal. As far as we know, these things can't chew through metal."

"Luke is looking after her." Said Kate. "I'll ask him to get her inside one of the helicopters."

Kate was one of life's runners in an emergency, she went everywhere at the run. Michelle watched her hurtle across the tent field and envied her energy. The wolf had to weigh over a ton and it had just killed and eaten one of the Muisca church. A middle aged clergyman called Ian, though Michelle wasn't sure of his family name. Worst of all, there had been no one close enough to help him.

"Well, Jess.....It looks like just you and me." Said Michelle.

And Jess didn't have a weapon likely to hurt the creature. She was armed with an old shotgun she'd found inside an abandoned tent. The lack of firepower wasn't something Michelle wanted to think about, much less talk about. The creature was close and probably still hungry. Lots of villagers were relying on them for protection.

"That roar.....I wish it would stop roaring." Said Jess.

They hadn't brought chemical toilets, though that had been suggested. Julie wasn't keen on the extra expense for something she considered a luxury.

"If latrine trenches are good enough for the army." Julie had said. "They're good enough for us."

So they'd dug trenches and just about everyone thought it was working well. Far enough from the tents to keep bad smells away. Health and safety would have approved, if they'd actually brought any health and safety people with them. There was a problem with the distance to the latrine trenches. It meant there were no security cameras, or regular patrols.

"Crap, we have to do something." Said Jess. "That was José screaming, I recognise his voice."

"Come on, just don't get killed." Said Michelle.

José was one of the few in the helicopter crew, who everyone got on with. Somewhere in his twenties and Michelle had no idea of his second name, or whether he was married. For all she knew, he might have a wife and six kids waiting for him, somewhere. He needed help and Jess and her were the only help available. The massive wolf was worrying something on the ground, quite close to the currently used latrine trench.

"That's José.....The bastard has killed him." Yelled Jess.

"So we kill the creature.....Come on." Shouted Michelle.

Jess began firing first, though the shotgun was never going to kill the wolf. It must have been hurting it though; the roar became fiercer, more angry. Michelle stopped to fire the new pocket howitzer she'd been given. In theory it would kill the brute, but it had never been tried in action before. She held the gun firmly in both hands and aimed at the huge wolf's face. Michelle fired four times in quick succession. It was a real disappointment when the brute didn't fall down dead.

"Why didn't it die?" Asked Jess.

"These things never seem to be instant.....Give it a while." Said Michelle.

"In a while.....We're likely to be wolf food." Said Jess.

Michelle had talked to Cesar about killing a huge creature with just a standard service firearm. He'd put most of it down to not rushing; even if the beast was close enough for him to smell its bad breath.

"I just kept reloading and aiming at its eyes." Cesar had said.

Michelle ignored the wolf as its huge yellow eyes, turned towards her. It was bleeding, but she'd obviously aimed wide and one of its ears had been shredded. Four advanced pieces of ammunition to give it a ruined ear. Actually one bleeding wound was in its face, but it hadn't died from it.

"Fucker.....This time you're dying." Yelled Michelle.

Cesar had killed a wolf like creature with standard ammo in a very standard firearm. Jaimie had killed one of the lizard beast with a hunting rifle bought online. The key seemed to be determination and a certain attitude. Michelle aimed at the creature's face, as it ran at her.

"Get out of its way!" Screeched Jess.

Michelle emptied her gun into its face and head. When there were no more rounds to fire, she closed her eyes and hoped for a quick death. It probably wouldn't be painless, but quick was worth hoping for. After about a minute of still being alive, she opened her eyes. On the ground in front of her was a very dead looking monster wolf.

"Crap, Michelle.....You actually killed it." Said Jess.

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Ana Moura felt her heart beating a little too fast, even though she knew the wolf like creature was dead. No waiting for it to die either, she'd heard about Michelle bringing it down instantly, with her new supergun. Ana should have felt relief, maybe even a little happiness. It was the size of the brute though and the blood on its claws. Even dead, it still made her anxious. Luke was pottering about of course, or as he called it, taking samples.

"This one is a youngster, still growing." Said Luke. "Might well have grown to over two tons, if Michelle hadn't given it a really bad day."

Ana hated people being glib about death, though it was probably alright if it was the death of a monster. The creature had killed José, who was well liked. It had also killed and devoured most of Ian, a quiet and reclusive clergyman from the village. That kind of carnage took away any sympathy Ana might have had, for the dead brute lying close to their latrine trench.

"I take it we're leaving it here?" Asked David Sullivan. "I mean.....We can hardly take it with us."

"A few samples, then incineration." Said Luke. "The helicopters have enough spare fuel. We can burn it and bury what remains. Not pleasant work, but it needs to be done."

"As you mentioned the helicopters." Said Ana. "They want us to pack up and leave. There's part of their agreement which covers death in service. José was half eaten, so they're invoking the clause.....Hardly surprising really."

"I'd let Julie argue with them about that." Said David.

"Oh, trust me.....I intend to." Said Ana.

A clause that had been on the contract when Julie had signed it. Ana was happy to leave Julie Yago to try and get out of that. The helicopter crews were insisting on leaving, or threatening punitive damages in any later court action. Ana's hope was that Julie might get them to agree staying for a few more days. Then there was Yoon, the mystery Korean, who'd just arrived on a small propeller driven plane.

"While I think of it.....Who is Yoon here to see?" Asked Ana.

"She has to be here to see Julie." Said Luke.

"I assumed that.....It seems she here to see Chad." Said Jess.

"Oh, you must know all about her, Kate." Said Ana. "Why is she here to see your boyfriend?"

Ana was assuming it had something to do with the superguns. There was a growing rumour that they'd been supplied by the South Koreans. It seemed Chad had left some notes on his bedside table about an 'Operation Dinosaur.' Some of the papers had a watermark for the Korean embassy in Bogotá. Kate had told Michelle, who muttered at Luke. In the end, a lot of people were putting two and two together. The consensus theory quickly took shape and operation dinosaur became research on the megafauna plaguing the plantation. As Yoon was Korean.....Some were putting two and two together and coming up with a very large number.

"I don't know anything." Said Kate. "Yoon seems very nice, but she refuses to talk to me about why she's here. A private matter between Tessera coffee and her office in Bogotá. She'll only discuss it with Chad."

"I wouldn't put up with that." Said Michelle. "Do you want my advice?"

"Not particularly." Said Kate.

With that, Kate left and headed in the direction of the main camp. David was looking concerned of course. It was something else to ruin the harmony of his team from Calgary.

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Chad was still finding it hard to believe that Julie wanted him as part of her team. It seemed to be because he'd been included in her first trip to the temple. Julie was obviously a firm believer that if something worked, don't fiddle with it.

"You were with us before, Chad." Julie had said. "This time I want the same team. Gustavo of course, he is my long suffering husband. Then you and Ana. A small group, with all the expertise needed for a quick trip to the temple."

Julie Yago had thrown lots of money at the helicopter problem and as usual, that had worked. Chad had heard everything directly from her, so he knew it was true. She'd agreed to paying an amount to cover damages and something for the families of the deceased. There was also a sizeable extra for the helicopter crews as danger money. For that, they'd agreed to wait while Julie had one last visit to the ancient temple; or Lugar de Descanso, The Resting Place; as most of the Muisca people were calling it.

It was an uneasy agreement, with Julie being given two days, or the helicopter crews would leave without her. Not that Chad believed they'd have the guts to leave Julie Yago behind.

As for him, why had Chad agreed to go ? It hadn't been for money. He'd neither asked for, or been offered any kind of payment. Being honest with himself, it was a useful way to get away from Yoon and Kate. They were becoming friends and eventually something would be said; something was certain to be said. Chad wanted to be at the temple when that happened. Hopefully feelings would have calmed down before he saw Kate again. Of course, past experience and not being a total fool, told him he was being delusional.

"Yes, I'd love to go with you, Julie." He'd told Julie Yago.

Once they'd left the camp and were following Julie through woods and across dry, pebble strewn ground; it was as if all their troubles had been left behind. Even Ana started smiling, despite losing Ian, one of the stalwarts it seemed, of the Muisca church.

"Is it wrong to say I'm enjoying being away from everyone ?" Asked Gustavo.

"No, I feel the same.....But I do feel a little guilty about it." Said Ana.

"It was all getting a bit heavy back there." Said Julie.

Chad decided to keep his feelings to himself. He had his own reasons to be happy to get away from the camp for a while. Julie was at the front and their instructions were to stop if Julie stopped. Just as they came over a rise in the ground, Julie stopped.

"I thought they only came out at night." Said Julie. "I'm sure Luke told me that."

Several of the giant rabbit like creatures, were busy eating a patch of greenery quite near the path. The creatures looked wary of them, but they showed no sign of running away, or even stopping eating.

"Michelle told me they're nocturnal feeders." Said Chad. "I suppose they're feeding habits must vary. Especially if they find a nice fresh area of something they like to eat."

"Wow, they're huge." Added Gustavo.

"Luke has determined that they are harmless to humans." Said Ana.

The huge rabbits carried on feeding, as Julie headed towards the green jungle, where walking would be harder. It would be his third trip to the temple and Chad now knew the route reasonably well.

Chad deliberately walked fast enough to put himself next to Julie.

"Are we looking for anything in particular ?" Asked Chad. "I'm assuming we are going to the temple to find something ?"

"My sanity, Chad." Said Julie. "I'm hoping to find what's left of my sanity."

"Oh, I gave up looking for mine a long time ago." Said Chad.

She was looking at him, as if deciding whether to confide in him, or ask him awkward questions. He was expecting a heart to heart with Julie Yago. It was a massive relief when the conversation went nowhere near Yoon or Kate.

"The very first time I was here, was so different." Said Julie. "I saw what was either an angel or a deity of Muisca. I like to think we had a proper conversation. There were no Raiments appearing out of nowhere, no steps in the temple which seemed to go on forever. I feel as though we're being tested in some way."

"Maybe we are.....They must make sure we're worthy." Said Chad.

"But I am worthy, Chad.....I was here for quite some time then." Said Julie. "I was obviously trusted, they spoke to me. I was given knowledge of the secret paths through the jungle. I'm left wondering what changed from then until now?"

"Maybe we did, the group with you." Said Chad. "Lots of unbelievers in the Gods of the temple. I'm guessing a lot more non Muisca believers than last time? I guarantee you didn't have a group of Canadians with you. More outsiders, more nonbelievers. It might be the key to the whole testing business."

"You really think that?" Asked Julie.

"I do, because it's logical." Said Chad. "I'm not a believer, never will be; not in anyone's God. But I can see how you feeling tested, fits the situation. Can I offer a piece of advice? You can ignore it of course."

Admitting being a nonbeliever had probably been a poor move, Julie was giving him a long hard look. She might forgive him for not worshipping Muisca, but having no God at all. A friend in Calgary had real problems being his friend because of that. Chad was quite pleased when she asked him for his advice.

"Tell me then, Chad.....I will listen to you." Said Julie. "I don't promise to do it, but tell me what you think I ought to do?"

The worst that could happen was being told he was an idiot, but Chad really did think he'd cracked the problem.

"Outsiders are the problem, so go to see the Gods of Muisca on your own." Said Chad. "I'm not telling you to go to the top floor of the temple alone. I think we should go and I'll leave you on the stairs at the floor below. You'll get the protection of my supergun, but the Gods will just see a nonbeliever; well out of earshot. Do you think that's workable for you?"

Ana chose that moment to run towards Julie. It seemed there were jungle flowers in bloom and she wanted a short break to take pictures on her phone. Unless you had a satellite phone, cell phones were now only useful as cameras. Julie called a short halt, for Ana to get lots of pictures.

"We'll carry on our conversation later, Chad." Said Julie.

"Yeah, fine.....I'm not going anywhere." Said Chad.

Chad felt that was it, Julie would never bring up the subject again. Ana took her pictures, bemoaning that she hadn't taken the opportunity to take pics of the huge rabbits.

"Well.....We're not going back there." Said Gustavo. "If you're lucky, we'll see some on the way back."

After that the it was noticeable that it was the time of year for most of the jungle creepers to bloom. The riot of colour was nice, but it obviously meant a growth spurt for the jungle undergrowth. Time was a factor, there was that threat that the helicopters would leave without them; if they took too long to get back. Ana was still trying to hold them up, to take her precious pictures.

"No, Ana !" Shouted Julie. "We need to push on faster, not slow down."

That did it, they were moving at a fast pace after that. Chad had noticed that many might say they'd stand up to Julie Yago, but few ever did.

"The roof.....I can finally see the temple roof." Said Gustavo.

There it was, poking up through the tree canopy and now covered in red and yellow blooms. The entire jungle had become drenched in flowers, if they'd had time to really look.

"I never knew there was a season for the creepers to bloom." Said Chad.

"There isn't a season for it.....This has nothing to do with anything seasonal." Said Ana.

"Then, what is causing it ?" Asked Chad.

"I can sense him everywhere." Said Julie. "It's Chaquéen the god of sports and fertility. I think he's trying to tell me I need to listen to some very wise advice. The deities of Muisca have filled the jungle with flowers. It would seem, I am worthy after all."

"Worthy.....I don't understand." Said Gustavo. "Worthy of what ?"

"I think I understand." Said Ana.

"Yes, I thought you might, Ana." Said Julie. "We'll set ourselves up in the large chamber, the one I used before. Then Chad and I will be heading for the top floor of the temple. No insults intended, but it will be just Chad going with me. I hope to once again, converse properly with the deities of Muisca."

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Julie had intended to keep a few paces in front of Chad, but she found herself enjoying his company. They were going to take the climb to the top of the temple very gently; they'd agreed that before they'd climbed the first set of stairs. Nothing rushed, despite the ever present clock, when the helicopters would leave them behind. Julie didn't want to arrive at the top floor, while red faced and trying to catch her breath.

"I can see that.....Arriving hot and breathless wouldn't be cool." Chad had said.

She'd always thought of Chad as a bit of annoyance, from the day she'd been introduced to him. Useful with a gun, but iffy; decidedly iffy. Who refuses to say where they call home, or where they were born ? Only someone fairly dodgy. Now though, Julie was realising that Chad Hudson was actually clever, with quite a large dash of charm. At last, she understood what Kate saw in him. As for Yoon; she was looking forward to the arguments that was going to cause. Julie quite liked Chad now, but two women fighting over the same man.....She'd have gladly bought tickets to see that. Julie stopped for a moment, to look at the mass of blooming creepers, which were covering part of a wall.

"Not too many flowers." Said Julie. "Just the right number of blooms to look beautiful, but not over the top."

"We could stop so that you can take pictures on your phone, if you want to ?" Asked Chad.

"Tempting, Chad.....But no, we need to keep moving." Said Julie. "If the deities wish to talk to me, I'll need every spare minute we have left. Not that I think the helicopter crews will have the nerve to abandon us."

"No, I thought that too.....They'll wait for us." Said Chad.

They did stop about two thirds of the way to the top, though once again, there seemed to be many more floors than were visible from the ground. It was Chad who looked out of a broken wall, to look at the ground below.

"It's happened again.....Looks as though we're five miles up." Said Chad.

"Now I want a few pics, or no one will believe us." Said Julie. "Time for a cold ration pack I think; and something to drink."

The ration packs were given out by someone Ana knew in the church and they obviously had no imagination. Julie had four packs, all of them chicken jalfrezi and rice in her pack. Similarly, the warm cans of drink were all diet 7up, which Julie loathed.

"Hmmm.....cold jalfrezi isn't as nice as cold pasta." Said Julie

"Might be nice if it was cold.....Lukewarm Indian food is pretty weird." Said Chad.

They both ate every morsel though, which said something for the quality of US army ration packs. Julie took lots of pictures of the ground below and the hills in the distance. She also checked to see if the magic was gone when photographed. It wasn't, all the pictures looked as though they'd been taken from a few miles up.

"I was thinking.....I want you to come with me; right to the top." Said Julie.

"Supposing you get ghosted for bringing the hired help?" Asked Chad.

Was she really like that? Chad hardly knew her, but he'd obviously made his mind up. On the way up, she'd decided that if it took abandoning everyone to talk to the deities of Muisca, then she'd prefer not to talk to them.

"I think it will be alright.....My decision though and I'd like you with me." Said Julie.

"Fine.....I'd be proud to be stood next to you." Said Chad.

There was a rarefied feel to the air as they started to climb the final set of stairs; as if in some weird way, they really were miles above the ground.

"I'm actually nervous about them being there." Said Julie.

"So am I, but you can never tell anyone that." Said Chad.

Side by side, they reached the top floor of the temple. It still looked no cleaner, nor was there less rubble on the floor. Something was there though, which hadn't been there before. It was wearing the Raiments of an angel and it was glowing.

"Julie.....It's so good to see you again." Said the angel.

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